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Possibilities of cultural tourism development in Sudan, through events and Attractions covering the most recognizable elements of heritage and identity (Survey study on Sudan tourism)

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ABSTRACTAs Africa's third-largest country (1.861.484 square kilometres), 37 million people and 3 remarkable listed sites on the UNESCO world heritage sites combined with 19 major ethnic groups and over 597 ethnic subgroups speaking more than 100 languages and dialects. These multifaceted ethnic divisions make Sudan a very diverse country, with each ethnic group having a unique culture of its own and lifestyle, all this element of tangible and intangible cultural assets can make the country one of the world best cultural tourism destination, Although the country travel and tourism infrastructure is in need of serious investments and improvement, that's reflected one low contribution to the total GDP (2018 4.6% (USD2, 305.8mn)[1] and the low arrival rate 700.000 tourist in 2018. the researcher hypothesis is by promoting Sudan as cultural tourism destination to the world it will lead to a positive impact on the current tourism sector, In this way, it protects and strengthens the cultural identity, values, lifestyle, and economy of local communities as well as providing new experience for the tourist .as a form of sustainable tourism cultural tourism contribute to 39% [2] of all international tourism arrivals. to test this hypothesis the researcher conducted primary research. Hybrid methodological strategy has been used, combining quantitative and qualitative methods, the survey questioner covered 1285 Sudanese and 156 non-Sudanese beside an official interview. Collected data have shown that the vast majority of the non-Sudanese who participated in the study are willing to visit Sudan and experience the local culture, the data also shown local people ambitions to be a destination for cultural tourism and willing to share their cutler with others.

KEYWORDS: Sudan tourism, Cultural tourism, Tourism, Heritage, Sustainable development.

I. INTRODUCTION

As Africa third largest country (1.861.484 square kilometers), 37 million people and 3 remarkable listed sites on the UNESCO world heritage sites (Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe, Gebel Barkal and the Sites of the Napatan Region and Sanganeb Marine National Park and Dungenab Bay – Mukkawar Island Marine National Park) [3] Sudan comes with wide range of activities and tourist sites, a country which offers everything from tours of the Nile and virgin rainforests to wildlife safaris and 9 big game parks There is also the possibility to go diving in the Red Sea and visit important archaeological sites in the north of Sudan. In addition, the huge territory of Sudan and incredible diversity of its landscape mean that there is a wealth of scenery, including the rolling desert dunes of the north and the lush rainforests on its southern borders as Africa's third largest country is also its most diverse in the region. From a cultural perspective, the Sudanese population consists of a large cultural diversity which is made up of a combination of original inhabitants of the Nile Valley and migrants from the Arab peninsula. There are 19 major ethnic groups and over 597 ethnic subgroups speaking more than 100 languages and dialects. These multifaceted ethnic divisions make Sudan a very diverse country, with each ethnic group having a unique culture of its own and lifestyle. With rich cultural elements within every ethnic group, traditions like weeding in the northern part of Sudan (Arab speaking Muslims are considered the largest single ethnic group at about 70% of the total population), is quite rich and unique from others in the world, with the braid preparation stage that's start at least a month before the big day, the ceremony of making

traditional perfumes and beauty products to the henna night before the wedding day. All this ritual and tradition brings great experience for culture tourists as a form of the local cultural intangible assets.

Despite all the relative advantages that qualify Sudan to become one of the most attractive tourism destinations in the world, the Sudanese tourism sector is facing critical situations, according to the world travel & tourism council statistics The direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was SDD15,541.5mn (USD2,351.3mn), 2.3% of total GDP in 2017 and is forecast to rise by 4.0% in 2018, and to rise by 3.8% pa, from 2018-2028, to SDD23,373.1mn (USD3,536.1mn), 2.3% of total GDP in 2028, which consider as below the World Average of contribution (USD 21.5 mn)[1].

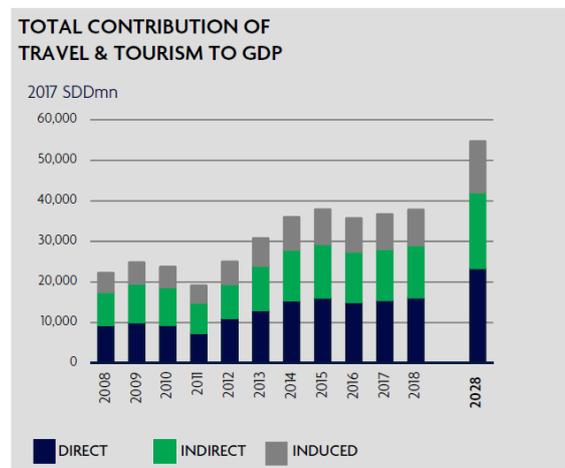


Figure 1 TOTAL CONTRIBUTION OF TRAVEL AND TOURISM TO GDP IN SUDAN

The travel and tourism infrastructure in Sudan is in need of investment. There is a severe branding problem after years of armed conflicts in the country, a shortage of hotels, particularly outside the capital Khartoum, with many key tourist attractions completely lacking suitable accommodation in close proximity. Many of the country's historical monuments are in need of restoration, while the lack of guides and trained staff to assist visitors is another issue. Whilst roads and access to remote parts of the country have improved in recent years, largely as a result of overseas aid and the activities of private developers, facilities for visitors also need to be established or upgraded. Sudan faces competition for inbound tourists types from many of its neighbors and it will continue to lose out on potential long-term travel and tourism revenues until conditions in the country improve for inbound tourists. Meanwhile, there is a growing type of tourism account for over 39% of all international tourism arrivals[4], that's doesn't require high investment on infrastructure or luxurious hotels instead its focus on the cultural Aspects of the travel experience, it's called cultural tourism. It is a type of tourism activity in which the visitor's essential motivation is to learn, discover, experience and consume the tangible and intangible cultural attractions/products in a tourism destination [5]. These attractions/products relate to a set of distinctive material, intellectual, spiritual and emotional features of a society that encompasses arts and architecture, historical and cultural heritage, culinary heritage, literature, music, creative industries and the living cultures with their lifestyles, value systems, beliefs and traditions. It emphasizes experiencing life within a foreign culture, rather than from the outside as a temporary visitor[2]. Cultural travelers leave their home environment at home, bringing only themselves and a desire to become part of the culture they visit. Cultural travel goes beyond cultural exploration or discovery; it involves a transformation in way of life.

The significance of the cultural tourism is recently brought into focus by a UNWTO Report on Tourism and Culture Synergies (2018), which included online surveys covering 43% of UNWTO Member States as well as 61 international experts and academics in the field[4]. This study confirmed the importance of the cultural tourism, with 89% of national tourism administrations indicating that cultural tourism was part of their tourism policy. The respondents also indicated that they expected further growth in cultural tourism in the following five years.

The research hypothesis was Sudan is capable to be one of the world best destination of cultural tourism due to the large cultural diversity and both tangible and intangible assets of the local culture and the Concrete possibilities of the development of cultural and creative tourism through events and attractions covering the most recognizable elements of heritage and identity of the local Sudanese people.



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To test the hypothesis the researcher conducted a primary research in Khartoum city the national capital of Sudan, Dongola city in the northern part of Sudan and senar city in the southern part of Sudan, in order to collect information for the situation analysis and strategic planning of cultural tourism, a hybrid methodological strategy was applied combining quantitative and qualitative methods, a survey questioner were published covering the local Sudanese and the non-Sudanese potential victors ,as well as an interview of official from the local tourism administration in Dongola city.

The main objective of my research has been to explore the possibility and capability of Sudan to adopted culture tourism approach as one of the main tourism attraction in the country. And to assess the key stakeholders' (local and tourist) perceptions and perspectives of Sudan as a cultural tourism destination and to define the key elements of its cultural identity, which makes Sudan unique and recognizable in the perception of its guests and residents.

II.THE METHODOLOGY

Following the literature review a case-study approach was used to allow a deeper insight into the current situation of the tourism industry in Sudan as well as acknowledging the people (Sudanese and non-Sudanese) awareness of the research topic .since there was no previous studies on cultural tourism in Sudan a mix exploratory study of quantitative and qualitative approach was employed to gain a detailed understanding of the current situation.Both survey questioners and interviews was used as the main research approach methodology of this study. The design of the questionnaires was based on ethnographic research principles therefore the researcher designed two independent questioners targeted two main groups, the first targeted group of people were the Sudanese people (includes local and immigrants) and the second targeted group of people was the non-Sudanese (includes the international community in Sudan as well as general non-Sudanese who's not living in Sudan).to ensure maximum distribution and completely converged of the targeted groups the researcher adopted an online questioner methodology through social media platforms (Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, and WeChat) as the online survey can provide several advantages including Easy to use for participants, Reach & scalability and Anonymity.

III.THE QUANTITATIVE APPROACH

A. THE PROCESS

As the evidence on research into question design suggested the survey questions should be constructed to be as clear, simple, specific and relevant for the study's research aims as possible. This serves two purposes. Firs it facilitates comprehension of the questions by the respondents. Second it assists in keeping questionnaires to a manageable length as, for every question, it should be specified how the information gained will be used to test a hypothesis or contribute to answering the research question. Therefore the researcher planed the survey into two stages the first stage was publishing the first questioner that targeted the first group, the Sudanese people (including locals and immigrants) .the questioner contented 15 questions designed to measure the public awareness on tourism and the tendency to participate in a future project aims to promote the Sudanese tourism.

followed the first stage The second stage aimed to targeted the second group ,the non-Sudanese (includes the international community in Sudan as well as general non-Sudanese who's not living in Sudan) the second questioner contented 13 questions designed to measure the public awareness about Sudan and the tendency to participate in a future project aims to promote the Sudanese tourism.Despite the researcher's doubts about reaching wide participants, the researcher was able to receive a total number of 1441 responses (1285 responses from the first group and 156 from the second group)

B. DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

- Descriptive statistics

Are used to describe the basic features of the data in the study. Together with simple graphics analysis, they form the basis of virtually every quantitative analysis of data.

- Inferential statistics

With inferential statistics, the researcher was trying to reach conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data alone and to make inferences from thedata to more general conditions.

C. THE SUDANESE CULTURAL TOURISM (THE FIRST QUESTIONER)

- **target audience:**the local community in Sudan / Sudanese abroad
- **The aim of this questionnaire:**to examine the tourism awareness in the Sudanese people as well as the degree of selling to be open to share their culture with others.

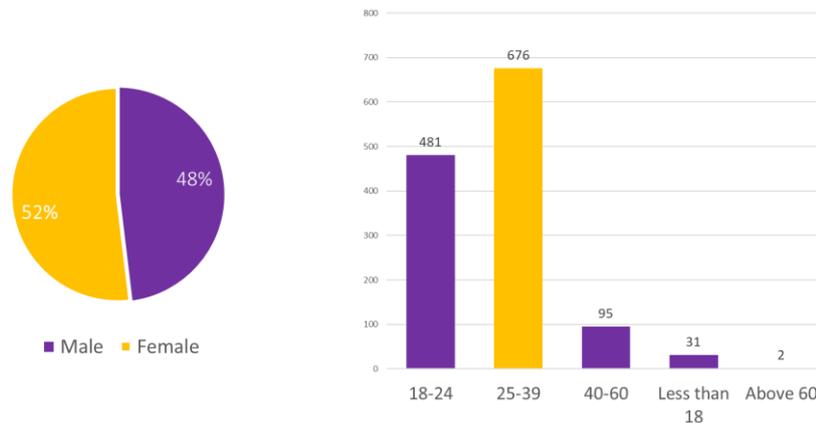


Figure 2 the demographic information

- **degree of participation:** 1287

The first figure shows the majority of the responses were belong to the youth segment ranked between the age of 25-39 followed by the young-teen group between the age of 18-24 (fig 2), with higher education level (fig 3) shows 67% was a degree holder and 30% were higher degrees holders which reflects the educational and the cultural level of first targeted group.

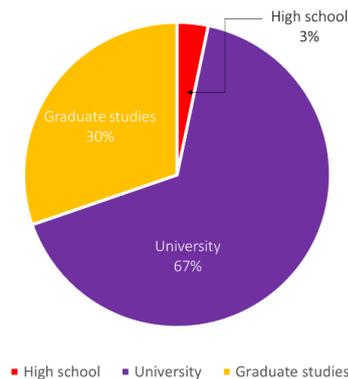


Figure 3the educational and the cultural level

2- The Tourism Awareness

Following the general demographic questions the participants were asked about the impact of tourism and where is if it can improve the current Sudanese economy, 99% of the participants agreed on the importance of tourism in general, at the same time the data clearly shown that 83% of the participants believe on the positive impact of tourism in the Sudanese economy.

3-How Much Do You Think The World Knows About The History Of Sudan?

The bar chart below shows that 51% of the Sudanese who participated on the questioner think the world knows very little about the history of Sudan (653 responses) .and only 2% of the participants think that the world knows more than enough about the history of Sudan (30 responses). This result reflected the need of the Sudanese people to feel recognized by the world.

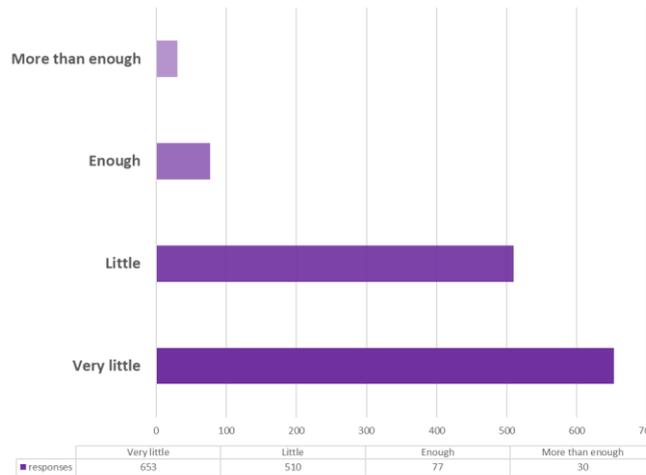


Figure 4 the world knowledge about Sudan

4- Do You Think The Sudanese Culture Is Worth Being Known Worldwide Like the Indian And Chinese Culture?

Followed the previous question about the popularity of the Sudanese history among non-Sudanese, the participants were asked if their culture was worth being known worldwide like other famous cultures, 96% of the participants chose yes and 4% of the participants chose no

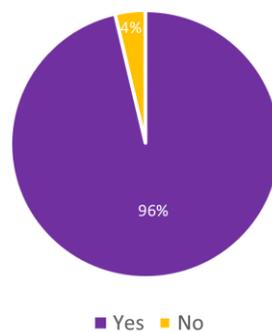


Figure 5 the eligibility for worldwide recognition

5-The Term Cultural Tourism Means Travelling And Engaging Closely With A Strange Community In Order To Learn New Cultures And Different World View, Do You Think The Cultural Travelers Will Enjoy The Sudanese Experience?

The survey shows that 80% (1030 participants) of the Sudanese think that the travelers will enjoy the Sudanese culture, and 19% of the Sudanese chose maybe as an answer.

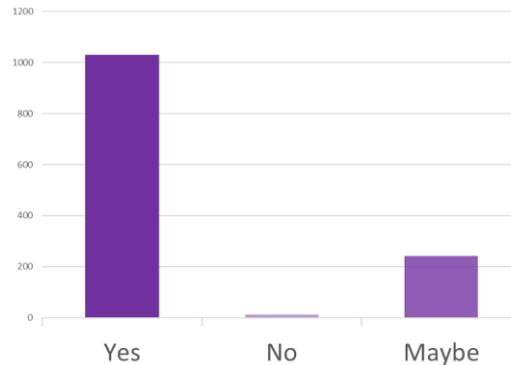


Figure 6 the possibility of the Sudanese culture been liked by tourists

6- If There Is An Investment Project Aimed At Promoting Sudanese Culture For The Cultural Tourists From Around The World, Would You Like To Take A Part Of This Project As A Local Tourist Guide (With A Financial Return)?

78% of the participants Saied yes, and 22% of the participants Saied no that shows that the majority of young Sudanese people are willing to take apart on future projects that aimed to promote the Sudanese culture.

7-If Your Answer Is Yes, What Aspects Would You Like To Improve The Most As A Local Guide?

44% of the participants want to gain more information about their history, 32% want to improve their English language for better communication between them and the tourists. The result shows the people interest in improving their communication and academic skills.

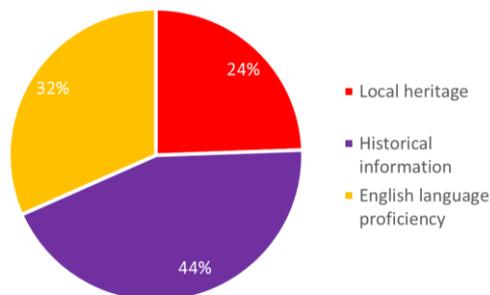


Figure 7 areas of personal improvements

8- What Is The Most Aspect Of The Local Culture That You Like To Present To The Tourists?

As can be seen from the figure below 395 participants were like to show their archeological areas to the tourists followed by their willing for sharing traditional events (317 participants)

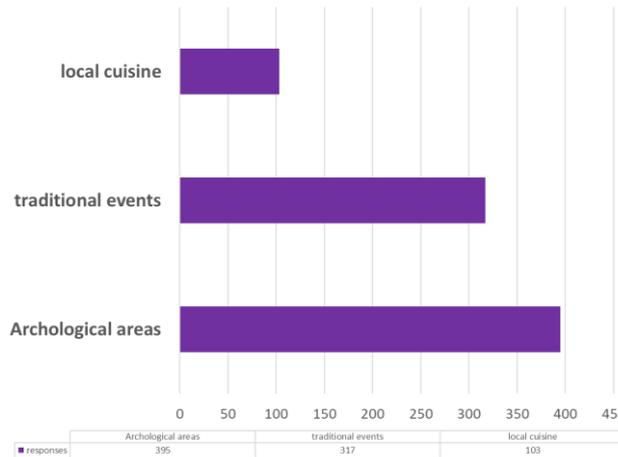


Figure 8 aspects to share with tourist

9-If The Arranged Tourist Program Allows The Tourist To Take Part In Voluntary Work In Your City, What Are The Most Areas That Need Support And Assistance? Education, Health, Other.

412 participants chose healthcare as a sector that can receive help from the tourist when vesting their cities as well as the education sector (407 participants)

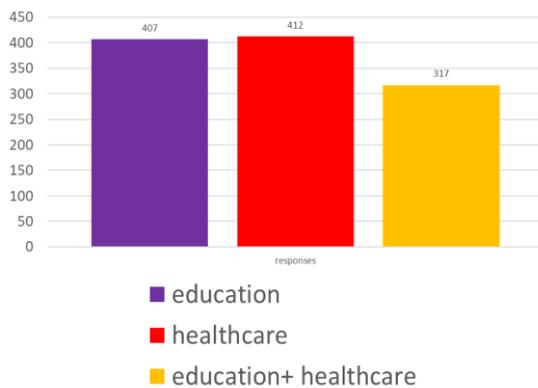


Figure 9 arise for improvement within the community

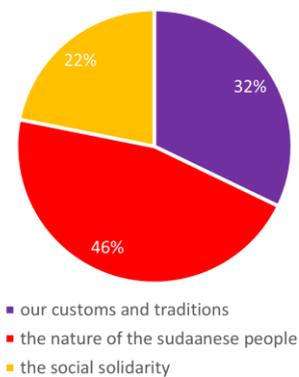


Figure 10 factors that makes the Sudanese culture special

10- Do You Think That Growing Up In The Sudanese Culture Makes You Special? Yes, Maybe Not.

79% of the participants think growing up in Sudan gave them a feeling of special identity.

11-If Yes, Why Do You Think Your Culture Is Special? Multiple Options. (Our Customs& Traditions, the Nature of the Sudanese People, the Social Solidarity)

46% of the participants chose the nature of the Sudanese people as the main reason that’s making their culture special (fig 10), combined with 32% of the participants who also believes their customs and traditions contribute to their sense of specialty. According to this finding, it’s clear that’s the majority of the participants are entangled with high cultural stock and traditions background.

D. THE SUDANESE CULTURAL TOURISM (THE SECOND QUESTIONER)

- **target audience:** non-Sudanese (includes the international community in Sudan as well as general non-Sudanese who’s not living in Sudan)

- **the aim of this questionnaire** :to measure the degree of the non-Sudanese awareness about the Sudanese culture, Perception of Sudan, tendency to learn other culture, Needs and concern
- **degree of participation:**156 responses

Age and gender

The first figure shows the majority of the responses were belong to the youth segment between the ages of 25-39 followed by the young-teen group between the ages of 18-24, with higher participation level from the male segment 56%

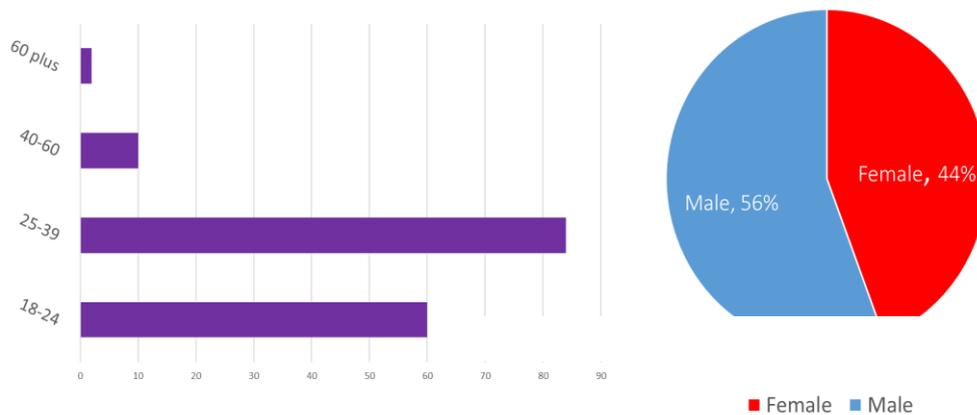


Figure 11 group 2 demographic information

What continent do you belong to?

As the figure below shows 38% of the participants are Asian followed by 34% are African and 20% are European

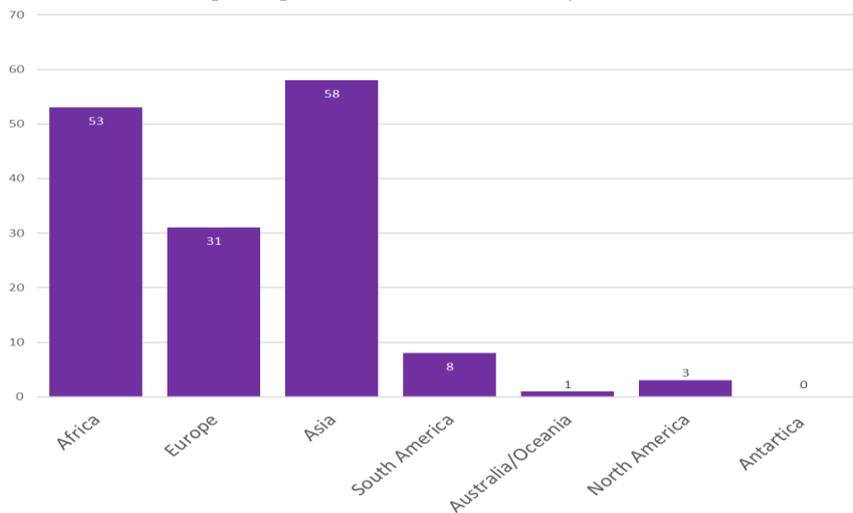


Figure 10 group 2 regions

1- Have You Been To Sudan Before? Yes, No

The results show that 88% of the participants never visited Sudan before, 12% of the participants said they visited Sudan

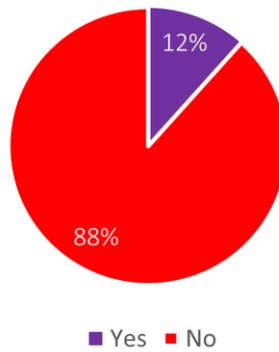


Figure 11 visiting Sudan

before.

2- If YES how do you describe your experience with the locals?

Here are some of the response from the participants expressing their feedback about their visit to Sudan

- The people are nice and loving. Sudanese people are like one big family. Everyone is treated as if they are relatives.
- Friendly
- It was a great experience, unique culture and they are kind people.
- They are very nice and humble
- Friendly and cooperative people but with some corrupted people.
- Very nice people and very bad government
- Great
- Good people
- It was a great experience they are very kind people.
- Very kind, polite, friendly, welcoming, hospitable.
- Nice trip
- Gentle and sweet heart.
- Very hospitable and the world should envy and learn and practice from Sudanese

The feedbacks reflect the positive impression of the participants who visited Sudan before about the Sudanese people and the local culture, which supports the researcher's hypotheses of promoting the local culture as a main tourist attraction, as well as some of the negative impression about the current service system and the official transactions.

3- Do You Know Sudan Has 3 Listed UNESCO Heritage Sites?

According to the result below 87% of the participants did not know that Sudan has 3 heritage sites listed in the UNESCO heritage sites. The conducted result reflects the weak official effort in Sudan to promote those sites internationally as the responses of the majority shows.

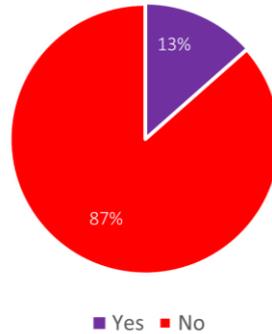


Figure 12 degree of knowledge about Sudan's 3 UNESCO heritage sites

4- The Term Cultural Tourism Means Travelling And Engaging Closely With A Strange Community In Order To Learn New Cultures And Different World View, Are You Willing To Have A Sudanese Cultural Travel Experience?

The results obtained from this question shows that the majority of the participants 69% are willing to visit Sudan to have a cultural experience, with 25% of them were uncertain

5- If Your Answer Is NO Can You Explain The Reason?

Here are some of the response from the participants expressing the reason why they don't want to visit Sudan

- Don't know much about any relevant opportunity there.
- I answered maybe". I am definitely interested in exploring Sudan if the opportunity presented itself. However, I am a bit concerned about the security with all the news floating around about Radical groups spreading roots around the country. I am not aware of the whole picture, as the news media doesn't bother about the truth. They are just looking for click baits and sensational headlines. I hope, I have made my position clear here. Without this issue, I would visit Sudan any day.
- I don't know much things about this country and doesn't appear as a dreamy destination for me
- It doesn't sound appealing.
- Nobody introduced the heritage site.
- Never had the empery of anything that personally appealing about Sudan in its self

The themes identified in these responses reflect several concerns including lack of relevant information about the country, security concerns and lack of desire in general.

6- If it's YES, Are You Willing To Participate in Any Local Activates with the Local Community?

The result shows 71% of the participants are willing to participate in activities with the locals while visiting Sudan, followed by 26% of the participants who choose maybe as an answer. The answer provides great supports for any future planning to design opportunities for the tourist to engage and participate in local activities

7- If Your Answer Is NO Can You Explain The Reason?

Here are some of the responses from the participants expressing the reason why they don't want to participate in local activates. The researcher received two responses to this question, the responses below mentioned not having enough time and lack of information as the main reason for choosing no as an answer

- All my trips are maximum 7 days for business.
- We do not know the exact historic site / No advertisement. In case we get the simple advertisement, we can try to visit there. Also it is very difficult for foreigners to find the travel agency for Historical Site Visiting.

8- If YES, What Kind Of Activities Would You Like To Take Part In (Multiple Choices)? 1-Traditional Activities (Weeding, Harvesting Season) 2- Local Food 3-Local Market

The majority of the participants 46% selected the 3 provided options (1- Traditional activities (weeding, harvesting season) 2- local food 3- Local market) followed by 22% of the participants who were interested only on attending the Traditional activities (weeding, harvesting season)

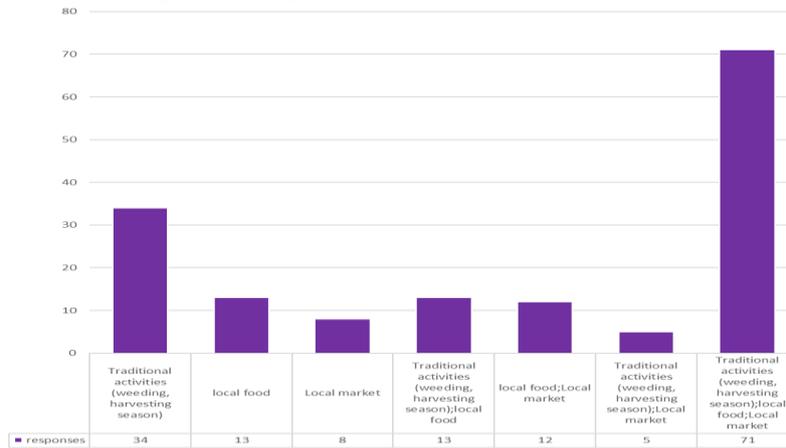


Figure 13 activities that potential tourist would like to participate in Sudan

9- Do You Agree To Take A Part On A Business Project Aiming To Promote The Sudanese Culture To The Cultural Travelers By Being A Cultural Traveler Who’s Visiting Sudan?

82% of the participants are willing to experience the Sudanese culture as a cultural tourist in case of a future project aimed to promote the Sudanese culture and 18% are not interested to take a part in such a project.

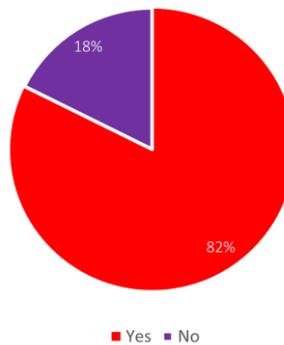


Figure 14 willing for visiting Sudan and support future tourism planes

10- Will You Agree To Help The Local Community As A Part Of Your Travel Program

67% of the participants chose yes, 27% of them chose maybe as an answer and 6% of the participants chose no. according to the result, it’s obviously clear that the majority of the participants were willing to engage in voluntary activities to help the local communities while they travel in Sudan.

IV.THE QUALITATIVE APPROACH

A. THE PROCESS

An interview was conducted with Mr.Saleh aljalad an official of the supreme council of tourism in the reason of choosing Dongola city because of its high historical assets, it’s the land of 2 of the UNESCO heritage sites, all those reasons combined with the fact it’s the city where 90% of the current tourist start their tourism program in Sudan.I have used a semi structured interview in which I have asked him to describe the current situation in the field of tourism in the country and Dongola city, in particular, culture and tourism in the city, describe the tourism programs and to list the main problems and development priorities and to offer a strategic vision.



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V. MAIN FINDINGS

1- The role of cultural tourism in Sudanese tourism

Mr. Aljalad revealed that most of the tourist who is visiting the country are culture-driven tourists, they visit us to experience our local culture, food, our lifestyle, local markets and of course the archeological sites.

2- The high cultural competence of the northern state of Sudan

the fact that the northern state is the home of more than 38 archeological sites in Sudan, two of them are listed in the UNESCO heritage sites (Archaeological Sites of the Island of Meroe and Gebel Barkal and the Sites of the Napatan Region) combined with karma archeological sites and the kawa island as a religion site (Jewish tourist). With verities of tourism destination including cultural, medical and religious destination. Also, the state contains 3 museums located on 3 famous historical cities, 14 hotels with 733 adsorptive capacity.

3- An increase in the proportion of tourists

In 2017 there was 16.000 tourist visited the northern state and in 2018 was 18.000. our targeted in 2019 is to attract 20.000 tourists to our state. Meanwhile the state is has been welcoming the annual Canadian international cycling team for 17 times. This race is coursing 27 African countries in Dongola city is one of the stops where the contestants have time to enjoy the local culture.

4- The Governmental endeavors to develop the sector

The state government offering the opportunity for the privet sector companies to invest in the tourism industry in the state, including tourism service company to provide tourism programs and touring services, hospitality companies who provide serval hotel in the state.

We provide workshops to train the tourism companies to ensure high-quality service to our visitors. We still need to improve some aspect of our services, for example, we still don't have enough souvenirs shops or even enough facilities near most of the archeological sites

VI. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The main objective of the questionnaire survey and the interviews was to provide a basic overview and deeper insight into the current situation of the tourism industry in Sudan as well as acknowledging the people (Sudanese and non-Sudanese) awareness of the research topic, and at the same time to test the research hypotheses that's adopting the cultural type of tourism will have a positive impact on the Sudanese tourism sector.

The data collected from the 1441 respondents has confirmed the promising future of the cultural tourism in Sudan. And the public acceptance to welcome culture travelers into their own community, theresearch results shows the following:

- 1- the majority of the Sudanese responses were belong to the youth segment between the age of 25-39 followed by the young-teen group between the age of 18-24, with higher education level fig 2 shows 67% was a degree holder and 30% were higher degrees holders which reflects the educational and the cultural level of first targeted group.
- 2- 99% of the Sudanese participants agreed on the importance of tourism in general at the same time clearly shown that 83% of the participants believe on the positive impact of tourism in the Sudanese economy.
- 3- There is a high since of cultural pride among the majority of the Sudanese participants as 96% of the responses said there culture was worth being known worldwide like other famous cultures. The survey also shows that 80% of the Sudanese think that the travelers will enjoy the. But at the same time 51% of the Sudanese who participated on the questioner think the world knows very little about the history of Sudan.
- 4- Higher participation rate: as the majority of the Sudanese participants 78% are willing to take apart on future projects that aimed to promote the Sudanese culture.
- 5- Mutual learning & value exchange: as 412 participants chose healthcare as a sector that can receive help from the tourist when vesting their cities as well as the education sector (407 participants)
- 6- Low visiting rate: the results from the second questioner shows that 88% of the participants never vested Sudan before, 12% of the participants said they vested Sudan before. Meanwhile The feedbacks reflects the positive impression of the participants who visited Sudan before in regard to the Sudanese people and the local culture, which supports the researcher's hypotheses of promoting the local culture as a main tourist attraction, as well as some of the negative impression about the current service system and the official transactions.



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- 7- Lack of information: 87% of the participants (non-Sudanese) did not know that Sudan has 3 heritage sites listed in the UNESCO heritage sites. But at the same time the results obtained from this question shows that the majority of the participants 69% are willing to visit Sudan to have a cultural experience.
- 8- Promising future: 82% of the participants (non-Sudanese) are willing to experience the Sudanese culture as a cultural tourist in case of a future project aimed to promote the Sudanese culture 71% of the participants are willing to participate in activities with the locals while visiting Sudan. The majority of the participants 46% selected the 3 provided options (1- Traditional activities (weeding, harvesting season) 67% of the participants chose yes to engage in voluntary activities to help the local communities while they travel in Sudan, according to the result, it's obviously clear that 82% of the participants (non-Sudanese) are willing to experience the Sudanese culture.
- 9- Aligns with the official efforts: as the tourism sector in Sudan acknowledges the importance role of cultural tourism for supporting the national economic, but still in the early stages with absents of basic tourism services and facilities.

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