

## ACHIEVING AUTHENTICITY THROUGH ETHNIC TOURISM, A CONSUMER PERSPECTIVE

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*Ethnic tourism is considered a unique type of tourism since it enables the tourist to experience and learn about other cultures through their traditions, customs lifestyle and practice. Authenticity is an important concept in ethnic tourism studies. This article examines tourists' participation in ethnic attractions and products, and the levels of satisfaction with their experiences based upon empirical research conducted in number of Nubian villages which still exist north of the Dam. Field research was done through visiting, interviewing some of the local people and observing their lifestyle. A survey of 600 visitors to Nubian villages was also conducted, only 560 questionnaires were valid to analysis out of which 89.2% was international and 10.8% was domestic. The study finds out that authenticity is a major concern among international tourists. Although it was the first experience for large number of tourists but they have different reasons for getting through this experience.*

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**Keywords:** *ethnic tourism, authenticity, Nubian heritage*

JEL Classification: *L83, M1, O1*

### INTRODUCTION

The tourism industry has been affected by globalization. This new phenomena paved the way towards new dimensions in the tourism industry, as well as the appreciation of past cultures and traditions. Obviously, this made tourist destinations try to diversify their supply and offer new types and techniques to fulfill these demands. Ethnic tourism is considered a unique type of tourism since it enables the tourist to experience and learn about other cultures through their traditions, customs lifestyle and practice. Authenticity is an important concept in ethnic tourism studies as well as a critical issue in tourism practice.



## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Ethnic tourism**

Ethnic tourism is "travel motivated by search for the first hand, authentic and sometimes intimate contact with people whose ethnic and /or cultural background is different from the tourists" (Sanyal, 2011). Ethnic tourism is considered a unique type that enables the tourist to experience the practices of another culture, and may include performances, presentations and attractions portraying presented by small, often isolated indigenous communities. Ethnic tourism is related to the more popularly known nature or eco-tourism. In which people visit a region, usually in a third world country, in order to enjoy its natural beauty. Nature tourism can also imply social awareness because it "creates an understanding of cultural and natural history, while safeguarding the integrity of the ecosystem and producing economic benefits that encourage conservation" (Anderson, 1994).

These traditional groups of people live in a unique blend with the environment; they interact and depend upon it. Because of the ethnic groups' dependence on the environment, it is difficult to separate ethnic tourism from the landscape in which it occurs. For the visitor it is an enjoyment of the environment and the experience of the primitive, simple, ethnic tourism. From the visitor's point of view, ethnic tourism is "travel motivated by the search for the firsthand, authentic and sometimes intimate contact with people whose ethnic and/or cultural background is different from the tourists" (Anderson, 1994). Ethnic tourists are also motivated by the desire to see some of the "endangered" cultures which may rapidly disappear through absorption into the nation's majority. The visitor's experience usually includes opportunities to see and take pictures of people in their traditional dress, observe their living environment and purchase local handmade products.

### **Features of the ethnic tourists**

Tourists do differ in terms of the experience they seek in ethnic tourism situations. Some may see personal ethnic contact as difficult or uncomfortable, while others find great pleasure in such experience. Ethnic tourist needs the product to be "real." It must originate from the proper source, it must be authentic, not packaged (Shopping For Culture & Bringing It Home, n.d). The travelers of ethnic tourism are divided in to four groups. The first group includes people that are mostly interested in

having personal contact with ethnic people and are likely to participate in tourism programs that offer such opportunity to experience the primitive, simple and unique way of life. The second group is the passive culture learning group, they are interested in ethnic tourism but prefer experiences that focus on cultural learning rather than personal contact. The third group is more interested in participating in traditional activities; it is called the Ethnic product and activities group. The fourth group is called the low ethnic tourism group, they are most likely to visit the tourism attraction as part of a tour or because someone else in their social gathering wanted to visit. They are interested in ethnic tourism experiences (Anderson, 1994).

### **Ethnic tourism in Egypt**

Egypt's population is fairly homogeneous, with around 98% being Arabic speakers Other ethnic groups include Berbers, Nubians, Bedouins, and Beja (1%), and a small number of Europeans such as Greek, Armenian, French, and Italian (Defence language institute foreign language centre, 2007). In considering the case of the Egyptian Nubian, it is important to first explain who are they as a people and where do they live. In general the Nubians are a group of Egyptian people that are unique and different in their cultures and beliefs. They are an indigenous group who adopted their lives and culture with the natural environment that surrounds them. Nubia is located in southern Egypt and northern Sudan. It was divided into two main regions: Lower Nubia and Upper Nubia. Lower Nubia was the northern region extending nearly 400 km from the First Nile Cataract to the area around Semna and the Second Cataract (southern Egypt). Upper Nubia extended upriver along the Nile to the Sixth Cataract and Khartoum (central Sudan) (Redford, 2001, Ancient Nubia Press Kit, 2006).

The modern inhabitants of southern Egypt and Sudan still refer to themselves as Nubians. They speak the Nubian language as well as Arabic. Their native villages extended along the Nile River from the first cataract at Aswan south into the Sudan through the region known as Dongola (Fernea, 1973). The Nubian people are a major ethnic group that has resettled along the Nile in Upper (southern) Egypt after being dislocated by the construction of the Aswan High Dam. Linguistically, they can be divided into two groups, which are the Kenuz, who speak a dialect of Matoki, and the Fadicca, who speak a dialect called Fadicca. (Poole, n.d). In the 1960's, a dam was constructed at Aswan, to provide electricity for all of Egypt and push the country into the 21st century. It

created the largest ever man-made lake which permanently flooded ancient temples and tombs as well as hundreds of modern villages in Nubia. In doing so; forty-six villages were moved to Kom Ombo. One hundred thousand people were moved to a new location, no longer on the Nile River. It was the end of Nubia (Rizk, 2005). Today, few struggling villages, with just a few hundred residents, remain, while the others have been changed. These villages sit just below the High Dam. Its people live in their traditional, brightly colored domed concrete and rock houses. They have kept their language alive after and support their families by selling Nubian handmade products to the tourists who arrive each day to capture a shot or a picture of a civilization which is diminishing.

### **Lifestyle and traditions**

Nubians have distinct traditions, architecture, and languages. Nubia contains dozens of sites of archaeological interest, including temples, as well as fortresses and tombs. In old Nubia, men migrated to the big cities to find work, while the women farmed the land, cared for the animals, and did household tasks. Today, since the land is located far from their homes, men do most of the fieldwork while the women work at the home. Some women have also found employment as schoolteachers, public service workers, and seamstresses (Pik, n.d).

The typical Nubian house is very spacious, with several large rooms. In the center of each home is an open courtyard. The Nubian house begins with guest's sitting room which has a door that opens directly to the street. The house is furnished with number of wooden benches and decorated with palm leaves plates and mats hung on the wall. Also baskets made of palm leaves are hung from the ceiling for keeping food away from animals and insects. Most of the Nubian houses are painted white with lime from outside and decorated by drawings of elements from the nature like fish and, palm trees (Higazy, n.d). The front of the house is painted with colorful geometric patterns. Most of the paintings and decorations on the homes have religious implication they also hang mummified fish and crocodiles and other animals on their doors so as to drive away evil spirit or protect them against the evil eye. The colorful designs are a distinctive and admired feature of Nubian culture.

A Nubian wedding ceremony often lasts for 40 days, with a long series of ceremonies. According to traditions; the groom has to present several gifts, particularly garments for the bride, her mother and sisters. During the wedding ceremony the groom is well-dressed, holding a sword and a belt. The social status of a Nubian is judged by the wealth

of land and waterwheels he owns, as well as his noble descent. Performance of prayers, for a Nubian, is evidence to his vividness and an object of pride to his tribe. A Nubian woman normally bears lots of jewelry, all over her body and adorns herself also with tattoos. The Nubian woman is known for her remarkable use of henna and perfumes (Nubian Traditions, n.d.).

## **Tourism as a tool of preservation of ethnic cultures**

Ethnic tourism brings a lot of positive results to local people; it also has a negative side as well ( Wu, 2000) .Tourism has proven to be one of the main industries in building the economy in many developing countries. Tourism has traditionally influenced the economic activity of ethnic groups in a wide variety of ways (Willett, 2007).Therefore tourism with its preserved, conserved and sustainable concept can help preserve the Nubian culture as well as develop the economy of these indigenous tribes that live in south of Egypt.

Modernization can be the cause of diminishing the art, handicrafts, housing, clothes, festivals, ceremonies and lifestyles. But with planned sustainable tourism we can implement measures for the conservation of indigenous Nubian culture through their appropriate utilization as tourist resources. Restricting the number of tourists entering the Nubian area to safeguard the identity of the people and prevent cultural conflict can be achieved through the small scale projects of tourism. Sustainable heritage conservation depends upon the commitment and involvement of local communities. It also needs to promote local community stewardship of the heritage as well as providing socio-economic benefits for local communities (Engelhardt and Lane, 2007). From an environmental and economic perspective, if local people are not involved, the resources on which tourism depends will be destroyed and the investment will be lost over time (Brandon, 1996).

## **Ethnic tourism planning approach**

Planning is a decision making process aimed to guide future actions and solve afterward problems. It is a dynamic process that determines goals, set systematic considerations, and alternative actions to achieve prospective goals. And since tourism is an industry with constant and rapid changes, tourism planning has moved from the narrow-minded and rigid concerns to more comprehensive, flexible, responsive, systematic and participatory approaches (Blowers, 1993). Tourism can serve as an

agent for socio-cultural development through creating better opportunities for local people, to gain and become a part in the tourism development in their localities. In this case the planning process should be shifted in the direction of preserving the cultural heritage. This plan should be incorporated within the overall development plan for Aswan governorate. Significantly, this part of the land is well gifted with natural resources. It possesses the natural beauty of unique landscape, archaeological sites, and distinctive historic and cultural background. It has been noted by the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) that communities located near major attraction sites, such as natural parks, reserves, archaeological and historic sites, should have the opportunity to participate in tourism. Since these communities can provide hotels, restaurants, shops for souvenirs, transportation and guide services as well as other tourist facilities and services.

One of the successful projects that were established during the last century for preserving the Nubian culture is the Nubian museum. The Museum was built on vertical cliff land and surrounded by Natural Botanical Garden that enables it to make a full scale design for the Nile River from its origins in Ethiopia and Sudan to Egypt. According to the Wikipedia (n.d) the total area of the museum is 50,000 square meters: 7,000 owed for the building, and 43,000 for the grounds. The architecture and design of the Museum and the enclosure walls are intended to induce traditional Nubian village architecture, as it was along the Nubian Nile before the region was flooded by Lake Nasser. The Nubian Museum is part of a wider policy of the Supreme Council of Antiquities. The museum contains three thousand items that was found in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) missions representing the history of the area from the prehistoric, Pharaonic, Roman, Coptic and Islamic ages, and also examples of the daily life and traditions of the Nubian people, who lost their homes for the continued progress and welfare of the Egyptian nation. The museum also plays the role of the 'community museum' through its education section, which organizes school trips around the museum itself and also to neighboring temples (Alamuddin, 2001). The educational department provides various activities for school children such as Pottery workshops, basketry, costume making of different periods represented in the museum, theatres performances in which the children can act small plays and Journal writing workshop that enables children to create a magazine relating their visit to the museum or on any other particular theme they are studying. More over Small exhibitions of the children's achievements are organized annually in the education department (Nubia museum, n.d).

The museum also hosts cultural events that are organized by the Ministry of Culture and recently organized by the Egyptian Opera House for the Nubian artists in the outdoor amphitheatre (Alamuddin, 2001).

## **METHODOLOGY**

A mixed methodology was used which incorporates both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Mixing these methods enabled us to collect more data and to reach specific conclusions through data analysis.

The methodology depended on:

- In-depth interviews with local people who live in some of Nubian villages.
- Questionnaires were formed and distributed for tourists to gather the data needed with regard reasons for visiting Nubian villages within our cultural tourists' programs and their satisfaction and assessment of the visit.

Field research was done through visiting a number of Nubian villages which still exist north of the Dam, interviewing some of the local people and observing their lifestyle. A survey of visitors to Nubian villages was conducted. Researcher was seeking the following information from the survey.

Socio-demographic information, plus general information about their visit, sources of information, reasons for visit, previous experience with ethnic tourism products in other countries and overall satisfaction with the Nubian experience.

## **RESULTS**

The sample of visitors was surveyed 600 tourists only 560 questionnaires were valid to analysis. The survey showed that most of the tourists visiting Nubian villages are in the age interval 25-34.

**Table 1. Respondent profile (Age & sex)**

	16-24	25-34	35-45	45+	Total
Male, n	21	126	49	77	273
Female, n	105	105	63	14	287
Total, n	126	231	112	91	560
Percentage	22.5	41.25	20	16.25	100

48.75% are males while 51.25% are females. 448(80%) of visitors are in groups, and 112 (20 %) are individuals. Domestic visitors are very

few compared to the international ones. Large number of the sample 495 (88.4%) was international visitors mostly from North America and Europe while 65 (11.6%) was domestic tourists, 258 (46.07%) of the sample had passed through this experience before, while this experience was the first experience for 302 (53.93%) of the sample. While 213(38.03%) of the sample knew about the experience from friends, 235(41.9%) of them knew about it from their own previous visit and 112(20%) from their tourist guide while none of them knew about it from the tour operators in their countries. The survey results were used to group tourists into four main groups as follows:

- Ethnic tourism connection group represents 213 tourists (38.03%)
- Passive cultural learning 145 tourists (25.89%)
- Ethnic products and activities 106 tourists (18.9%)
- Low ethnic interest 96 tourists (17.1%)

Factors which were used to determine different groups of ethnic tourists are the points of interest or reasons for visiting Nubian villages and participating in ethnic tourism attractions were:

- Interest in contact with ethnic people
- Interest in learning about ethnic cultures
- Participation in activities
- Interest in visiting Aboriginal communities in region

The largest group, the Ethnic Tourism Group (38.03%), is most interested in having personal contact with ethnic people and are likely participants in tourism tours which offer such opportunities. The Passive Cultural Learning Group (25.89%) is interested in ethnic tourism but prefers experiences that focus on cultural learning rather than personal contact. The Ethnic Products and Activities group (18.9%) are more interested in participating in traditional activities than in learning about ethnic cultures or having a personal contact with them. The Low Ethnic Tourism group (17.1%) are most likely to visit an indigenous tourism attraction as part of a tour or because someone else in their party wanted to visit.

However, all four groups showed a high to very high level of satisfaction in their visit to Nubian villages and were also interested in further ethnic tourism experiences. Even those with little interest in ethnic tourism products and personal contact with indigenous people reported having an authentic and pleasant experience. One reason for most visitors reporting a high level of satisfaction was due to the very authentic nature of the Nubian village.

### Mann-whitney test

This test was used to identify the if there is a difference in answers of the sample that depends on the sex of the individual or if the answers are affected by the individuals sex.

**Table 2.** Significant difference between the answers of males or females.

Mean Rank		Z	Sig. (P.Value)
Male	Female		
7.5	5.1	0.457	0.648

The above table (2) shows that P.value equals 0.648 which is greater than level of significance 5%, this means that there is no significant difference between the answers of males or females.

The same test was used to determine if there is a significant difference in the answers of the domestic and international tourists.

**Table 3.** Significant difference between the answers of domestic visitors and international visitors

Mean Rank		Z	Sig. (P.Value)
Domestic visitors	International visitors		
8.84	1.16	0.464-	0.048

As shown in table 3 P.Value equals (0.048 ) which is less than 5%. This means that there is a significant difference between the answers of the domestic and international tourists.

### Spearman's rho

This test was used to determine if there is a correlation between the Factors which were used to determine different groups of ethnic tourists which are the points of interest or reasons for visiting Nubian villages and tourist experience.

**Table 4.** Correlation between the factors which were used to determine different groups of ethnic tourists and visitor experience

Pearson Correlation Factor	P.Value
+ 0.821	0.021

As shown in the above table Pearson correlation factor equals (+0.821) which means that there is a strong positive correlation between the factors which were used to determine different groups of ethnic tourists and visitor experience (as one increases, the other also increases).

We can observe also that P.value equals (0.021) which is less than 5%, this means that there is a strong correlation between the above variables.

### Chi Square

This test was used to determine if there is a correlation between visitors in groups and different groups of ethnic tourists

**Table 5.** Correlation between visitors in groups and different groups of ethnic tourists

Pearson Chi Square	Sig. (P.Value)
.089	0.765

As shown in table 5 P.Value equals (0.765) which is more than 5%, this means that the two variables are independent and there is no correlation between them.

By interviewing some of the local people, they said that they mostly welcome the tourists to visit their villages and enter their houses. All family members participate in welcoming the guests in their houses in several ways. They prepare food and drinks for the tourists and sell traditional handicrafts for them. Some of the house owners have small crocodiles in their house kept in basins. These crocodiles get the attention and interest of the visitors. Tourist represents Dollars for them, as their income depends mainly on tourism. International tourists spend more per visit in the Nubian village than domestic tourists who are mainly students. One negative impact was detected during the visit which is the diminished role of the new, well educated generation in these traditional activities the matter that may threaten the sustainability of this type of tourism.

### CONCLUSION

Ethnic tourism is a tool of authenticity. Here the tourist departs from the traditional tourism type that sells programs away from experience, feelings and interaction. It enables the tourist to practice interpersonal and environmental relations immerse and taste the local culture and traditions of the local community. The Nubian community is one of

these cultures that attract the tourists very much due to its unique and distinct traditions and architecture. The study finds out that most of the tourists were interested in seeing the culture, traditions and way of life of such people in their local area. Although a large number of the tourists knew nothing about the Nubian Culture before coming to Egypt, they have different reasons for getting in contact with such people. All tourists showed a high level of satisfaction in their visit to Nubian villages and were also interested in further ethnic tourism experiences. Tourism brings a lot of positive results to local people; it also has a negative side as well. Modernization can be the cause of diminishing of art, handicrafts, housing, clothes, festivals, ceremonies and lifestyles. But with planned sustainable tourism we can succeed in the conservation of indigenous Nubian culture, through applying and increasing the role of the local people. Also we can stimulate the values, traditions and arts of the past to sustain them through time. From the field study we can conclude that there is no significant difference between the answers of males or females while there is a significant difference between the answers of the domestic and international tourists. We can conclude also that there is a strong centrifugal correlation between the factors which were used to determine different groups of ethnic tourists and visitor experience which means that the previous experience of the tourist plays a very important role in his commitment to ethnic tourism

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cooperation should be maintained between the governorate and the Egyptian Tourism Authority. Sustainability of ethnic communities can be achieved through the small scale projects of tourism. Through ethnic tourism we can increase the role of the local community residents especially the well educated new generations, by involving them in the tourism industry and the sustainable development of the area. They should also be provided socio-economic benefits to ensure their commitment. By time this will preserve the authenticity of traditions and lifestyle as well as enrich and enhance the feel of loyalty and nationalism. Also tourists from different nationalities will integrate through this culture to widen their knowledge and ability to interact with other nations.

### **Recommendations for the governorate**

- Ensure the involvement of the communities and their benefit out of tourism.

- Minority-made products and community-based businesses should be facilitated in order to give tourists an authentic experience and improve the economic gains for local communities
- Plan and develop the Nubian villages in a sustainable manner.
- Cultural resources in Nubian villages should be managed, protected and maintained for the benefit of all interested parties within the community.
- Limiting the number of tourists entering the Nubian villages to safeguard the identity of the people and prevent cultural conflict.
- Land use planning and development projects for tourism should include effective protection and sustainable utilization of cultural resources.
- Minimize negative and socio cultural interference of host communities.

### **Recommendations for the Egyptian Tourism Authority**

- Perform Press coverage and special campaigns to promote and highlight the Nubian traditions and events worldwide.
- Spread knowledge about local environment and cultural heritage through guides.
- Promote heritage conservation and environmental sustainability.

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