

The Effects of Tourism Development on the Local Community of Rural Ethnic Minorities in an Islamic Society  
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學位論文要旨  
**Summary**

Tourism in Egypt has a long history. Starting from the 1880s, Cook & Son Company promoted Egypt as a tourist destination. Since that time, destinations like the Nile River have become a favourite winter resort for Westerners. For several decades, the Nile River was the only attraction promoted to tourists, encouraging them to visit the ancient wonders that Egypt has to offer. The Egyptian government recognised the importance of tourism for the national economy and started developing new destinations. Egypt's open-door economic policy [Infitāh] introduced in 1981, helped establish new tourism destinations along the Mediterranean coast, Upper Egypt, the Red Sea, Sinai, and the Western desert. It was around this time that the Egyptian government sought to diversify its tourism destinations to contribute to the enhancement of economic growth and employment opportunities. Siwa Oasis in the Western desert was one of those destinations and has consequently been opened to tourism for the last two decades.

Interest in the world's heritage is steadily increasing, whether in remote islands, rural communities, historical or nature-based sites. Heritage can be used by people to outline their identity and values and, therefore, as a way to cope with today's rapid socio-economic changes. The main aim of tourism development in Egypt is to enhance the living standards of the Egyptian people; yet, the government has only focused on issues such as increasing income, creating new jobs, and maximizing foreign exchange earnings. Emerging research has identified negative impacts of tourism development on local communities; for instance, not prioritising local culture as a tourism resource or enhancing community engagement in the tourism development process as a tool for sustainability. Balancing economic benefits and maintaining the heritage values in ethnic

minority community is a challenge. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand the impact of tourism on an ethnic minority community—

the Siwa oasis in Egypt. The main research question to be explored is: “what are the effects of tourism development on local culture of an ethnic minority community and the local perceptions of lifestyle changes?”

Tourism development can help to achieve economic benefits for minority communities, but it can also lead to unfair situations and even long-term disempowerment. The danger of a top-down development policy is that the government relies on outside investors leading the tourism development which could result in lack of local benefits or, even worse, local disempowerment. This study investigated the meaning of development to ethnic minority communities under a top-down government policy.

A qualitative approach was employed to explore the impact of tourism development among the community. The research phase began with a secondary data collection based on the research questions and identified Egypt’s tourism development policy introducing tourism to new destinations and minority rights, as well as women’s empowerment strategies. Semi structured interviews were carried out with key community members in Siwa oasis. Visits were made in May 2017 and November 2019, during which observation and interviews were conducted.

The study found that the Egyptian government neglected the intangible culture heritage of the Siwan, which limited Siwan participation in tourism. Although there were some economic benefits, Siwan were dissatisfied with “tourism development” as their needs were neglected. The limited participation of the Siwan in the tourism development process and the neglecting of their culture also affected women’s participation. A fundamental problem associated with the ignorance of “minority” rights and identity is the failure of tourism development to benefit them.

The implementation of a hegemonic tourism development plan that did not include the minority community's needs and thus the "development", resulted in lack of local empowerment, hindering any community benefits and opportunities. The government promoted tourism in Siwa Oasis as a place for camping, safari, and visiting ancient Egyptian heritage site, without recognising the importance of integrating the Siwan cultural heritage in tourism development. Therefore, Siwan fear losing their identity and control which has led them to persist in their traditional social systems which impose heavily on women to pass on the Siwi language and their traditions to the next generation.

Women's psychological empowerment could be supported, if acknowledgment is made that the Siwan women play an important role in their community as the keepers and carriers of cultural knowledge. However, traditional gender roles that are often criticised as out-dated and discriminatory remain. As men are the disproportionate holders of power in the status quo, engaging them in discussions of gender equality and development is an important indicator of the success of a gender equality agenda. Therefore, the research investigated the impact of tourism on men's perception of gender roles. The findings show that tourism development in the Siwa Oasis has not significantly affected men's perception of gender roles. The men were keen to protect basic features of traditional gender roles such as being the primary breadwinner and the guardian of his family. However, due to domestic tourism working mobilities, Siwan women were negotiating for more agency.

This dissertation underscores the complexity of empowerment in Islamic society. The findings suggest that the Egyptian government should utilise the intangible cultural heritage of minority communities as a tourist attraction by relying on local people's knowledge rather than outside investors to promote the oasis. Accordingly, Siwan people should be involved in decision-

making, which itself is a step forward in empowerment. In terms of empowerment, women should have chances to participate in the tourism development process. While women's involvement in tourism in rural community might be a challenge, by utilising intangible cultural heritage as a tourist attraction controlled by local people, women could be employed as they are considered knowledgeable professionals in this area. Thus, culturally specific approaches towards development are essential for tourism to be an empowering force for local, especially rural, communities.