



The Role of Travel Agencies' Websites in Promoting Religious Tourism in South Sinai

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Abstract

Tourism website has become the primary channel used by tourists to search for tourism product and services. It is a crucial tool for product and service distribution, brand promotion and marketing of destinations. This research aims at evaluate the role of travel agencies' websites in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai. This research used two methods to collect data. The first method is the content analysis of the travel agencies' websites. This research used seven dimensions to evaluate these websites, they are (Information dimension, Interactivity, Website design, Online Processes, Online media and advertising, Online sales promotion, and Online public relations). The research chose the websites of top ten travel agencies in Egypt as a sample for the study. The second method is the interview to know the reasons for not focusing on religious tourism in South Sinai, the suggestions to improve the travel agencies websites to promote religious tourism and to know the extent of travel agencies' interest in the religious tourism pattern in South Sinai

The findings of this research verified that only three companies used their websites as a marketing tool in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai. The research presented Recommendations directed to governmental authorities concerned with the tourism sector in Egypt and recommendations directed to travel agencies in Egypt.

1. Introduction

Internet technology is a significant 'communication channel' between offer and demand in modern tourism. Thanks to the Internet, there is a chance for all operators in tourism industry to promote and sell services and products successfully and to cope with desires and needs of modern customers. In modern travel agencies business, the Internet has proven to be an effective mean for tourism promotion and sales, so distribution of products and services no longer depends on the quantity of printed catalogues and brochures, but information on tourism products and services can reach millions of Internet users, and overbooking has become almost impossible because all communication problems have been solved. (Batinić, 2013).

Promotion is all about companies communicating with customers. A business's total Marketing communication program is called "Promotional Mix" and it consists a blend of Advertising, Personal selling, sales promotion, Public relation tools (Shanthakumari. & Priyadarsini, 2013, p. 426).

Sinai has been one of the most important tourist attractions for the Christian monks since the early Christian eras. These monks established many monasteries and churches in the valleys of Sinai and the most famous one is St. Catherine's Monastery, which is located at the bottom of Mount Sinai. This monastery is the most famous tourist attractions in Sinai which attracts tourist groups from all over the world, which generates an income of 10 million pounds annually. It has a great wall which surrounds several internal buildings next to each other and sometimes go up to four floors that have paths and corridors retort. It was established in 432 at the order of Empress Helena, mother of Emperor Constantine, and was completed during the reign of Emperor Jusytian in 545 to be a stronghold for the monks of Sinai and it was named in the following ages as St. Catherine's Monastery (Ali, 2013).

- **The problem of the research**

Despite the importance of religious tourism type in South Sinai, there is no sufficient interest by travel agencies in this type. The most of travel agencies' interest is directed to coastal and recreational tourism in South Sinai.

Promotion of religious tourism product is an important part of the company marketing that creates a product. The most popular and generally available distribution channel is the Internet (Rejman et al, 2016). Therefore, new ideas are important in promotion because the same promotion theory for a long period of time cannot be used.

- **The importance of the research**

The importance of this research returned to focusing on evaluating the role of travel agencies websites in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai. Religious tourism in South Sinai was chosen as a case study, where Sinai is the confluence of religions. It is considered the capital of religious tourism because of its great religious significance to the followers of the three heavenly religions, where many prophets and messengers passed on its land. On the other hand, E- marketing was chosen as a way to attract these tourists. It's an untraditional tool and the most popular in tourism industry now.

- **The Objectives of the Research**

- 1- Evaluating the role of the top ten travel agencies' websites in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai.
- 2- Evaluating the information dimension about South Sinai in the websites of the top ten travel agencies in Egypt.

- 3- Determining the interactivity of the websites of the top ten travel agencies in Egypt.
- 4- Evaluating the design of the websites of the top ten travel agencies in Egypt.
- 5- Identifying the reasons for not focusing on religious tourism in South Sinai.
- 6- Identifying the suggestions of travel agencies to improve their websites to act as marketing tools for religious tourism in South Sinai.

- **The questions of the research**

There are six questions for the research as follows:-

- 1- To what extent the information dimension about South Sinai is included in the websites of the top ten travel agencies in South Sinai.
- 2- Are the websites of the top ten travel agencies in South Sinai characterized by interactivity?
- 3- Are the websites' designs of the top ten travel agencies in South Sinai distinctive and easy to use?
- 4- To what extent the top ten travel agencies use their websites as a marketing tool in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai?
- 5- What are the reasons for not focusing on the religious tourism in South Sinai?
- 6- What are the suggestions to improve and develop the website to promote religious tourism?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Websites and tourism

Tourism is an intangible service sector but after the advent of the tourism website, tourism services and products somehow become tangible because buyers can see images and videos before purchasing. The use of multimedia increases the confidence to buy tourism products and hence increases the quality of the website. All tourists want to make sure that they have enough information about the destination, accommodation, transportation, etc. before beginning their journey. The easiest and fastest way to find all the information is directly from the tourism-related websites. Tourism websites are simply baskets of information or travel catalogues or travel journals designed to deliver information to the tourist. Tourism websites are created by companies, organizations or nations (Gela, 2020). The tourism website could contain all the industries that are related to the business of tourism. Nation and destination themselves, hotels, airlines, travel agencies and other small and medium related enterprises use websites to deliver information to their customer and this process is getting better and more advance by the day. Nevertheless the primary purpose of the websites should be the same which is the delivery of the right and correct information to the potential customer so that they feel secure before purchasing the products or services (Pradhan, 2012). Tourism businesses have gone online along with the rapid development of the internet using websites as one of their ways to enhance communication and engagement with customers (Suteja et al., 2019).

2.1.1 The benefits of websites

A website can serve various purposes for companies, including helping customers in the purchase process, providing information, saving customers' money and time,

allowing customers to communicate with the organization, and providing a better experience to customers (Chaffey and Smith, 2013)

According to Maini (2015) and Kaur and Singh (2017), more and more people/companies seek to own a website. Positive sides of creating and having a website are: It is possible to reach a broad audience in an easy way. It is possible to change information from virtually anywhere in real time. If, for example, a website offers some products, it is possible to update prices with just a few clicks. Web sites allow a much better relationship with customers compared to conventional printed materials or advertisements on television or radio. The user can receive information more easily, answer questions, share experiences on a forum (if the page has one), etc. that can keep the relationship and communication between customers and company for a long time. Maintaining a website is far less expensive than advertising on other media. Therefore, an online business can significantly reduce costs for staff, office space, etc. Websites provide ongoing information and obtain information of the customers and create a specific target of the promotion. The website is a communication channel.

2.1.2 Role of websites and internet in tourism sector

Doolin et al., (2002), suggested that in the tourism industry, major milestones in Internet commerce development are: Moving beyond a basic Web page with an email contact to providing links to value-added tourism information and the use of Web-based forms for customer interaction, The beginnings of Internet commerce transactions with the acceptance of online bookings for accommodation, travel, and other tourism services, Full adoption of Internet commerce, where consumers are able to complete transactions online through secure Internet channels, Offering opportunities for the consumer to interact with the Web site through (a) value-added features such as sending electronic postcards or recording their experiences and reading others' experiences in Web-based guest books, and (b) the provision of online customer support via internal site search engines and searchable databases.

Paudel (2012) reached the importance of the websites in tourism sector showing that the website is a significant marketing tool in the field of tourism. The website tells about a company's products and services to clients, and they find all the information that they are searching for on the site. In the field of tourism, a website is playing an essential role to market tourism industries individually. Since this is a modern technology world, many people know about information technology and they know how to use and get information through the Internet. Internet is everywhere and this is a benefit for companies in that they do not have to use more traditional marketing ways such as brochures, word-of mouth, posters or banner. If they have to use such traditional marketing ways, they will use it only in a limited way to promote their web address.

ALsarayreh et al., (2011) concluded that: Tourism promotion through the Internet helps to disseminate information about the tourism offers. Tourism promotion via the Internet increases competition in the prices of tourism offers the website design helps to disseminate information about the tourism offers. The website design helps to ensure the veracity of the information about tourism offers. Website design helps to increase competition in the prices of tourism offers.

Abou-Shouk et al., (2013) has profiled Egyptian travel agents and their use of the internet. The study has concluded the importance of travel agencies' websites as

follows: - travel agencies use their websites to present information to customers, receiving enquiries and comments, offering online reservation request form, searching the website content, interactively planning trips and providing virtual brochures. A minority of agents' websites provides online booking and payment.

Marla (2013), mentioned some criteria should be in tourism websites

- Giving the customer a reason to come to the website

This includes giving information such as photos and videos of the destination, how to reach to the destination, the internal transportation means, presenting a map, places to stay and activities to do in the destination in addition to reservation facilities.

- Building trust

For the tourism websites this includes encouraging the visitors to sign a guest book and give him the chance to create his personal brochure and to create his own guidebook to the destination.

- Cost savings

The tourism websites can save a lot of money on prints like brochures by translating and adapting them to the websites'. The website can reduce the costs of advertising because search engines do much of the work.

- Interactivity

Interactive features such as virtual tours Interactive communication (FAQs, guest books, chat)

laudon, (2006), mentioned that perfect design of the website, as the website has to create a direct relationship between visitor and the information which it's presented on the website. The website must treat with the issues of the color, text, font, size, videos and sound all of which share in the appeal of the website. The visual refers to how the principles of graphic design are adhered to so as not detract from the informational content of the website

2.2. E-promotion

E-promotion is considered a powerful tool essential for enhancing organizational reputation through advertising. The essential E-Promotion tools include social media, email marketing, content marketing, online video, and use of websites, among others. These platforms are important in generating online engagement whereby the organization generates greater profitability and success in marketing (Shaan, 2021). The advantages achieved when promoting organizations through the online environment were presented to highlight the importance of this medium: lower cost, flexibility, speed, the high importance given to the client who ultimately has control in the online environment, increased interactivity and rich amount of information provided by this environment, overcoming geographical boundaries and other possible barriers and permanent access, as this environment is accessible 24 hours a day and seven days a week. Currently, the Web is a great opportunity for any business, all industries facing dramatic changes. Web services have emerged as a natural need for expansion of

information technology (Talpau, 2014). There are a number of online promotion methods: the site itself, paid advertising (text and image ads, banners, through videos), optimizing your site for search engines, promoting an organization through social networks, through partners and affiliates and through newsletters (Talpau, 2014).

2.3.1 Online advertising

Online advertising is a type of mass communication which is based on traditional form of advertising but develops its own communication strategies in correlation with the new technical and medium based requirements. Broadly, online advertising is about delivering advertisements to Internet/online users via Web sites, e-mail, ad-supported software and Internet-enabled smart phones. Examples of online advertising include contextual ads on search engine results pages, banner ads, Rich Media Ads, Social network advertising, interstitial ads, online classified advertising, advertising networks and e-mail marketing, including e-mail spam (Bakshi & Gupta, 2013).

In a research published on Online advertising by Bakshi, & Gupta (2013) count six formats of advertisement. They include Floating ad, Expanding ads, Wallpaper ads, Trick Banner, Pop-up, Pop-under, and Banners. Rajalakshmi, & Purusothaman (2017) also added these important forms of online advertising; Sponsors, Sponsored link words, Commercial sites, and Banners

2.3.2 Online media

“New media” is a broad term that appeared in the early 1990s to reflect the changes in the media environment occurring under the influence of computer technology. It includes many different phenomena and practices arising as a result of the dynamic development of these technologies: CDs and DVDs, computer games, the Internet, websites, blogs, social networks, chat, email, mobile phones and applications. (Ekmekci et al, 2022). At present, the main types of digital media are text, image and audio. On the basis of these three types, new forms can be formed by combining with each other. For example, video can be formed by playing images in sequence and adding audio (Yu, 2022).

2.3.3 Online sales promotion

According to Shamout (2016) sales promotion is a technique which mainly used by marketer on a temporary basis to create an attractive goods or services to encourage the customers to purchase goods or services in a specific time period by providing more benefits.

As the internet has become a new channel for the company to implement their sales promotion activities, there are some popular online promotion strategies that have been used such as online price discount, online coupon, and free shipping that influence customer to buy (Huang, 2013).

Forms of Online Sales Promotion are such as Coupons, Rebates, Free Trial, Premium, Contest, Sweep takes, Price Packs Sampling, Coupons ,online discount, online rebate, or free offer(Neha & Manoj ,2013; Wells et al., 2007).

2.3.4 Online public relations

Digital public relations involves issuing online news releases to inform stakeholders about an organization’s services or updates to these services, leveraging the power of

journalism networks and disseminating information through the Internet (Gifford, 2010).

2.4 Religious tourism

“Religious tourism means when people travel for the purpose of religion to visit sacred and holy sites, for example churches, shrines or monasteries, to make a pilgrimage or missionary work or to participate in events and festivals connected to religious feasts” (Pintér, 2014,p5).

Religious tourism can be defined as a type of tourism in which the religious sites meet the needs of the visitors (Robinson, et al., 2011, p. 251). The UNWTO (2011) has defined religious tourism as a kind of tourism that reflects itself with socially responsible actions by respecting the sacred and thorough stewardship of sacred sites.

2.4.1 Promotion of religious tourism

Religious products and faiths are both essential sources for identity creation. Through the process of marketing faith brands are popularized as spiritual products. The religious products may or may not be a tagline. For instance, it can be books, religious courses, spokespeople – monks, priest, a spiritual practice or a fusion of all of these. Mediator, for example, monks, priest or television personality or some public figures are an important aspect of the brand (Einstein, 2008).

The internet makes getting information easier and faster. People nowadays get acquainted with all related information before they plan or think about any place to travel. Price, quality of services, customer feedback, and travel books ratings, safety, and security and many more are the key issues to make the decision. Information can also be collected from travel agencies, travel agencies and Destination Management Organization (Weiermair & Mathies, 2004).

Promotion of religious tourism product is an important part of the company marketing that creates a product. Offices and organizations involved in such products creation should promote and advertise them in a certain way. The most popular and generally available distribution channel is the Internet. Customer can also find posters and ads including information about holy sites, the duration and price of travel, as well as information about an organizer (Rejman et al, 2016).

2.4.2 Religious sites in South Sinai

Saint Catherine Monastery is located in South Sinai at the foot of Catherine Mountain and near Mount Moses. It dates back to the 4th century. The Monastery is considered one of the oldest monasteries in the world. It attracts a great number of tourists from all over the world. According to Rashwan (2021), The Monastery comprises many magnificent contents:

- **The Church of Transfiguration:** It is the center of concern in the whole Monastery. It was built by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian
- **The Burning Bush:** It is a rare evergreen plant that only grows in Saint Catherine Monastery. It has a special status for Christians and Jews. It is named after the place where Prophet Moses saw fire, as cited in the Munificent Quran. A wall was built around the tree to protect it.

- **The Monastery's Museum:** It is also known as the "Sacred Storage". It includes a variety of religious, artistic and symbolic manuscripts. In the first room in the Museum, there is a painting that dates back to the 12th century AD.
- **The Monastery's Mosque:** It is "Al-Hakim Bi-Amr Allah" Mosque that was built with a separate minaret in the 11th century during the Fatimid era.
- **The Monastery's Library:** The library includes a variety of the greatest and the oldest valuable manuscripts in the world. The books reach more than 2000, written in Greek, Persian, Amharic, Arabic, Turkish and Russian languages.
- **The Monastery's Gardens:** A group of beautiful gardens shaded with towering trees and flowers is located outside the Monastery's walls to the North West that produce a variety of vegetables and fruits.
- **Mount Moses:** Mount Moses or Mount Sinai is 2285-m above the sea level. It is known that it is the place where Prophet Mussa (Moses) received the Ten Commandments from Allah, the Almighty. Thus the Mountain is holy in the three religions; Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The Mountain comprises 2 main routes established in the 6th century; the routes were taken by pilgrims as steps of redemption.
- **Mount Moses Church;** It is a small church built on the mountain's peak in 1930. Moreover, there is a small mosque that has a significant status for Muslims.
- **Mount Catherine;** It is the highest mountain in Sinai, about 2642-m high. It constitutes of black volcanic rocks. There is a meteorological station on its peak. The Mountain is rugged, yet gorgeous and includes various archeological sites.

3. Methodology

The main aim of this research is to evaluate the role of travel agencies websites in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai. Moreover, it displayed the reasons for not focusing on religious tourism in South Sinai. To achieve the aims of the study, a qualitative approach based on analyzing the content of travel agencies websites was applied. In addition to conducting four interviews with the marketing employees in four travel agencies.

3.1. Designing the interview

The interviews were carried out with four marketing employees of the top ten travel agencies in Egypt. The interview contains eight open ended questions as follows:-

1. What are the reasons for not focusing on the religious tourism in South Sinai?
2. What are your suggestions to improve and develop the website to promote religious tourism?
3. What important role do you think that websites play in promoting the tourist destinations?
4. What are the expectations of travel agencies about religious tourism future in South Sinai after developing the Site of the Great Transfiguration?

3.2. Determining the Population/the Sample and Collecting Data

The population of the current study are; the travel agencies in South Sinai. The top ten travel agencies were identified as the sample of this research. The selected agencies have the largest proportion of tourist demand in Egypt according to Ministry of Tourism

(2023). The content analysis of the top ten travel agencies websites was conducted from September to October 2023. Moreover, the interviews were carried out with four of the top ten travel agencies. The interviews were distributed and collected through November 2023. The interviews were conducted with the employees of marketing in travel

In the current study, the attributes of evaluating the travel agencies' websites were extracted from Gela (2020); Hussein et al. (2022); Abd Elhalim et al. (2023) and adopted to match with the aims of the current study.

Table (1): Content analysis attributes in the current study

Information dimension	
1	Attractions information
2	Activities information
3	Maps and directions
4	South Sinai information
5	Transportation information
6	Events calendar
7	Restaurant information
8	Accommodation information
9	Entertainment information
10	Price of products / services are available
11	Local Weather information
Interactivity	
1	Chat room
2	Links to social media Networks
3	Free downloads
4	Interactive maps
5	An internal search engine
6	Contact details
Website design	
1	The website loads quickly
2	Text is clear and readable
3	Font size is suitable
4	Font type is easy to read
5	Multiple languages
6	Effective use of webpage space
Online Processes	
1	Online booking for excursions
2	Online booking for accommodation
3	Purchasing transport tickets
4	online "shopping basket"
5	Bookings for shows
6	Secure Online Payment

Online media and advertising	
1	Videos about South Sinai
2	Sound clip about South Sinai
3	Text describes the uniqueness of South Sinai
4	An advertising sign appear over the Web page
5	An advertising film appear over the Web page
6	Travel guides/brochures
7	Logo for South Sinai
8	Slogan for South Sinai
9	Virtual tours
10	Visitor comments
On line sales promotion	
1	Online price discount
2	Online coupon can be delivered via email
3	Special religious tours is available
4	A chance to win a large prize
On line public relations	
1	Online news about religious tourism
2	Annual online reports about religious tourism
3	Feedback form about the website
4	Feedback form about the tours

4. Findings and discussion

The findings of the research were extracted from the content analysis of travel agencies websites and the interviews as follows:

4.1 Findings and discussion of content analysis of travel agencies websites

The symbols T1, T2, T3 etc. were used for symbolizing the top ten travel agencies

- 1) **For tourist attractions**, some sites have displayed some attractions in the cities of the Egyptian destination, such as the **T1** displayed information about (Alexandria - Cairo - Aswan - Luxor - Hurghada - Marsa Alam - Sharm El Sheikh - Dahab). **T6** clarified information about (Sharm El Sheikh - Marsa Alam - Luxor - Aswan – Hurghada). Moreover, **T10** displayed information about a large number of Egyptian cities such as (Sharm El Sheikh - Hurghada - Safaga - El Gouna - Sahl Hasheesh - Makadi Bay - Soma Bay - Dahab - Marsa Matrouh - Nuweiba - El Gouna - Taba - El Quseir - El Alamein). **Cairo Express** website provided information about some attractions in Cairo, Luxor and Hurghada only. As related to other websites, some of them talked about Egypt in general, such as (**T4-T5**), and the other sites didn't provide any information about attractions (**T2- T3- T7-T8**).
- 2) Some websites have displayed **tourism activities** that tourists can practice within the cities offered by the sites, by displaying excursions in these cities. As for activities in South Sinai, **T1** displayed the activities that tourists can do in Sharm El-Sheikh and Dahab. **T4** and **T5** have explained some of the activities

that are only available in Hurghada through the optional tours. **T10** and **T6** displayed the activities that are only available in Sharm El Sheikh. **T9** website displayed activities in Hurghada, Cairo and Luxor only. **T10** displayed activities in a number of Egyptian cities such as (Marsa Alam, El Alamein, Safaga, Soma Bay, and Hurghada), and as for South Sinai, it displayed the activities in Sharm El-Sheikh, Dahab, Taba and Nuweiba. The other websites didn't display any information about tourism activities.

- 3) **As for maps**, the sites displayed maps showing the locations of company branches in the destination, whether inside or outside Egypt, exception of **T1**, **T2**, and **T9** didn't provide any maps.
- 4) **As for information about South Sinai**, there are some sites that provided information about some cities in South Sinai. **T10** provided information about (Sharm El-Sheikh, Dahab, Taba, and Nuweiba), **T1** provided information about (Sharm El-Sheikh and Dahab). **T6** provided information about Sharm El Sheikh. The other websites didn't provide information about South Sinai Governorate.
- 5) Majority of websites talked about each company's **transportation** fleet, but **T3** offered some flights between Sharm El-Sheikh and Cairo International Airports.
- 6) Regarding **weather information**, **T3** presented average temperatures for each month of the year for some cities in Egypt, namely (Cairo, Hurghada, Sharm El-Sheikh, and Alexandria). **T10** talked about the climate of the Egyptian tourist destination in general. While the other websites did not display information about the weather.
- 7) **As for the prices of goods and services** and the possibility of booking them through websites, **T1** offered prices for its services such as optional tours and offers availability of booking them online, while it didn't provide prices for hotels. **T2** offered a form for booking tours, when the tourist himself plans this trip, and he chooses its elements according to his desire, but the site didn't display prices for hotels or flights. Moreover, it didn't provide an opportunity to book hotels through it. **T3** provided prices for hotels, and displayed a form for booking a hotel. Moreover, it displayed prices for flights. **T9** has displayed prices for the optional tours in the city of Hurghada. **T10** has displayed prices for the hotels offered by the website with the possibility of booking them. As for tours, the website has offered more than 30 tours to Sharm El Sheikh, but it didn't provide prices for them and didn't provide an online booking service for these tours. The **T9** displayed prices for some optional tours to the city of Hurghada with the possibility of booking them, but it didn't display prices for hotels and didn't provide a chance for booking them through it. The other websites didn't display prices for their services or the possibility of booking them through the websites. The **T9** website displayed prices for some optional tours to the city of Hurghada with the possibility of booking them, but it didn't display prices for hotels and didn't provide a chance for booking them through it. The other websites didn't display prices for their services or the possibility of booking them through the websites.
- 8) All the sites displayed different accounts for their companies on social media sites, except for the **T5** which didn't display any accounts for its company on social media.
- 9) All websites have provided ways to communicate with them, such as displaying phone numbers and e-mails, and mentioning company addresses.
- 10) As for websites design, all sites are characterized by fast loading, the ability to read text clearly, and the font style and size were appropriate.

- 11) Some sites displayed their content in English only, while others displayed it in more than one language. As for the **T1** was displayed in three languages (English, Spanish, and Portuguese). **T5** is available in three languages (English, Russian, and Turkish). **T9** is available in five languages (English, German, Polish, Romanian, and Slovenian). **T4** allows several languages only in case of submitting a complaint against the company's client in a specific country, such as (Arabic, English, Spanish, German, Italian, Greek). However, the site content is only available in English. **T1** website is only available in Russian.
- 12) All the websites didn't display videos, logos, slogans, or virtual tours related to South Sinai.
- 13) **As for the texts that describe tourist attractions in South Sinai**, **T1** showed the attractions in Sharm El-Sheikh and Dahab only, but it mentioned an optional tour to visit St. Catherine's Monastery, the Burning Tree, and Moses' Mount. **T6** showed some of the attractions that tourists can visit in Sharm El-Sheikh, which are Ras Muhammad Reserve, Tiran Island, and Mount Moses, on which Moses received the Ten Commandments. **T10** displayed some of the tourist attractions in South Sinai in Sharm ELSheikh, Dahab, Taba, and Nuweiba. As for the type of religious tourism, the site presented a detailed explanation of the religious tourism attractions in St. Catherine Monastery and Mount Moses by offering two optional tours to Sharm El-Sheikh. The other websites didn't display texts describing religious tourism or tourist attractions in South Sinai.
- 14) The websites didn't display travel guides "brochures", except for **T4** displayed a travel guide containing tourist attractions in the countries that the site talked about.
- 15) The websites didn't offer any reductions or discounts on flight prices or opportunities to win prizes, except for **T3**, which provided opportunities for discounts on the announced prices and also provided purchase vouchers that could be sent to customers via e-mail.
- 16) As for tours of religious tourism in South Sinai, **T1** provided one optional tour under the title "An Unforgettable Trip". **T10** provided two optional tours for religious tourism in South Sinai, one under the title "St. Catherine's Monastery and Dahab" and the other under the title "Mount Moses and St. Catherine Monastery".
- 17) The websites didn't provide any news or annual reports on the pattern of religious tourism. Furthermore, they didn't provide a form to evaluate the sites and tours, except for **T5** which provided a form to evaluate the website.

4.2The finding and discussion of the interviews

- 1) The majority of tourists coming to South Sinai prefer beach tourism and adventure tourism, as they are the types that most capture the interests of tourists
- 2) The website can contribute in promoting any type of tourism by displaying more information, photos and videos about this type, in addition to displaying tourists' opinions on the website.
- 3) The role played by websites is very important. Sooner or later, modern technology will be the future of tourism companies.
- 4) The project of developing the great site of transfiguration; by improving St. Catherine Airport, increasing the number of hotels, and equipping the area with the basic services that tourists need, such as restaurants, cafes, shops, and commercial centers, will certainly work to increase the number of arrivals to South Sinai.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

• Conclusion

Tourism websites are simply baskets of information or travel catalogues or travel journals designed to deliver information to the tourist. Tourism websites are created by companies, organizations or nations. Since all tourists rely heavily on information given on tourism websites before going on holidays, tourism website must present useful and suitable information for all kinds of users. Nation and destination themselves, hotels, airlines, travel agencies and other small and medium related enterprises use websites to deliver information to their customer and this process is getting better and more advance by the day.

Travel agencies use their websites to present information to customers, receiving enquiries and comments, offering online reservation request form, searching the website content, interactively planning trips and providing virtual brochures. A minority of agents' websites provides online booking and payment.

The main aim of this research is to evaluate the role of travel agencies websites in promoting religious tourism in South Sinai. Moreover, it displayed the reasons for not focusing on religious tourism in South Sinai.

Travel agencies in South Sinai do not utilize their websites well to promote religious tourism.

Three companies only presented information about religious sites in South Sinai on their websites; seven companies didn't present any information about those sites. This number isn't enough to promote religious tourism in South Sinai through travel agencies' websites. Hence, the role of those websites is too weak and the evaluation is considered negative.

The interviews added that the majority of tourists coming to South Sinai prefer beach tourism and adventure tourism, as they are the types that most capture the interests of tourists. The website can contribute in promoting any type of tourism by displaying more information, photos and videos about this type, in addition to displaying tourists' opinions on the website. The role played by websites is very important. Sooner or later, modern technology will be the future of tourism industry.

• Recommendation

Recommendations directed to travel agencies

- Travel agencies may pay more attention to the type of religious tourism in South Sinai because of its importance and sanctity.

- Travel agencies may organize specific religious tours as it is one of the most promising patterns in Egypt.
- Travel agencies may provide a sufficient and detailed explanation of the religious tourism sites in South Sinai.
- Travel agencies can be interested in providing news about all the efforts in Egypt to develop religious tourism sites in South Sinai.
- Travel agencies can display "brochures" on their websites that includes including religious tourism sites in South Sinai.

Recommendations directed to Governmental authorities concerned with the tourism sector in Egypt

- The government authorities can cooperate with each other to provide promotional activities for religious tourism in South Sinai.
- The government authorities can provide the necessary services and facilities, including roads and infrastructure, to develop religious tourism sites in South Sinai.

These authorities can adopt new ideas such as making balloon flights or creating a cable car project in the St. Catherine area. This allows tourists enjoy the religious tourism sites in a different way.

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