

**Evaluating sustainable tourism development of Gable El-Tair region
as one of the stations of the Holy Family path**

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Abstract

Egypt enjoys a number of tourist attractions that attract tourists from different parts of the world. These elements vary from historical, cultural and natural components that have made Egypt one of the most important Tourist destinations. the religious tourism is one of the most important attractions because Egypt contains religious sites which belongs to the three heavenly religions Jewish, Christianity and Islam. This research aims to shed light on the monastery of Al Adra Gable Eltair as one of the stations of the path of the Holy Family in Egypt. This research aims also to evaluate the role of tourism development and its aims in the region.

The study relied on the survey method, where a questionnaire was designed and distributed to officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Gable El-Tair monastery. Its final form included 29 questions. The findings of this study have many benefits that result from the application of sustainable tourism development on Gable El-Tair region, including the preservation of the tourism attraction, provide the best service to the visitor, preserving the environment. Finally, the study is recommended the necessity of applying sustainable tourism practices or activities with special attention to eco-tourism, in addition to creating job creation opportunities to residents in the region.

Key Words: Holy Family, Monastery of Gable El-Tair, Sustainable Tourism Development.

Introduction

Dair al-Adhra Gable El-Tair is considered one of important and most beautiful in Egypt. It is considered one of the important stations of the holy family after the El-Moharaq Monastery and the church of Abu Serga. The holy family came to Gable El-Tair on their flight to Egypt and lived in a cave inside the church for about 3 days. Recently it has been added by UNESCO as one of the stations of the path of the Holy Family in Egypt. The place is visited in the early summer months of each year by millions of both Christians and Muslims visitors from Egypt.

Problem of the Research

The problem of the study lies in the limited studies that dealt with the study of sustainable tourism development in the region of Gable El-Tair. The problem of the study is also focused on existence of deficiency in the efforts of sustainable tourism development in the region. This deficiency may affect negatively on the flow of the tourists to the region. Therefore, the research problem discussed in this study can be formulated in the following question:

Does the applying of the concept of sustainable tourism development in the Gable Al-Tair region affect positively on tourism sector by maintaining the region, creating new job opportunities and improving the standard of living of the local population? This will be discussed on research.

Questions of the Research

1. What is the importance of applying sustainable tourism development in the region of Gable El-Tair?
2. What are the requirements for applying sustainable tourism development in the region of Gable El-Tair?
3. What are the challenges and obstacles facing the applying of sustainable tourism development in the region?

Objective of the research

The objectives of the study are:

1. Identifying the tourism importance, location and history of the monastery of El Adra Gable El Tair.
2. Describing the architectural design of the church of the Virgin Mary in the monastery of El Adra Gable El Tair.
3. Highlighting the aims of sustainable tourism development in the region.

Significance of the research

The importance of the study stems from the fact that the monastery of Al-Adra Gabal El-Tair is considered one of the tourist destinations especially the site was recently included by the UNESCO as one of the station of the pilgrimage to the path of the Journey of the Holy Family in Egypt. The importance of the study also due to that the site is visited over the year by millions of visitors either from Egypt or from other countries, so this tourist flow plays a vital role in increasing the benefits and revenues.

Literature Review

Location of the Monastery

The monastery is located on the east bank of the Nile on the mountain of Gable El-Tair, a high mountain opposite the city of Samalout, about forty kilometers north of the Minia Governorate (Aziz, 1991).

For many centuries pilgrims would first travel to Bani Khalid, two kilometers south of Samalut, where a ferry crosses the Nile, then climb the 166 steps leading to the top of the cliff. The ferry and stairs are still there, but the government has built an eastern desert road from Cairo to Minia, a branch of which leads to Gabal al-Tayr. Most pilgrims now take the easier route by bus over the eastern desert road and do not cross the Nile anymore. The visitors also can reach the church by crossing the bridge of Minia to the east bank of the Nile then going north through the paved road which leads to the church. Dair al-Adhra was inhabited by monks until the middle of the 19th century (Mohamed, 1997).

The Names of the Site

There are several names associated with this site. Gabal al-Tayr can be translated as the "mountain of the birds", so called because thousands of birds known as "Albukirs" was gathering or rest in on the top of it. These migratory birds that escape the winter and cold Europe to warmth in winter and the Nile Valley in Egypt in this mountain. AlMaqrizi added that on the Holy day of the Convent, all the Bukir birds in Egypt Assemble there, and each in turn thrusts its peak into a cleft of the Rock, until one of them dies. For this Reason, the monastery is called the mountain of birds (Al-Sharqawi, 2010).

It is also called Gabal al-Kaff, meaning the "mountain of the hand". Tradition told us that while the holy family passing by this place in a small boat headed up river, the Holy Virgin noticed that an enormous rock coming loose from the mountain which was about to fall on the boat and its occupants. The child Jesus extended his hand, intervened and stopped the rock from falling on the boat. The shape of the hand remained imprinted on the rock (Bakheet, 2008). In 1168 AD while Amaury -the sovereign of Jerusalem- campaigning in Egypt, he regrettably cut the part of the rock imprinted with the palm of Jesus and took it with him to Syria (Meinardus, 1999). The Monastery is also sometimes known as the Monastery (or Convent) of the Pulley (Deir al-Bakara), because originally one entered the monastery from the base of the cliff up a crevice in the

rock by means of a pulley. The monastery and its church were dedicated to the Virgin Mary (Gabra et al, 2007).

The history of the church of the Virgin Mary

The church was built by the Empress Helana, mother of the Emperor Constantine (AD 306-377) in 328 A.D in memory of the passage of the Holy Family. A foundation tablet above the western entrance (fig.1) indicates that the first structure was completed in the year 328 A.D and restored by Severus, the bishop of Minya, in 1938 A.D. Dair al-Adhra' was inhabited by monks until the end of the 19th century, this fact was supported by many visitors who visited this place in the 19th Century (Aziz, 1991).

The Architectural Design of the church:

The church is carved entirely in the rock. It is built on the Basilican order consisting of a nave and two aisles with western return aisle and three sanctuaries (fig.1). Ten columns hewn from the rock separate the small side aisles and western return aisle. On the south side of the church, the baptismal font has been carved in a column. The area in front of the middle sanctuary, which is raised about one meter above the nave, serves as a Choir (Khurus). The lower part of the church (the walls and the benches along the north, west and south wall) as well as the columns are all hewn in the rock (fig. 2). The original entrance to the church was located above the cave. Now there are two entrances the first is located in the southern corner of the west wall the second in the eastern corner of the south wall (Al-Sharqawi, 2010).

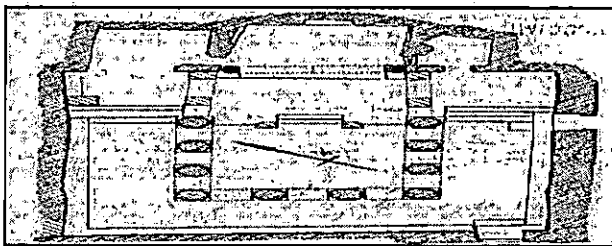


Fig1: the plan of the church of the Virgin Mary



Fig2: Interior view of the church

The choir is approached by a double flight of steps. Two columns with Corinthian capitals delineate this space. The central sanctuary is located behind an iconostasis, which was originally hewn from the rock. It was decorated with small pilasters and niches. The remains of the original iconostasis are placed above the western entrance of the church. The stone iconostasis was replaced by a wooden one. The modern wooden iconostasis is decorated with cross patterns. In the middle of the iconostasis there is a door leading to the central sanctuary (Khalaf, 2014). Above the iconostasis there are icons of the Virgin Mary and the apostles (fig. 3).

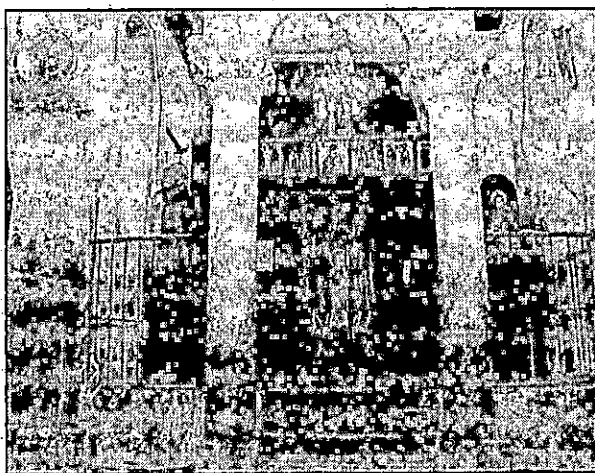


Fig3: The choir and the iconostasis of the church

The sanctuary is hewn in the rock with an altar in the middle. The cave in which the holy family rested is located to the south of the main sanctuary (fig. 4) (Fathi, 2016).



Fig4: The cave to the south of the sanctuary

Above the western entrance of the church there are friezes decorated with motifs drawn from the vegetal and animal realms. One of them shows seven human figures. Each figure is depicted inside a niche and holding a book in the left hand. These seven human figures probably represent seven apostles and were once a part of a larger composition, the rest of which is now lost (fig. 5)

Many restorations were taken place. The restoration work carried out in 1938 by Bishop Saverus intended to remove of the original stone roof in order to make the church taller so that a second level could be added. Extra rooms were added on the south and west sides.

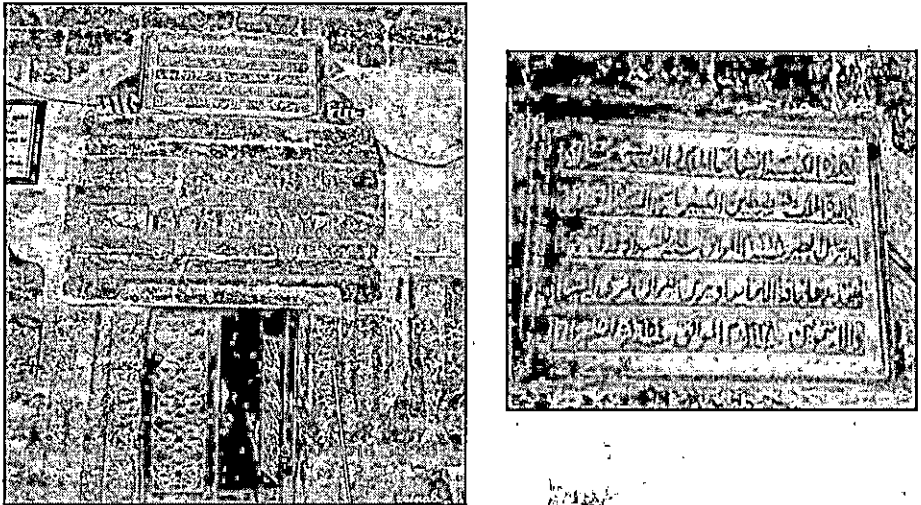


Fig5: The western entrance of the church and restoration tablet above it. The church contains a group of archaeological icons like the icons of the Virgin Mary, Saint George, saint Demiana and the fourteen virgins. These icons date back to the 19th AD. They were drawn by the artist Anastasy El-Romy (Al-Sharqawi, 2010).

The church attracts millions of visitors in the festivals held every year in the monastery. The first festival is held after the forty day of the Easter. Another festival is held in from the 7th of Augusts to 22 of the same month.

Sustainable tourism development of Gable El-Tair

Sustainable tourism is outlined as all forms of activities, management and development of tourism that preserve natural, economic and social integrity and guarantee maintenance of natural and cultural resources (Graci& Dodds, 2010), And it can determine as “Sustainable development

is one that meets the requires of the present generation without comprising the flexibility for future generations to fulfill their own needs” (Cooper et al, 2008).

This definition identifies basic principles of sustainability, such as

- Takes a holistic approach to planning and strategy.
- Protects the environment and artificial heritage.
- Preserves the essential ecological processes.
- Facilitates and engages public participation.
- Ensures that productivity can be sustained into the long-term future.

Sustainable tourism development needs the knowledgeable participation of all relevant stakeholders, as well as strong political leadership to make sure wide participation and accord building. Achieving sustainable tourism is a continuous method and it needs constant observation of impacts, introducing the necessary preventive corrective measures. Sustainable tourism ought to additionally maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and guarantee a important expertise to the tourists, raising their awareness about sustainability issues and promoting sustainable tourism practices (Page, 2011).

The main aim of making strategy of sustainable tourism for Gable El-Tair region is outlined as a rise of the number of tourists with the principles of sustainable development. This aim can be achieved by variety of specific objectives, such as:

1. Coordination of all parties interested in developing of tourism within the region.
2. Consideration of the interests of local communities and the environment in Gable El-Tair region.
3. Developing a vision, mission and marketing plan for Gable El-Tair region
4. Developing tools to assess progress in Gable El-Tair region.

Research Methodology

The researchers used the descriptive analytical approach, where a questionnaire was prepared and distributed to a random sample of forty (40) officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Gable El-Tair monastery. 35 (87.5%) of sample was retrieved. The statistical analysis of the responses was carried out via SPSS v25.

Data Collection

Data has been collected through questionnaires that were prepared in approach that is relevant to the situation so as to decrease invalid responses. They were distributed to officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Gable El-Tair monastery.

Measures

This research employed a method of descriptive analytical methodology by using a questionnaire tool, a survey consisted of nine sections is used as a data collection tool. The first section includes the officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Gable El-Tair monastery. The first section demographic characteristics. The second section included 7 variables representing requirements for tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate. The third section the obstacles to tourism development in the Gable El-Tair monastery of Minia Governorate included 12 items variables. The fourth section included 10 variables representing the tourism development proposals for the Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia Governorate. The questionnaire items were anchored according to the five point Likert Scale, "1 = Strongly Disagree (SD)", "2 = Disagree (D)", "3 = Neutral (N)", "4 = Agree (A)", and "5= Strongly Agree (SA)".

Data Validity and Reliability

Data Validity

To validate the data collection instrument utilized in this study in terms of its readability, format, and ability to measure the study's constructs; the researcher distributed the questionnaire instrument to a number of officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Gable El-Tair monastery. The questionnaire instrument was then updated and refined to reflect the comments and suggestions received by the domain experts. Moreover, the experts showed interest and interacted with the researcher concerning the questionnaire instrument which adds to its validity.

Data Reliability

The reliability of an instrument is the degree of accuracy and consistency with that it measures whatever it is measuring. Before proceeding with further analysis, the reliability testing was led in order to ensure consistent measurement across various items in the questionnaire. Indeed,

the reliability of a measure indicates stability and consistency of the instrument. Consequently, this method determines reliability through examining the internal consistency of the research instrument such as questions (items) in the questionnaire, which are normally presented. Cronbach's alpha coefficient measures this effect and ranges from 0 (no internal consistency) to 1 (maximum internal consistency). Reliability higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations.

As depicted in table (1), the Cronbach's Alpha Reliability was computed for three sections. The tests showed that the Reliability Coefficients for all the sections were equal 0.911 and Validity Coefficient for all the sections were equal 0.954 which indicates that the instrument is reliable for being used.

Table 1: Cronbach's Alpha Value for sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate

Variables	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha Value	Validity *Coefficient
Tourism development Requirements	7	0.896	0.947
Obstacles to tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery	12	0.868	0.932
Tourism development proposals for Gable El-Tair monastery	10	0.857	0.926
Total	29	0.911	0.954

* Validity coefficient = $\sqrt{\text{Reliability coefficient}}$

In order to measure the internal consistency and reliability of the study's constructs. Cronbach's Alpha (α) measure was used. The scales' reliabilities were measured and the Cronbach's Alpha, of all scales in Table (1) ranged from 0.857 to 0.896, and for total questionnaire items was (0.911), this indicate an acceptable Cronbach's Alpha value for each field, whenever Cronbach's Alpha value is acceptable if it's more than (0.7). It is also evident that the validity coefficient is (95.4%) which means the reliability and validity of the study sample.

Data Analysis

To achieve the objective of this study, the researchers used the descriptive analytical approach. The researcher depends on using The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to process data statistically. The treatment included the following statistical methods:

1. Frequencies, Percentages, Means, and Standard Deviation (SD): To describe the characteristics of the study population of the functional variables, and to determine the responses of its members towards the study axes.
2. Cronbach's Alpha Test: To calculate the stability coefficients of the questionnaire, and the coefficient of stability of each axis of the study axes.

Sample Characteristics

A total of 40 questionnaires were distributed to officials of Tourism management, officials of planning management in Minia Governorate, and staff of Jable El-Tair monastery. 35 (87.5%) of sample was retrieved.

Results and Discussion

The following part explains the results concerning the three dimensions representing sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate.

Descriptive analysis of sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate:

First Section: Demographic characteristics of respondents

Figure (6) indicates the discussion of the research findings begins with a brief demographic profile of respondents in terms of gender. 70% of the respondents were male whereas 30% of them were female.

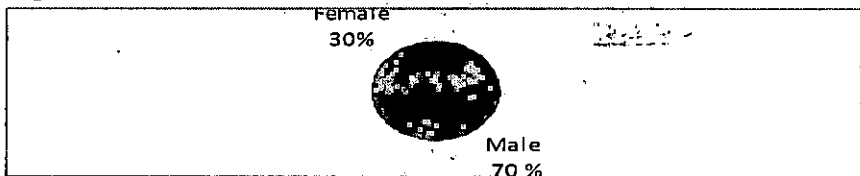


Fig 6: Gender

Figure (7) has shown the percentage of age group. Most of the respondents 44% were aged between 30 and 39 years, whereas 39% of them were aged between 40 and 49 years.

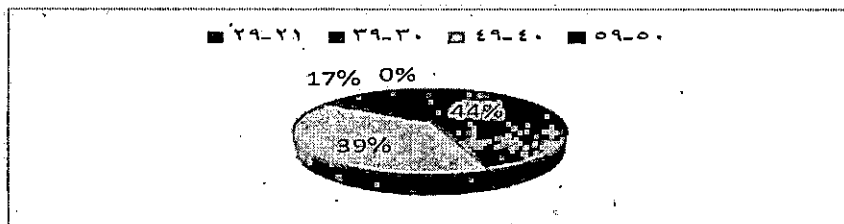


Fig 7: Age group

Figure (8) has illustrated the percentage of regarding the education level, 45% of the respondents were Bachelor degree, whereas 17% of them were Master degree, and PHD degree.

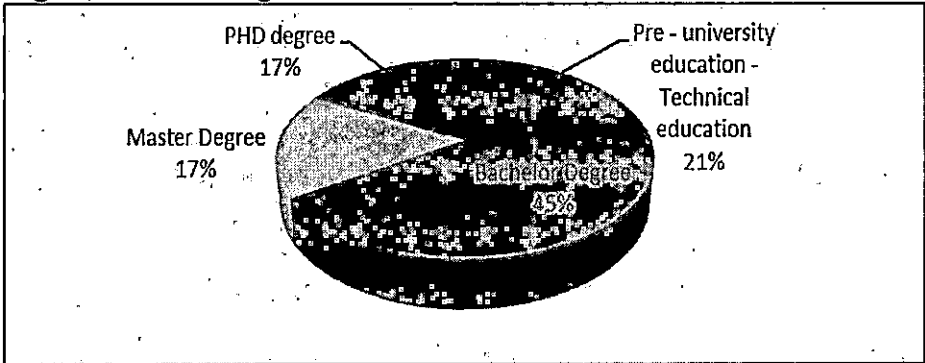


Fig 8: Education level

Figure (9) concerned about the years spent in current position and the majority (50%) of the sample spent round 5-10 years in the current position, whilst (33%) spent round 11-15 years, and (17%) spent round more than 15 years.

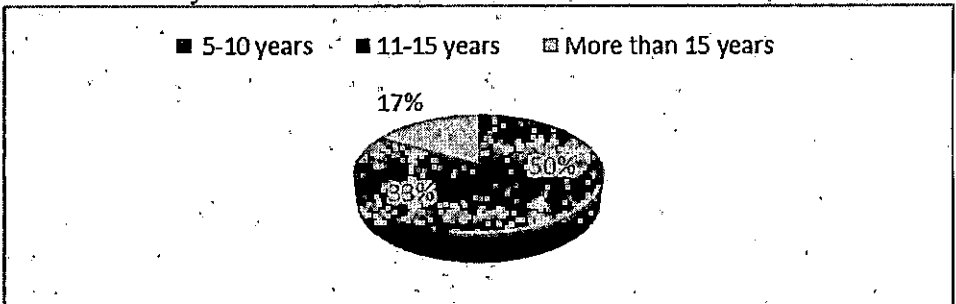


Fig 9: Current position

Figure (10) concerned about the years spent in Experience with the current position and the majority (50%) of the sample spent round 5-10 years in experience with the current position, whilst (35%) spent round 11-15 years in experience with the current position, and (15%) spent round more than 15 years.

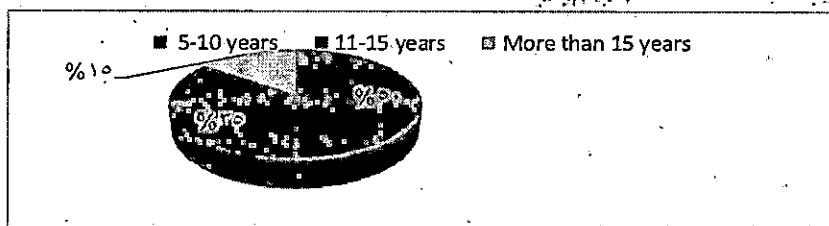


Fig 10: Experience with the current position

Table 2: requirements for sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	standard deviation
Paving the way to the monastery	2.9	2.9	0	51.4	42.9	4.29	0.860
Development, expansion and deepening of the marina	0	0	5.7	31.4	62.9	4.57	0.608
Place guide plates	0	2.9	2.9	42.9	51.4	4.41	0.698
Provision of water and sanitation services	0	0	5.7	31.4	62.9	4.55	0.610
Provision of electricity services	0	2.9	5.7	28.6	62.9	4.51	0.742
Provide breaks and cafeterias	0	0	8.6	40	51.4	4.43	0.655
Providing health units in place	0	0	8.6	42.9	48.6	4.40	0.651

The detailed examination of the results presented in Table (2) reveals the respondents' responses pertaining to requirements for sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate. The average score resulted with a mean of 4.45. This indicates that majority of the cases tend to mark on the middle of the scale on a 1 to 5 range. However, most of the items resulted with a slightly higher mean than 4 indicating the agreeableness of the respondents on those items, as imperative for requirements for sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia governorate. The highest mean values for sustainable tourism development Requirements emerged for the item "Development, expansion and deepening of the marina" (mean = 4.57, standard deviation =0.608), followed by "Provision of water and sanitation services"(mean = 4.55, standard deviation =0.610), whereas, the

lowest mean value for this construct is for "Paving the way to the monastery" (mean = 4.29, standard deviation =0.860) followed by "Providing health units in place" (mean = 4.40, standard deviation =0.651).

Table 3: The obstacles to sustainable tourism development in the Gable El-Tair monastery of Minia Governorate

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	standard deviation
There is no tourist guide in the monastery.	5.7	22.9	11.4	40	20	3.46	1.221
Human resources are not qualified to work in the place.	2.9	20	22.9	42.9	11.4	3.40	1.035
Lack of tourism awareness among the local population in the region	2.9	14.3	20	42.9	20	3.63	1.060
The lack of partnership between the government sector, the private sector and the community in the development plans for the region.	2.9	8.6	8.6	31.4	48.6	4.14	1.089
The administrative procedures for the development of the region are complicated.	5.7	0	14.3	37.1	42.9	4.11	1.051
Weak budgets for the development of the region.	8.6	8.6	17.1	31.4	34.3	3.74	1.268
Plurality of responsible bodies (Ministry of Tourism-Ministry of State of Antiquities- Minia Governorate- church)	2.9	17.1	8.6	31.4	40	3.89	1.207
There are no large spaces suitable for the establishment of tourism projects.	11.4	25.7	17.1	34.3	11.4	3.09	1.245
The presence of cemeteries that distort the visual environment of the place.	5.7	11.4	5.7	34.3	42.9	3.97	1.224
Do not provide job opportunities for a large segment of the community.	2.9	11.4	14.3	34.3	37.1	3.91	1.121
There is no comprehensive marketing plan for the region.	2.9	5.7	20	31.4	40	4.00	1.057
Inadequate facilities and services for tourists.	2.9	11.4	8.6	45.7	31.4	3.99	1.067

Table (3) presents the means and standard deviations of obstacles to sustainable tourism development in the Gable El-Tair monastery of Minia Governorate, where the means ranged between (4.14-3.09), compared with the total instrument mean for the domain (3.78) the item "The lack of partnership between the government sector, the private sector and the community in the development plans for the region" ranked first with a mean and standard deviation (mean=4.14, standard deviation = 1.089) compared with the total instrument mean and the standard deviation. The item "There are no large spaces suitable for the establishment of tourism projects." ranked last reached a mean (3.09) and the standard deviation was (1.245) compared with the mean and standard deviation of the total instrument.

Table 4: sustainable tourism development proposals for the Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia Governorate

Variables	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean	standard deviation
Spreading tourism awareness to the local community.	0	0	5.7	60	34.3	4.29	0.572
Encourage community participation in the development of the region.	0	2.9	5.7	62.9	28.6	4.17	0.664
To develop the pattern of ecotourism and environmental conservation.	0	2.9	8.6	51.4	37.1	4.23	0.731
Non-exploitation of tourists.	0	0	5.7	45.7	48.6	4.40	0.608
Attention to the environmental development of the place such as recycling of waste and interest in a forestation.	0	0	5.7	37.1	57.1	4.51	0.612
The development of the River Marina.	0	0	2.9	45.7	51.4	4.47	0.562
Development of the ladder leading to the monastery.	0	0	0	45.7	54.3	4.54	0.505
E-Marketing of the region.	0	0	0	37.1	60	4.57	0.558
Take advantage of the role of the media in raising awareness of the culture and cultural heritage of Deir Gable El-Tair	0	0	2.9	51.4	48.6	4.49	0.507
Raising the aesthetic and architectural value of the buildings surrounding the monastery	0	0	0	57.1	42.9	4.43	0.502

Table (4) presents the means and standard deviations of sustainable tourism development proposals for the Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia Governorate, where the means ranged between (4.57- 4.17), compared with the total instrument mean for the domain (4.41) the item "E-Marketing of the region" ranked first with a mean and standard deviation (mean=4.57, standard deviation = 0.558) compared with the total instrument mean and the standard deviation. The item "Encourage community participation in the development of the region." ranked last reached a mean (4.17) and the standard deviation was (0.664) compared with the mean and standard deviation of the total instrument.

Conclusion and Recommendation:

The present study examines the role of sustainable tourism development and its aims in Gable El-Tair monastery in Minia Governorate; also it shows the requirements for sustainable tourism development in Gable El-Tair monastery. The study shows that "Development, expansion and deepening of the marina" the most important requirement for sustainable tourism development requirements, followed by "Provision of water and sanitation services".

The results of field study show that there are many obstacles to sustainable tourism development in the Gable El-Tair monastery like the lack of partnership between the government sector, the private sector and the community in the development plans for the region, weak budgets for the development of the region and there are no large spaces suitable for the establishment of tourism projects. So the results lead to some recommendation that can be summarized in the following:

1. The necessity of applying sustainable tourism practices or activities with special attention to eco-tourism; in addition to creating job creation opportunities to residents in the region.
2. Holding training courses to educate and train workers, youth and poor families in the region.
3. Encourage participation between the private sector, staff of tourism administration in the governorate and members of local community, coordination the different roles of each and creating economic ties and working together.
4. Diversification of tourism services in the region and attention to aesthetics aspects by using the cultural heritage of the region.
5. The need for observation and disposal of sources of environmental pollution in the region.
6. Maintaining the existing architectural elements, decorative and aesthetic components, in addition to performing the works of maintenance and restoration by specialists and experienced.

7. Transferring tombs from the area adjacent to the archaeological church to a new area far from the perimeter of the Church.
8. Improving the infrastructure and superstructure for the region.
9. Paying attention to the E-marketing of the region.

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تقييم التنمية السياحية المستدامة لمنطقة جبل الطير كأحد محطات مسار العائلة المقدسة

الملخص باللغة العربية

تتمتع مصر بالعديد من المعالم السياحية التي تجذب السياح من مختلف أنحاء العالم، تختلف هذه العناصر من المكونات التاريخية والثقافية والطبيعية التي جعلت مصر واحدة من أهم الوجهات السياحية. السياحة الدينية هي واحدة من أهم مناطق الجذب لأن مصر تحتوي على مواقع دينية تنتمي إلى الديانات السماوية الثلاث اليهودية والمسيحية والإسلام. يهدف هذا البحث إلى إلقاء الضوء على دير العدرا جبل الطير كأحد محطات مسار العائلة المقدسة في مصر. يهدف هذا البحث أيضًا إلى تقييم دور التنمية السياحية وأهدافها في المنطقة. وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على طريقة المسح، حيث تم تصميم استبيان وتوزيعه على مسؤولي إدارة السياحة، ومسؤولي إدارة التخطيط في محافظة المنيا، والعاملين بدير جبل الطير. تضمن الاستبيان في شكله النهائي ٢٩ سؤال، النتائج التي توصلت إليها هذه الدراسة لها فوائد عديدة ناتجة عن تطبيق التنمية السياحية المستدامة في منطقة جبل الطير منها الحفاظ على الجذب السياحي، وتوفير أفضل خدمة للزائرين، والحفاظ على البيئة. أخيرًا، أوصت الدراسة بضرورة تطبيق ممارسات أو أنشطة السياحة المستدامة مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص للسياحة البيئية، بالإضافة إلى خلق فرص عمل للمقيمين في المنطقة.

الكلمات الدالة: العائلة المقدسة، جبل الطير، التنمية السياحية المستدامة.