

Exploring the Potential of Meditation Tourism in Egypt

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Abstract:

This paper aims to explore the potential of meditation tourism in Egypt. With its rich cultural heritage, spiritual traditions, and serene natural landscapes, Egypt presents a promising destination for individuals seeking inner peace, self-reflection, and holistic well-being through meditation practices. However, the concept of meditation tourism is relatively unexplored in the Egyptian tourism industry. This study aims to gain insights into the current status, opportunities, and challenges of developing meditation tourism in Egypt. An online survey was conducted to assess Egypt's capability to tap into this market, with 108 complete responses collected between July and September 2023. The hypothesis tested suggests that word-of-mouth recommendations significantly influence

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awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt. The findings can shed light on the power of personal recommendations and testimonials in attracting potential travelers interested in meditation experiences, highlighting the importance of fostering positive customer experiences to encourage word-of-mouth marketing. The statistical analysis provides valuable information about participant demographics, Package preferences, and the impact of word-of-mouth recommendations. These insights enable tourism stakeholders to develop tailored strategies, target specific demographic segments, and foster positive word-of-mouth recommendations. By conducting empirical research that explores the influence of WOM recommendations on awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt, this study aims to contribute to the existing literature and provide valuable insights for tourism marketers and policymakers.

Keywords: meditation tourism, Egypt, potential, spiritual.

Introduction:

The global wellness tourism industry has experienced tremendous growth in recent years, with a significant rise in the popularity of meditation and yoga retreats. Amidst this trend, Egypt has emerged as a captivating destination that intertwines spirituality with its ancient cultural heritage (Jones, 2020). The land of pyramids, magnificent temples, and mesmerizing landscapes, Egypt offers seekers of tranquility a unique blend of meditation/yoga experiences, historical exploration, and cultural immersion. This paper aims to examine the factors contributing to the rise of meditation/yoga tourism in Egypt and highlight the distinctive characteristics that make it an appealing destination for spiritual and wellness experiences.

Meditation tourism: -

(NCCAM) defined meditation as "a conscious mental process that induces a set of integrated physiological changes termed the relaxation response"

Recently the NCCAM appears to have reviewed its understanding of meditation, by including a new central feature:

"In meditation, a person learns to focus his attention and suspend the stream of thoughts that normally occupy the mind"

indicating a shift from a physiological ("relaxation-response") to an experiential (suspension of thinking activity)

definition, more in line with traditional eastern understandings. (MANOCHA, et all, 2010: p.23)

meditation is a powerful tool for promoting physical health, mental well-being, and spiritual growth. There are many different types of meditation to choose from, each with its unique approach and benefits. So individuals and society as a whole need to continue to explore, study, and promote the practice of meditation. meditation will continue to play an important role in promoting human flourishing. As such, we must make the practice of meditation accessible to all, regardless of background or ability. By doing so, we can foster a culture of mindfulness and compassion that benefits not only ourselves but also those around us.

Meditation is a practice with thousands of years of history that has gained popularity in recent years as a way to reduce stress and improve well-being. In addition to its health benefits, meditation has become part of a growing wellness tourism industry.

GWI first defined and measured wellness tourism in 2013, bringing attention to the rise of wellness tourism worldwide and defining it as “travel associated with the pursuit of maintaining or enhancing one’s personal well-being.” (GWI, 2023).

Meditation tourism is an emerging trend in Egypt, where travelers seek a peaceful and restorative experience while exploring the country's rich history and culture (Abdelsalam & Elsayed, 2021). Egypt has a long-standing tradition of meditation and spirituality that dates back to ancient times when pharaohs practiced meditation to connect with the gods (Elnaggar, 2018).

Meditation Tourism and its impacts on Tourism industry: -

The rise of wellness tourism has had a significant impact on the tourism industry, with many destinations developing wellness tourism products to attract visitors. Wellness tourism includes activities such as spa treatments, yoga, meditation, and other forms of wellness programs (Kozak & Kozak, 2018).

Meditation tourism is a growing trend in the travel industry, with more people seeking out destinations that offer opportunities for relaxation, self-reflection, and personal growth (Cohen & Cohen, 2015). The benefits of meditation are well-documented and include reduced stress and anxiety, improved focus and concentration, and increased feelings of inner peace and well-being (Tang et al., 2015)

Egypt's Spiritual and Cultural Landscape:

Egypt's history is deeply rooted in spirituality, making it a natural magnet for those seeking inner peace and self-discovery. From the ancient wisdom of the Pharaohs to the

spiritual traditions of Islam and Coptic Christianity, Egypt offers a diverse tapestry of practices and beliefs (Smith, 2018), such as the Great Pyramids of Giza, the temples of Luxor and Karnak, and the serene shores of the Red Sea (Brown, 2019). It also highlights the fusion of traditional Egyptian healing practices, like sound therapy and energy healing, with modern wellness retreats.

Transformative Experiences and Practices:

Egypt presents a myriad of meditation and yoga experiences tailored to suit a range of preferences and levels of expertise. From silent meditation retreats in the serene landscapes of the Western Desert to yoga sessions overlooking the majestic Nile River, the country's offerings provide a space for personal introspection and growth (Davis, 2021).

Socioeconomic Impact and Sustainability:

The rise of meditation tourism in Egypt has brought about significant socioeconomic and sustainable implications., including job creation, local entrepreneurship, and community development (Johnson, 2019).

Potential Benefits of Meditation Tourism:

Meditation tourism offers several benefits, both for tourists and the host community. Tourists seek destinations that offer unique experiences and a break from their daily routines. Meditation tourism can provide a serene environment, away

from the hustle and bustle of city life, where tourists can unwind and rejuvenate. Moreover, meditation can help reduce stress, anxiety, and depression, thus promoting mental wellbeing (Kim & Kim, 2020).

For host communities, meditation tourism can stimulate economic growth by creating job opportunities and generating income. Additionally, it can promote environmental sustainability by encouraging responsible tourism practices, such as eco-friendly accommodations and activities (UNWTO, 2022).

The advantages of participating in meditation tourism in Egypt:

There are many advantages to practicing meditation in Egypt, including the following:

- **Rich History:** Egypt is home to ancient spiritual traditions that have been practiced for thousands of years. Practicing meditation in this country can be a deeply enriching experience, connecting visitors to the wisdom and spirituality of the past (Mansour, 2019).
- **Spiritual Energy:** Egypt is known for its powerful spiritual energy, which is believed to be amplified at certain sacred sites. Meditating in these locations can create a profound sense of peace and connection with the divine (Maged & Saad, 2017).

- **Natural Beauty:** Egypt is home to stunning natural landscapes, including the Nile River, the Sahara Desert, and the Red Sea. Practicing meditation in these environments can be incredibly grounding and rejuvenating (Gehad, 2020).

Current State of Meditation Tourism in Egypt:

While Egypt is known for its ancient spiritual practices, such as yoga and meditation, there are currently few dedicated meditation retreats or programs in the country (Mansour, 2019). However, some wellness centers and spas offer meditation classes and workshops, and there are opportunities for outdoor meditation at certain sacred sites (Maged & Saad, 2017). Overall, the market for meditation tourism in Egypt is largely untapped. While Egypt doesn't have many meditation-specific retreats or centers, there are several wellness resorts that offer yoga and meditation classes as part of their programs. Here are a few examples:

The Oberoi, Sahl Hasheesh: The Oberoi is a luxury resort located in Sahl Hasheesh, Egypt. In addition to luxurious accommodations and amenities, the resort offers a range of wellness programs, including yoga and meditation classes. The resort's meditation program includes guided sessions led by experienced teachers, as well as access to a meditation pavilion with views of the Red Sea (The Oberoi Group, n.d.).

Stella Di Mare Beach Hotel & Spa, Makadi Bay:

Stella Di Mare Beach Hotel & Spa is a wellness resort located in Makadi Bay, Egypt. The resort offers a variety of wellness programs, including yoga and meditation classes. Visitors can also take part in other wellness activities, such as hydrotherapy and massage therapy (Stella Hotels, n.d.).

Sofitel Legend Old Cataract Aswan: The Sofitel Legend Old Cataract Aswan is a luxury hotel located in Aswan, Egypt. The hotel offers a range of wellness programs, including yoga and meditation classes. The hotel's meditation program includes guided sessions led by experienced teachers, as well as access to a meditation room with views of the Nile River (AccorHotels, n.d.).

These resorts in Egypt offer travelers the opportunity to incorporate meditation and wellness practices into their travel experiences, while also enjoying the country's rich cultural heritage and natural beauty.

Overall, Egypt's blend of history, culture, and natural beauty makes it an ideal destination for meditation tourism, where visitors can escape and rejuvenate while exploring the country's unique offerings.

Awareness of Meditation Tourism:

Meditation has gained significant awareness and popularity in recent years, transcending its traditional associations with spirituality and entering the mainstream as a recognized practice for holistic well-being. The growing awareness of meditation can be attributed to various factors, including the increased availability of information through digital platforms, scientific research validating its benefits, and the rise of wellness trends promoting mindfulness and self-care practices. As more individuals seek ways to manage stress, improve mental health, and enhance overall quality of life, meditation has emerged as a viable solution. Studies have shown that regular meditation practice can reduce anxiety, improve focus and attention, and increase overall emotional well-being (Goyal et al., 2014; Pascoe et al., 2017). Moreover, the integration of meditation into various sectors, such as healthcare, education, and corporate settings, has further contributed to its visibility and acceptance in society.

In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in the awareness and practice of meditation in Egypt. Meditation, with its roots in ancient Egyptian culture, is experiencing a revival and gaining recognition as a beneficial practice for physical, mental, and spiritual well-being. The growing popularity of meditation can be attributed to various factors,

including the global trend of wellness tourism, the influence of digital platforms disseminating information about meditation, and the efforts of local meditation centers and retreats. Additionally, the surge of interest in mindfulness and self-care practices has contributed to the increasing awareness of meditation among Egyptians. This heightened awareness has not only attracted local Egyptians but has also made Egypt an intriguing destination for international meditation tourists seeking authentic and culturally rich experiences.

Factors Influencing Tourism Awareness:

Previous research has highlighted several factors that contribute to tourism awareness. For instance, Smith and Johnson (2019) found that destination marketing campaigns, online presence, and positive media coverage play significant roles in raising awareness among potential tourists. Furthermore, Wang and Xie (2020) emphasized the impact of personal experiences and recommendations in shaping tourists' awareness and perceptions of a destination. Word-of-mouth (WOM) communication has been recognized as a powerful marketing tool in various industries, including tourism. Kim and Lee (2018) investigated the influence of online WOM on travelers' destination choices and reported a strong connection between positive online reviews and destination awareness. Considering the aforementioned studies, it is evident that both

general factors influencing tourism awareness and the role of WOM recommendations in tourism contexts have been extensively examined. However, to the best of our knowledge, no specific research has investigated the relationship between word-of-mouth recommendations and awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt.

Methodology: -

1. Study Procedures and Study Sample:-

An online survey was developed on the Survey Monkey website, and a relevant link was distributed to travelers interested in meditation on social media platforms. The online survey used in this study was carefully developed to gather comprehensive insights into potential of meditation tourism in Egypt. The survey questions were designed to capture relevant information regarding participants' preferences for package options, and perceptions of marketing and promotional strategies.

The target population of this study comprised individuals who expressed an interest in meditation tourism in Egypt. To reach this population, the survey link was shared through various social media platforms known for their meditation and wellness communities. The study employs the “random sampling” technique. Participants were provided information about the study's purpose, scope, and survey

content. The survey was conducted in English to ensure wider accessibility. A total of 108 complete surveys were collected between July and September 2023.

2. Study instrument

The survey was divided into 03 main parts. The first part focused on the demographic characteristics of the respondents (03 items), including age, gender, and education to understand the characteristics of the participants. The second part explored participants' preferences regarding package options for meditation retreats in Egypt (4 items), including accommodation types, pricing models, preferred duration, and preferences for traveling alone or in groups. The third part delved into the marketing and promotion of meditation tourism in Egypt (04 items), asking about participants' awareness of meditation retreats in Egypt, sources of information, the influence of marketing channels, and their likelihood of recommending such retreats to others. The survey employed closed-ended questions and a 5-point Likert-type scale for responses (1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely).

3. Statistical analysis: -

Various statistical tools were used to analyze the collected data. Firstly, a convergent validity and reliability test was conducted to measure the consistency and reliability of survey items. Secondly, descriptive statistical analysis was

employed to provide an overview of the sample and variables. Thirdly, a Chi-Square Test was conducted to test the hypothesis. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25.

Results and discussion:

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Convergent validity and reliability test:

Table1: Convergent validity and reliability test

	Number of statement	Cronbach Alpha	Validity
Survey	8	0.703	0.837

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient is a measure of internal consistency reliability, A Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.703 indicates a moderate level of internal consistency reliability (Table 1).

Demographic Analysis:

1. Age

Table 2: the age analysis of the sample

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-25 years old	6	5.6%
26-35 years old	65	60.2%
36-45 years old	32	29.6%
46-55 years old	5	4.6%
Total	108	100%

Results in Table 2 reveal that the majority of participants were between 26-35 years old, accounting for 60.2% of the total respondents. The second largest age group was 36-45 years old, comprising 29.6% of the participants. Respondents aged 18-25 years old represented 5.6% of the total, while those aged 46-55 years old constituted only 4.6%. This age breakdown provides valuable information for understanding the target demographic and potential market for promoting meditation tourism in Egypt.

2. Gender

Table 3: Analysis of the sample's gender

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Female	72	66.7%
Male	36	33.3%
Total	108	100%

Results in Table 3 reveal that the majority of survey participants were female, accounting for 66.7% of the total sample. Male participants constituted 33.3% of the respondents. This gender breakdown highlights the need to consider gender-specific marketing strategies and approaches when promoting meditation tourism in Egypt. Understanding the preferences and interests of both male and female audiences can help develop tailored marketing initiatives that resonate with each target group.

3. Educational Level

Table 4: Analysis of the sample's educational level

Educational Level	Frequency	Percent
Pre-university education	4	3.7%
Higher education	76	70.4%
Postgraduate studies "MSc, PhD."	28	25.9%
Total	108	100%

Results in Table 4 reveal that the majority of participants had a higher education, accounting for 70.4% of the total sample. Additionally, 25.9% of the respondents pursued postgraduate studies, such as MSc or PhD. A smaller proportion of respondents, 3.7%, had a pre-university education. Understanding the educational backgrounds of potential meditation tourists is crucial for developing targeted marketing strategies that cater to the specific preferences and interests of different segments.

Package Preferences:

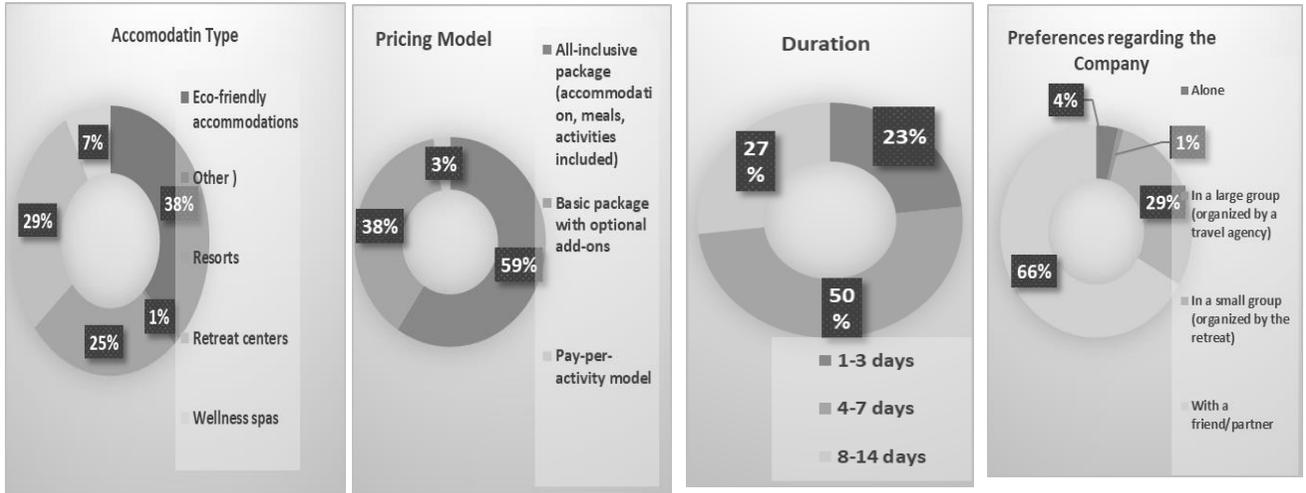


Figure 1: package preferences of the simple

Regarding package preferences of the simple (Figure 1) respondents showed a preference for eco-friendly accommodations (38%) and retreat centers (28.7%) for a meditation-focused trip in Egypt, indicating a desire for sustainable and serene environments.

The majority of respondents (59.3%) expressed a preference for an all-inclusive package that includes accommodation, meals, and activities. On the other hand, (38%) of respondents favored the basic package with optional add-ons that provides flexibility for individuals who prefer a more tailored retreat experience. A small percentage of respondents

(2.8%) favored a pay-per-activity model. These findings highlight the need for retreat organizers to offer a range of pricing options to cater to different preferences and budgetary constraints.

The survey results reveal interesting insights about the preferred duration for a meditation retreat in Egypt. The largest percentage of respondents (50%) indicated a preference for a retreat lasting 4-7 days. A significant portion of respondents (26.9%) preferred a longer meditation retreat lasting 8-14 days. This suggests a desire for a more in-depth and transformative experience, allowing for a deeper exploration of the self and a greater opportunity for personal growth. On the other hand, 23.1% of participants expressed a preference for a shorter retreat lasting 1-3 days.

It is important to note that the chosen duration of a meditation retreat can vary based on individual circumstances, personal preferences, and availability. By offering options for different durations, retreat organizers can cater to the diverse needs and schedules of potential participants, ensuring that everyone can find a suitable retreat experience to embark upon their inner journey in Egypt.

The survey results regarding the preference for participating in a meditation retreat in Egypt provide interesting insights. The majority of respondents (66.7%) expressed a

preference for participating in a retreat with a friend or partner. A significant number of participants (28.7%) indicated a preference for participating in a retreat as part of a small group organized by the retreat itself. A smaller percentage of respondents (3.7%) expressed a preference for participating in a retreat alone. Interestingly, only 0.9% of participants preferred participating in a meditation retreat in Egypt as part of a large group organized by a travel agency. This could indicate a preference for a more intimate and focused experience rather than a larger, more generalized one.

Marketing and Promotion:

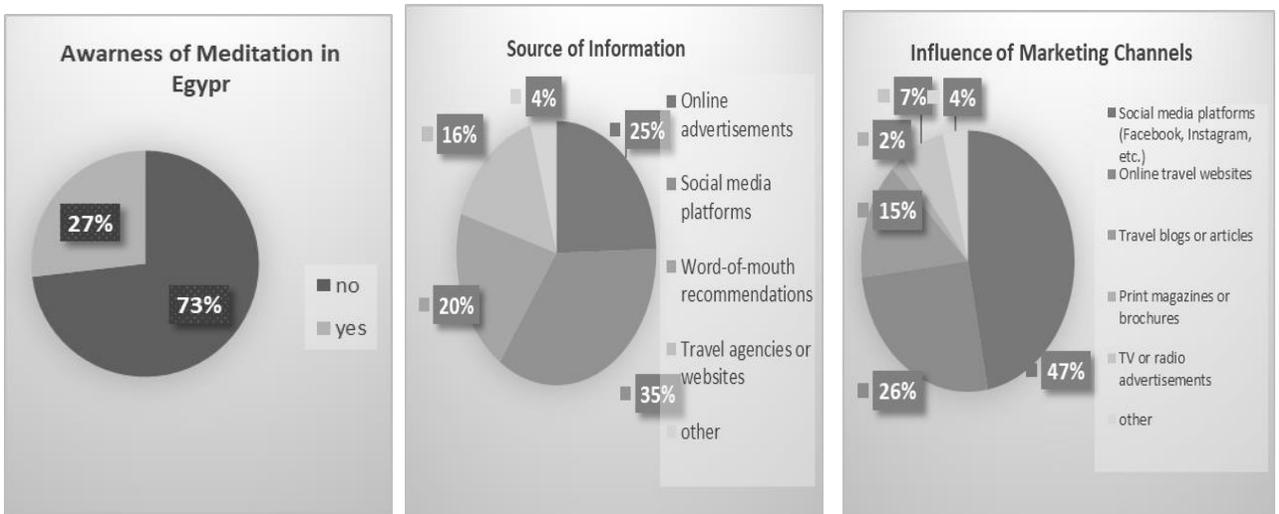


Figure 2: Awareness and Influence of Marketing Channels

The survey results indicate that 26.9% of respondents are aware that Egypt offers meditation and wellness retreats for tourists, while a majority of respondents (73.1%) are not aware of this offering. It may indicate that the promotion and marketing of meditation and wellness retreats in Egypt are not reaching a significant portion of the target audience. This suggests a potential area for improvement in terms of raising awareness and spreading the word about these retreats to attract more interested participants.

For respondents who indicated that they are aware of meditation tourism in Egypt, there are various ways they became knowledgeable about it; 24.50% of respondents discovered meditation tourism in Egypt through online advertisements, 35.10% of respondents found out about meditation tourism in Egypt through social media platforms, 20.20% of respondents learned about meditation tourism in Egypt through word-of-mouth recommendations, 16% of respondents discovered meditation tourism in Egypt through travel agencies or websites, 4.20% of respondents mentioned that they became aware of meditation tourism in Egypt through other means, which could include personal research, print media, or attending wellness-related events. These findings highlight the importance of a multi-channel marketing approach when promoting meditation tourism in Egypt. Targeted online

advertising, active presence on various social media platforms, fostering positive word-of-mouth recommendations, and collaboration with travel agencies and websites can all contribute to raising awareness and attracting potential participants to these unique wellness retreats.

When it comes to considering a meditation retreat in Egypt, Social media platforms (47%) were identified as the most influential marketing channel, followed by online travel websites (26%), then Travel blogs or articles (14.50%), This suggests that A strong presence on social media platforms, effective partnerships with online travel websites, engaging with travel blogs or articles, targeted placements in relevant print media, and strategic use of traditional media channels can collectively create awareness and drive interest in these unique wellness experiences (Figure 2).

Table 5: Recommending a meditation retreat in Egypt to others

	Very unlikely	Unlikely	Neutral	Likely	Very likely	Mean	S.d	cv
How likely are you to recommend a meditation retreat in Egypt to others?	1(%0.9)	5(%4.6)	22(%20.4)	67(%62.0)	13(%12.0)	3.80	0.746	19.63%

The provided table (Table 5) focuses on the likelihood of respondents recommending a meditation retreat in Egypt to others. It provides insights into their willingness to advocate for such retreats based on their personal experiences.

The results indicate that the majority of respondents, 62.0%, expressed a likelihood of recommending a meditation retreat in Egypt to others. This suggests that a significant portion of participants had positive experiences or perceptions of these retreats and are willing to share their recommendations with others. Word-of-mouth recommendations can be a powerful tool for attracting new participants and building a positive reputation for meditation retreats in Egypt.

Furthermore, 12.0% of respondents indicated they were very likely to recommend a retreat, indicating a strong willingness to promote and endorse the retreat experience. This subset of participants likely had highly positive experiences and holds a particularly favorable view of meditation retreats in Egypt. Their enthusiastic advocacy can contribute to attracting new participants and enhancing the overall reputation of these retreats.

A smaller percentage of respondents, 20.4%, expressed neutrality regarding their likelihood of recommending a retreat. This suggests that while they may not actively discourage others from attending, they might not actively promote or recommend

the retreat experience either. It is possible ve unsure about the preferences and expectations of others.

The mean score of 3.80 indicates that, on average, respondents are moderately likely to recommend a meditation retreat in Egypt to others based on their experiences.

Considering the data, there is a consistent trend of respondents being likely to recommend a meditation retreat in Egypt to others. This highlights the potential for positive word-of-mouth and personal recommendations to contribute to the growth and success of these retreats.

In summary, the majority of respondents are willing to recommend a meditation retreat in Egypt to others based on their experiences. Their positive word-of-mouth and advocacy can play a significant role in attracting new participants and building a positive reputation for these retreats. Retreat organizers should strive to provide high-quality experiences that exceed participant expectations and encourage positive recommendations from satisfied participants.

Hypothesis Testing: -

The hypothesis: Awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt is significantly influenced by word-of-mouth recommendations.

Table 6: analysis of Chi-Square Tests to test the hypothesis

			Other	Word-of-mouth recommendations	
Are you aware that Egypt offers meditation and wellness retreats for tourists?	No	100.0%	82.8%	26.3%	73.1%
	Yes		17.2%	73.7%	26.9%
Total		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Chi-Square Tests			
	Value	Df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	26.041a	2	.000
Likelihood Ratio	23.777	2	.000
N of Valid Cases	108		

Based on the provided data and the results of the chi-square tests (Table 6), we can validate the hypothesis that awareness and consideration of meditation tourism in Egypt is significantly influenced by word-of-mouth recommendations.

The chi-square tests indicate that there is a significant association between awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt and word-of-mouth recommendations. The p-values for the Pearson Chi-Square and the Likelihood Ratio tests were reported as 0.000, which is less than the typical significance level of 0.05. This suggests strong evidence to reject the null hypothesis, indicating that there is indeed a significant association.

In summary, the statistical analysis provides insights into the demographic characteristics of the participants, the effectiveness of

marketing and promotional materials, and the influence of word-of-mouth recommendations on awareness of meditation tourism in Egypt. These findings can inform the development of targeted marketing strategies and initiatives to promote meditation tourism in Egypt effectively.

Conclusion:

the potential of meditation tourism in Egypt is a promising prospect that can greatly contribute to the country's tourism industry. With its rich historical and cultural heritage, Egypt offers a unique setting for individuals seeking a serene and spiritual experience. The country's diverse landscapes, including deserts, mountains, and the majestic Nile River, provide a backdrop that is conducive to meditation and self-reflection. By capitalizing on its existing cultural and natural resources, Egypt can position itself as a leading destination for meditation tourism, attracting visitors from around the world who are seeking a blend of relaxation, spirituality, and cultural immersion. This form of tourism not only presents significant economic opportunities for Egypt but also fosters cross-cultural exchange and promotes an understanding of the country's rich heritage.

However, to fully realize the potential of meditation tourism, Egypt must invest in the necessary infrastructure, training, and marketing initiatives to position itself as a premier

destination in this niche market. Collaborations with experienced wellness providers, the cultivation of local expertise in meditation and mindfulness practices, and the implementation of sustainable practices will be crucial in ensuring the success and longevity of meditation tourism in Egypt.

Egypt has the opportunity to leverage its rich history, spiritual traditions, and natural beauty to position itself as a leading destination for meditation tourism and tap into the growing global wellness tourism market (UNWTO, 2022). By capitalizing on the growing global wellness tourism market and implementing targeted marketing strategies, Egypt can attract a new segment of travelers seeking meaningful and transformative experiences.

In conclusion, Egypt possesses immense potential as a destination for meditation tourism. With its captivating ancient landmarks, serene landscapes, and commitment to promoting wellness, the country can create a unique and transformative experience for travelers seeking inner peace and personal growth. By harnessing these strengths and making strategic investments, Egypt can establish itself as a global leader in meditation tourism, benefiting both its tourism industry and the well-being of visitors from around the world.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this research. The research focuses specifically on the potential of meditation tourism in Egypt and may not be directly applicable to other destinations. The findings and recommendations may be influenced by the unique cultural, historical, and geographical context of Egypt, limiting their generalizability to other countries or regions.

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