



## Assessing the Role of Official Website in Tourism Marketing Fayoum

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### Abstract

Fayoum is one of the governorates of the Northern Upper Egypt Region. Fayoum is features plenty of important tourism and archeological sites, as well as a variety of natural attractions. However, these capabilities have not been exploited as valuable tourism resources for Fayoum Governorate. Through an exploratory research, it was found that there is a weakness in the number of visitors to Fayoum. This weakness might be due to insufficient or ineffective tourism marketing especially the internet marketing efforts. This study aims to assess the role of official website of Fayoum in marketing its tourism products and make use of it for displaying Fayoum tourist attractions. Furthermore, this study seeks to identify the obstacles that hinder Fayoum's official site to promote visiting Fayoum. A content analysis method was used to analyze content of Fayoum official website. Results showed that the site suffers from a weakness of some important tourist information. Therefore, the research recommends that official tourism website of Fayoum significantly upgrade and display more information related to attractions, services and amenities which help the visitors. Thus, the official website into more effective and efficient marketing instrument.

## 1. Introduction

The tourism industry is a service economic sector associated with many other industries, which is interested in expanding digital use. Tourists use digital technology to plan their holidays in a better and faster way (Abd El Ghani, 2018). Online marketing has widely spread in the tourism sector, as it played a significant role after the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic. Everything has been digitized, and likewise the tourism sector, particularly when governments began to use the internet to promote their destination (Vaisakh et al., 2020). According to Statista (2023) there were 5.18 billion internet users worldwide, which amounted to 64.6 percent of the global population until April 2023.

Online marketing has several forms ie Website, Mobile marketing, Social Media, internet specific ads and display ads and videos. Recently, the customers try to identify the information about the destination offered by organization or agencies through website before purchase decision. Therefore, The website should be full of contents, fast and safe website. In addition to provide the customers with facility to proper customization. Thus the website can definitely push the customers to purchase offered services (Negi & Chaurasia).

Fayoum is considered one of the most important tourism destinations because of its varied tourism attractions represented in the beauty of nature, the moderate weather, the existence of many archeological monuments and the diversity of its modern tourism (Abd El Fattah et al., 2018).

Therefore, the study problem is that the capabilities of Fayoum are not well exploited for the sake of the tourism sector in Fayoum. In other words, the governorate is still a virgin tourism area that has not received enough attention like other important tourism areas (Kaoud et al., 2014); additionally, some previous literature dealt with the tested governorate separately by addressing their attractions, amenities or facilities. But there are deficiencies in studies dealing with the e-marketing efforts of the governorate website. Thus, the study aims to asses tourism marketing efforts of the official website of Fayoum. Moreover, the research aims to discover shortages and challenges impeding the success of these marketing efforts. To achieve these objectives there is the main question. This question which the study attempts to answer ie To what extent e-tourism marketing efforts of Fayoum are efficient and effective. To answer this question, three sub questions are put. These questions are:

1. How the Fayoum governorate is marketed through its official website?,
2. What are the shortcomings in presenting information through Fayoum official website?
3. How can enhance Fayoum official website's role in presenting information?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. E-Tourism Marketing

Tourism marketing has various forms, the most exciting and rapidly growing form of marketing in a globalized world is that of digital marketing (Chamboko-Mpotaringa & Tichaawa, 2021). Internet has radically changed the tourism and travel sector. Internet users browse the internet websites to gather travel many information about tourism destination, this led to economic development. In general, the internet should help its user to bargain for better prices of the tourism service (Putra et al., 2018). Kazoba & Msavange (2016) added that the internet has become necessary for the tourism industry to upgrade its practices and skills of the workers within in to

meet changing customers behavior. Also Information Technologies (IT) facilitated by internet such as social networks and websites within tourism industry to be available, marketing strategies plans for tourism products has been easier to do the fact that works to improve online service quality for serving the needs of the customers effectively and efficiently .

Internet Marketing is "the use of the internet and other digital technologies with traditional methods in order to achieve marketing goals". It is the use of media such as websites and emails, wireless media along with digital data to get information about customers behaviors and characteristics (Kaur, 2017 p.73) .

Internet makes a lot of information available to potential customers; meanwhile, it has allowed customers for amplifying their traditional communication channels of influence as opinion makers. This fact has forced the tourist destinations for investing several resources: money, time and effort; but a few of them which can make a real effort to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of its communication channel (Alzua-Sorzabal et al., 2015). E-marketing depends on many tools, and the most important of these tools are mobile marketing, website marketing, social media marketing. (Malra, 2013).

## **2.2 Official Websites**

Tourist destinations, travel agencies, hotels, airlines, and other related small and medium sized enterprises use websites to market themselves by offering information to their customers and this process is improving. However, the primary purpose of websites should be to deliver the correct information to potential customers so that they can feel safe before purchasing services or products (Pradhan, 2012). Sirisuthikul (2019) mentioned that official tourism websites are the most important promotional tools for traveling to destinations. On the other side, Marine-Roig (2019) added that official tourism website is an effective and useful tool to get in contact with potential clients.

Thus, tourism organizations, stakeholders and marketers use various travel websites for promoting the destination's key features to convince visitors and tourists about visiting destination and change their false or incorrect information about the destination. To achieve this, more information should be displayed to visitors and tourists through different websites, which will result in increasing their numbers to the destination (Huete-Alcocer et al., 2019).

## **2.3 Fayoum official Website**

The official website of Fayoum provides various information to visitors of the site by displaying all information and news about the governorate. The website presents information about the governorate entities and their leadership, investments, media news and statistics related to the governorate. On other hand the website also provides information about the governorate's tourism sector, attractions and services, and amenities as well as introductory information about the governorate.

## **2.4 Tourism in Fayoum**

Fayoum is located in the West Desert; 90 km Southwest of Cairo. It is divided into six districts, which are Tamiah, Senores, Fayoum, Abshway, Etsa and Yosuef El Seddique, in addition to 150 rural villages (General Organization for Physical Planning, 2014). Fayoum has various of tourist attractions and amenities, some of them are mentioned in the following points:

Natural Attractions: Fayoum has several natural attractions and the foremost of them are:

- 1) Wadi El Rayan: It was designated as a protected area in 1989 to conserve the area's biological, geological and cultural resources. It covers 1759 km<sup>2</sup> in the southern part of Fayoum. It is slightly lower than the rest of the western desert of Egypt. The area conserves large expanses of desert containing a variety of landscapes and formations. Rare and fascinating wild life species are found in the desert of Wadi El- Rayan as well as fossils of creatures of past epochs and cultural heritage sites from ancient civilizations (Ibrahim, 2012).
- 2) Qaroun Lake: it is one of the oldest lakes in Egypt. It was declared as one of the protected areas in 1989 with a view to protect the area's biological, archaeological, and geological diversity. It is 20 km from Fayoum, 80 km from Cairo. It is rich with more than 12 various species of fish, many mammals, reptiles and birds. Visitors can practice water sports, fishing and bird watching. Moreover, the area contains many archeological and geological formations from the rare fossils. This area enables its visitors to practice more than one pattern of tourism e.g. water sports, fishing and bird watching. The best period for fishing is from July to September (Fouda & Fishar, 2012).
- 3) Wadi Al Hitan: Wadi Al-Hitan is located within Fayoum at 80 km west of the city, 150 km southwest of Cairo. It is a natural reserve containing a number of ancient fossils, which represent part of Wadi El-Rayan Protected Area (IUCN, 2005).
- 4) Ein El-Silien: It is located in the midway between El- Fayoum and Qaroun Lake; 8 km from Fayoum, 13 km from Qaroun Lake. It is one of the important tourist attractions in Fayoum. Not only the natural springs that give a charming landscape to the site, but also its traditional watermills that have a very unique type. Nature is different in Ein El-Silien where the moderate climate, clear environment, tranquility and sweet water that contains traces of titanium can be found. It is lush valley has shopping places, restaurants, accommodations and other tourism amenities (Fayoum Governorate, 2019).

Man-Made Attractions: Fayoum has several man-made attractions, the most important of them are:

- 1) Qasr Qaroun: it is located at the western end of Lake Qaroun ; 40 km from the city of Fayoum. The site enjoyed great importance during the Greco-Roman period (Abd El Aal, et al., 2015).
- 2) Kom Oshim (Karanis): one of the largest Graeco-Roman cities in Fayoum built by the Ptolemies in the third century B.C. Today, the remains of the city include two temples dedicated to the crocodile god and a Roman bath. It also includes a museum of a display of glassware, jewelry and pottery discovered on the site (Fayoum Governorate, 2019).
- 3) Hawara Pyramid: the pyramid has been attributed to a king of the 12th dynasty; Amenemhet III who reigned around 45 years (1842-1797 B.C). The king built two pyramids, the first pyramid at Dahshur "Black Pyramid", it is thought that some structural problems at Black Pyramid led to the construction of the second Hawara pyramid, it is thought started in his 15th year (Hamilton, 2018).

- 4) Al Lahun Pyramid: it is located at the entrance to Fayoum, and it is the first pyramid built of mud bricks in the Middle Kingdom, and the construction of this pyramid is attributed to King Senusret II (Hamilton, 2019).
- 5) Qaitby Mosque: It was built during the Mamluki era by the wife of Sultan Qaitby. It dates back to the 15th century. Its platform is very unique as it was constructed in a way enabling it to be removed and installed. Furthermore, its door and the reader chair are original antiquities (Fayoum Governorate, 2019).

**Tourism Activities:** Fayoum is known for bird watching on Lake Qaroun, camps and festivals such as Festival of Sunlight on Jerusalem, the Pharaohs Racing and Paramotur (Regional Tourism Authority in Fayoum, 2017). Additionally, there are many activities practiced in Tunis village, including birds watching, sand skiing, tracking and camel and horse safaris to the nearby national parks and Tunis Festival (Fayoum Governorate, 2019).

**Other Amenities:** There are 18 travel agencies and approximately 11 hotels with different categories; 5, 4 and 3 stars, which are located in different areas of Fayoum and Qaroun (Fayoum Governorate, 2022).

Despite this attractions and amenities but the visitors numbers represents negligible percentage of visitors to Egypt as shown in table 1 and table 2 .

**Table 2** Number of international visitors to Fayoum & to Egypt 2017-2021

Year	Fayoum			Egypt	%
	Foreigners	Arabs	Total	Total in millions	
2017	8755	1194	9949	8.2	0.12
2018	4772	460	5232	11.3	0.05
2019	7428	841	8269	13.1	0.06
2020	6965	1654	8619	3.5	0.29
2021	8481	937	9418	8.0	0.12

**Source: The General Department of Tourism in Fayoum Governorate (2022) & Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (2022).**

It is clear from the previous table that international visitors of Fayoum are not expanding 0.3% from the total visitors to Egypt during 2017-2021. It is notes that few Foreigners and Arabs are interested with the visits.

**Table 2** Number of domestic visitors to Fayoum & to Egypt 2017-2021

Year	Domestic (Egyptians)
2017	6005
2018	3707
2019	9643
2020	10110
2021	10483

**Source: The General Department of Tourism in Fayoum Governorate (2022)**

The previous table shows that Little more Egyptians visited Fayoum. The number of Egyptian visitors from 2017 to 2021 has not exceeded 10483 visitors.

### 3. Research Methodology

This study aims to assess the role of Fayoum official website in marketing the governorate tourist attractions as well as how the website displaying Fayoum tourist attractions. Moreover, the current study tries to discover the challenges that face the official site to promote visiting Fayoum. To achieve the aims of the study a mixed methodology was used. It depends on content analysis of the main official tourism website of Fayoum is <http://www.Fayoum.gov.eg>. The content analysis is limited to analyze the information about the available attractions, activities and amenities in fayoum and the content analysis excluded the other points of measuring the website quality as: interactivity, responsiveness, website design, ease-of-use, visual appeal and innovativeness, marketing image, viable substitute and online processes.

Content analysis is defined as "a generic name for a variety of ways for conducting systematic, objective, quantitative and qualitative textual analysis that involves comparing, contrasting, and categorizing a set of data primarily to test hypotheses or answering the research questions" (Jackson et al., 2007, p.11).

A created content analysis form was used for the current study. The applied content analysis form was put in light of the objectives of the research, additionally the used content analysis units were placed after reviewing some bodies of literature. Two content analysis forms in two different researches were chosen to create the current study. The two forms were chosen because they are concentrated, simple, and relevant. Some modifications have been applied to the two forms to suit the objectives and questions of the study. Then the current new form has been created and adapted.

The first model was created by Attallah (2011), where the author tried to evaluate the effectiveness of the Egyptian official tourism websites by comparing it with some other top destinations' websites. The content of the site was analyzed by placing eighteen main units divided into twenty-one sub elements.

The other content analysis model was developed by Li & Wang (2010). This research dealt with an assessment of the effectiveness of Chinese tourism organizations' websites in marketing China. The content of the site was analyzed by placing five main units which divided in to forty-seven sub elements.

The previous two models were modified and a new form was created for the current study. Five main dimensions have been placed i.e., 1) Information dimension, 2) Communication dimension, 3) Social Media dimension, 4) Technical dimension and 5) Multimedia dimension. Twenty-nine elements are branched out the main dimensions. Discerning the differences between the sites mentioned in the previous studies and the official website of Fayoum, focusing on the marketing aspect and relying on the countable elements were some of the key tools that the study used. Therefore, the current list was revised in order to make the elements contained in the study more relevant to the topic of the study. The content analysis form was presented to a group of experts, professors in tourism marketing to ensure their suitability to the objectives of the study and the judge indicated their validity without making substantial amendments.

The website was qualitatively analyzed in September 2022 by gathering keywords and statements related of the selected items, then analyzed quantitatively

through converting these data to numerical data and interpret results to achieve the research objectives.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Table 3 shows the tested items of Fayoum tourist official website and the extent to which different dimensions are presented in this website.

**Table 3** The Content Analysis of Fayoum Website

Website items	Fayoum
<b>Information dimension</b>	
Attractions information	39
Activities information	4
Maps and directions	3
Destination background information	12
Themed products	2
Transportation information	-
Events calendar	-
Restaurant information	-
Travel guides/brochures	-
Travel agents	18
Accommodation information	11
Entertainment information	-
Local weather information	9
Shopping information	-
Useful linked	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>118</b>
<b>Communication dimension</b>	
Tel	2
Fax	-
Mob	-
Email	3
WhatsApp	1
Hot line	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Social Media dimension</b>	
Facebook	1
Twitter	1
Instagram	1
YouTube	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Technical dimension</b>	
Search engines recognition	2
Multiple languages	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Multimedia dimension</b>	
Photographs	78
Videos	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>80</b>

The tested five dimensions and twenty-nine sub dimensions of Fayoum website are analyzed in the following points:

a) Information dimension

- Attraction information: Regarding the tourist attractions of the governorate, the website provides 39 attractions, natural reserves, Pharaonic, Roman, Greek, Coptic and Islamic monuments and Museums, as indicated:
  - With regard to the natural reserves, three natural reserves are mentioned in the governorate, which are Qaroun Lake, Wadi-Elhitan and Wadi-ElRayan.
  - The website also presents several Pharaonic monuments, such as Hawara Pyramid, Hawara Palace, the Keiman Fares region "Arsenoi" "Shaida", the ruins of the City of Madi, Al -Labrrent Palace, Obelisk of Senouesrt, Sila Pyramid and other Pharaonic monuments.
  - The website presents Romanian and Greek monuments such as Qaroun Palace 'Divoisias', the city of Kranis, the ruins of the Roman city of Skasubius, Daltian Castle Philadelphia city, the cities of Theodelphia and Eyehamically and other monuments.
  - The website presents Coptic monuments including Al-Malak Monastery and Al-Azab Monastery.
  - The website presents Islamic monuments including many Islamic monuments, such as the Prince Suleiman Mosque, Qaitbay Mosque, El Ruby Mosque, Qantara Al-Lahun 'Baybars', Qantara Khond Aselabay and EL Maghrba Gate.
  - The website presents some other attractions including Fayoum Zoo, Hadier wheel, Tunis Village, Ein El-Selien and two museums, which are Kom Oshim 'Caranes' and the Cartoon Museum.
- Activities information: the website displays 4 activities, which are picnicking and tracking in Tunis Village, birds watching, sand boarding, and camel and horse safaris.
- Maps and directions: the website displays 3 maps of Fayoum, which are a map of the governorate in general, a map of the natural reserves in the governorate and another map of tourist attractions in Fayoum.
- Destination background information: the website presents over approximately 12 brief general articles about Fayoum including articles about its location, declaration date, national day, name, slogan, population, conservative leaders, activities, features, districts, tourist attractions, statistics, and some other information that give the browser a background about the governorate.
- Themed products: the website mentions handicrafts, palm and pottery.
- Transportation information and Travel guides/brochures: the website does not include any information about them.
- Travel Agencies: the website provides a statistical guide about agencies.
- Accommodation information: the website provides information about 11 hotels and resorts.
- Entertainment information: the site does not include any information about this item.
- Local weather information: the website provides detailed information about the weather, temperatures, UV index, humidity, wind, pressure, condensation, vision, the maximum cloud height and cloud cover.
- Shopping information: the website does not display direct information about shopping.
- Useful links: the website includes 20 links that browsers can use as useful links, such as the Egyptian Knowledge Bank, the cabinet, the Egyptian

government, the government job portal, the contract portal, the Egyptian Fatwa House, the University of Fayoum, Edomode link, E-Learning, the Purchase portal, the Fayoum Chamber of Commerce, the Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, the Egyptian Stock Exchange, Quran, radio, television, prayers, currencies, weather and gold price.

b) Communication dimension

The website puts two phone numbers, 3 emails, a hotline number and a WhatsApp number.

c) Social Media dimension

The website presents four social media tools that the visitor can use, which are an official Facebook page, an official Instagram page, an official Twitter page and an official YouTube channel.

d) Technical dimension

Regarding the technical part, the website allows the visitor to use two search engines, which are the Internet Explorer and Fire Fox.

Regarding the languages, the website offers only two languages, which are Arabic and English.

e) Multimedia dimension

The website provides 78 photos of the various tourist attractions in the governorate. There are two videos on the site, one of them is about the Whales Valley whereas the other is about some other attractions.

By analyzing the content of the official website of Fayoum some results have been noted. The most important note is related to the lack of some significant information about transportation, events, restaurants, travel guide, shopping and entertainment. Moreover, insufficient communication information has been noted as absence of a fax number and cellphone number in the website.

## 5. Conclusion

Recently, many organizations and countries are going to market their tourist destinations through their official websites. Fayoum is one of the most important governorates which has several tourist attractions. This research aims to analyze Fayoum official website and evaluating it to discover any deficiencies. For this purpose, the mixed approach (quantitative and qualitative) has been used depending on the content analysis of Fayoum official tourism website. The used content analysis units were placed after reviewing some theoretical studies relevant with the current research.

The main results of the study showed that the website of Fayoum Governorate suffers from lack of some important information about transportation, events, catering areas, travel guide, shopping places, entertainment facilities. Furthermore, the website has neither a fax number nor cellphone number. On the other side some other important items are ignored and are not involved in the website, such as information about transportations, events, restaurants, travel guides, electronic brochures, shopping facilities, insufficient contact numbers and insufficient languages. However, the website focuses on some information such as attractions, destination background, accommodations, useful links and photographs.

The findings of this study are expected for drawing attention to the importance of website development and displaying more information about transportations, events, shopping facilities and restaurants. On the other side Providing travel guides for the visitor of the websites contributing significantly to knowledge of destination. Moreover, The website should be focus on communication information which allow visitors to engage and communicate more and easily with the officials of the website. Electronic brochures, social media contact numbers and more languages are fundamental if they wish to increase the number of international visitors of website. Definitely, all these information will become a support information to the visitors of the website and help them to identify Fayoum attractions, services and facilities. In addition, the role of Fayoum official website become more effective and efficient as marketing instrument.

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## تقييم دور الموقع الرسمي في التسويق السياحي للفيوم

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### المستخلص

تعد محافظة الفيوم احدى محافظات اقليم شمال الصعيد وتمتلك المحافظة العديد من المعالم السياحية والطبيعية فضلا عن موقعها المتميز ومناخها المعتدل كل هذه العوامل تؤهلها ان تصبح مقصد سياحي عالمي الا انه على الرغم من ذلك لم تحظى المحافظة بنصيبها من حركة الزائرين الذي يتناسب مع امكانياتها المتعددة. وربما يرجع ذلك الى اسباب ربما يكون منها قصور الجهود التسويقية ولاسيما التسويق الالكتروني لذلك تهدف الدراسة الى تقييم الموقع الالكتروني الرسمي للمحافظة لمعرفة كيف يتم عرض مناطق الجذب السياحي بالمحافظة من خلال هذا الموقع. كما تحاول الدراسة الوصول الى نقاط الضعف ووجه القصور التي يعانى منها الموقع. ولتحقيق ذلك تم استخدام المنهجية المختلطة من خلال تحليل الموقع الرسمي للمحافظة نوعياً وكمياً. واطهرت النتائج ان هناك ضعف في عرض بعض البيانات الهامة سواء من حيث المعلومات التعريفية او طرق الاتصال او اللغات المتاحة من خلال الموقع. واوصت الدراسة بأهمية عرض مزيد من المعلومات خلال الموقع الرسمي للفيوم عن المواصلات واماكن الاقامة ومراكز التسوق والفاعليات الهامة بالإضافة الى اهمية عرض مزيد من ارقام الاتصال وغيرها من وسائل التواصل وعرض كافة المعلومات بالعديد من اللغات لجذب الزائر الاجنبي مما يؤدي الى تعرف متصفح الموقع على محافظة الفيوم كمقصد سياحي وبذلك يودي الموقع دوره كأداة تسويق بكفاءة وفاعلية.

### الكلمات الدالة

التسويق السياحي  
الإلكتروني  
المواقع الإلكترونية الرسمية  
الفيوم