Developing a Competitive Accessibility Chain Approach in Egyptian Heritage Sites for Better Market Share of Grey Tourism: Aswan Case Study

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Abstract

"All tourists want unique experiences tailored to their needs"
(The UNWTO Global Code of Ethics for Tourism)

United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) reports that accessibility is a key area of UNWTO's work in sustainable tourism development highlighting '*Accessible Tourism for All*' (World Tourism Organization and Fundación ACS, 2015). Nevertheless, physical, and mental impairments, family situations, economic barriers, age, illness, and other restricting factors still hinder many to participate in tourism on equal terms. Among those who find difficulty in travel is a large section of elderly people who would like to enjoy free-barrier tourism. This segment of senior tourism or '*Grey Tourism*', as they are often referred to, is as diverse as any other demographic group. Their market is increasingly growing and simultaneously gaining tremendous significance in the global tourism industry. Facilitating travel for them is a significant business opportunity since they tend to travel more frequently, going long distances, staying relatively longer, and spending more money. However, they demand accessible environments, products, services, and facilities to

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enable them to enjoy a better tourist experience.

Despite accessibility becoming more globally conceptualized, and the Egyptian tourism destinations are moving towards an increasingly globalized and challenging market, tourism accessibility has yet to be comprehensively addressed in Egypt's heritage sites. Ensuring accessibility in tourism destinations requires knowledge, planning, and a set of actions targeting the tourism sector to achieve accessible tourism for all. The proposed actions, as described by UNWTO, are based on the entire value chain of a tourist experience (i.e. information, transportation, built environment, accommodations, etc.) which are necessary for making infrastructures and attractions accessible for all including the Grey Tourism segment.

Aswan, as one of the major tourist attractions of Egypt, could be an ideal destination for Grey Tourism. Hence, this paper investigates the preparedness of Aswan for attracting senior tourists by adopting an accessibility chain approach advocating '*Accessible Tourism for All'*. The main aim is to determine to what extent the accessibility chain represents a determinant for the Grey Tourism industry in Aswan. A qualitative study using a multi-stakeholder focus was used to identify future trends and actions towards increase the Egyptian market share of this segment.

1- Introduction

The aging population is one of the most significant emergent phenomena in the modern world (Zielińska-Szczepkowska 2021; Pestana *et al*., 2020). While this worldwide trend is most advanced in countries of the 'developed' world, population aging is increasing at a fast pace also in developing countries, and already has profound social and economic implications (Vigolo, 2017). According to the most recent statistics of the United Nation, it is estimated that by 2050, over two billion individuals

will be aged 60 or over (United Nations, 2015). While in 2030, 73% of the world's older population will be living (Vigolo, 2017).

This global aging phenomenon is driven by multiple reasons associated with the fertility rate and increased life expectancy (Vigolo, 2017; The Economist 2009). Among these reasons is '*the baby boomers'* which are born between 1946 and 1964 (Gillon, 2004; Chan & Teng, 2009). This large generation of elderly people or baby boomers is defined as '*The Recession Boosters'* as they can recover from economic crises (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021; Naidooa *et al*., 2014). They are mostly healthy, financially well-off, highly educated, more independent, have fewer family obligations compared to younger people, and have more desire for authentic travel experience compared with the previous cohorts[1] of retirees (Gillon, 2004; Sperazza & Banerjee, 2010; Naidooa *et al*., 2014).

The tourism activities for this segment were largely focused on religious and social tourism (Vigolo, 2017). As the global demographic trend of the aging societies rises, the seniors market becoming increasingly targeted by business operators and tourism companies as a growing market with new tourism policies and standards advocating '*accessible tourism for all*' (Chan & Teng, 2009; Sperazza & Banerjee, 2010). Thus, the tourism of seniors and baby boomers is becoming gradually a big business and a prime example of a niche market with high development potential. This market contributes significantly to counterbalancing the negative impact of the economic crises by increasing both tourist arrivals and overnight stays (Vigolo, 2017). Senior tourism, which is also known as '*Grey Tourism*', is envisaged to be one of the most important segments of the global tourism industry in the next decades (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021). Therefore, this tourism segment is demanding a shift in the current services and facilities to accommodate the needs and motivations of this pattern of elder individuals.

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[1] A "cohort" is referred to as "people within a delineated population who experience the same significant event within a given period" (Vigolo, 2017, p. 30).

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Despite the exponential growth of the grey tourist market and its economic advantages, it is still untapped comprehensively in the Egyptian tourism sector. Therefore, the paper is examining the importance of integrating the Grey Tourism segment into the tourism industry of Egypt, specifically into the site of Aswan, along with the necessity of securing an accessibility chain approach that is crucial for attracting senior tourists and satisfying their needs. Thus, this research is investigating the foundational literature on Grey Tourism highlighting the segment-specific access requirements through the accessibility chain approach to reinforce the competitiveness of tourism destinations. The objectives are, therefore, twofold. First, the paper aim at contributing to a better understanding to the emergent phenomenon of Grey Tourism and travel trends. Secondly, the paper demonstrates the use of an accessible tourism chain for senior tourists visiting Aswan for assessing travel demands. Specifically, it asks; to what extent the accessibility chain would represent a determinant for the Grey Tourism industry in Aswan. In pursuit of these objectives, a qualitative approach was adopted using developed semi-structured interviews with 17 representatives from different authorities to assess the requirements of grey tourists in Aswan and to evaluate the possibility of adopting the accessibility chain measures to capture a new segment of the tourist market, namely 'Grey Tourism' and make the site more accessible and more competitive.

2- Literature Review

2-1 Grey Tourism: Definition and Demographic Characteristics

'*Grey Tourism*' or '*Silver Tourism*' is a term usually used to describe a niche market in the tourism industry that targets older tourists and the overall mobility aspects of the aging phenomenon. Generally, people aged 60 and above are the commonsense criterion for Grey Tourism (Sibi, 2017; Kofler, 2010). Different expressions and terminology have been used to refer to the market of older tourists, such as 'Older travelers', 'Older mature', 'Grey tourists' or 'Silver tourists', 'Senior tourists',

'Older adults', Baby Boomers' and the 'Silent generation' which are born between 1925 and 1945 (Sibi, 2017; Littrell et al., 2004; Nam et al., 2007; Naidooa et al., 2014; Pestana et al., 2020). 'Empty nested' is another terminology used in tourism literature to describe this segment since they have no family obligations. People aged 80 or over, are usually called the 'Oldest old', the 'Super senior', or the 'Fourth generation' (Vigolo, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2012).

The United Nations consider the age of 60 to indicate older individuals, even though many developed countries use the age of 65 as a threshold for retirement and old-age social security benefits, the developing countries use the age of 60 as a threshold for retirement. While reports by the International Monetary Fund (2015) and the World Bank (2015) refer to the age group of 65 and older to the older people. With regards to the tourism literature, there is no consensus about the specific age criteria of Grey Tourism. For example, people (aged 60 and above) are generally accepted as grey tourists or senior tourists. Other resources classify tourists aged 55 and over as seniors. Other studies have defined senior tourists as people (over the age of 50) (Kim *et al*., 2013; You & O'Leary 1999; Ward 2014). It is also argued that older adults or seniors can be classified into two main categories: perspective seniors (aged 50-64), and seniors (aged 65 and above) (Vigolo, 2017).

Further, some scholars have segmented older tourists according to the retirement age as 'Pre-retiree and early retirees' (aged 55-64), 'Retirees, older retirees, or mature adults' (aged 65-74), and 'Elderly' (aged 85-plus) (Sibi, 2017). Some other scholars provided a different classification; the 'Young-old' (aged 55–64), the 'Old' (aged 65–74), and the 'Very old' (aged 75+) (Hong et al., 1999). Others divided older tourists into 'Pre-seniors' (aged 50–59) and 'Seniors' (aged 60 +), 'Real seniors'-those individuals over retirement age -(65 years) (Vigolo, 2017).

Regardless of the age segmentation of older tourists, they obviously represent a profitable source of revenue for all the operators of the tourism industry, from hospitality and accommodation businesses to museums, heritage sites, and other service providers in general. They are recognized as a potential market, not only because of their rapid growth but also due to the time flexibility that characterizes the travel of older

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tourists, especially retirees. Therefore, they could represent an important tool to contrast the negative effects of seasonality since they are more prone to travel in off-peak seasons (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021; Sibi, 2017).

2.2 The Attitudinal and Behavioral Patterns of Seniors

Age alone does not decide the attitudinal and behavioral patterns of older people. Tourism literature evidently demonstrates that senior tourists are not a homogenous group, rather they are belonging to different cohorts each with differences in lifestyles, preferences, motivations, and interests (Naar, 2010, p. 15; Kim *et al*., 2003). Differences related to travel not only exist between cohorts but also within cohorts (Naar, 2010, p. 15). As reported by some scholars, significant differences have existed between '*Baby boomers*' and the '*Silent generation*' regarding the type of tourism experience sought and the actual travel activities that are practiced (Vigolo, 2017, p. 31; Naar, 2010, p.15; Lehto *et al*., 2008)[2].

It becomes evident that retirement becomes more effective than age to segment older tourists as it adopts the life cycle as a frame of reference to segment seniors based on common characteristics and motivation associated with this stage. Hence, several European studies have used retirement as a segmentation variable to identify the travel behavior, preferences, and related attributes between the retired and non-retired members (Cleaver *et al*., 1999; Le Serre & Chevalier, 2012).

Within this frame of reference, it was proved that people over retirement age have increased flexibility, and more interest in travel and thus tend to dedicate their additional free time to leisure activities and traveling in particular (Vigolo, 2017, p. 33; Nimrod & Rotem, 2010). According to the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) there is an increase in international travel by senior tourists, mainly '*Baby Boomers'*, from 10% in 1985 to 28% in 2005 (AARP, 2005). Travel activities practiced by

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[2] Baby Boomers' preference of travel for intimacy/romance and adventure/excitement more than the Silent Generation.

older tourists tend to remain constant after retirement. They consider travel as a long-range goal equal to a rite of passage into a new life stage after retirement (Naar, 2010, p. 16). Further, older tourists tend to stay longer at the tourist destination compared with non-retired tourists (Vigolo, 2017, p. 33). They always prefer mid and off-season as the best time for their vacations (Sibi, 2017, 67).

Other-focused studies in the tourism sector hypostatize that today's older tourists are more active, dynamic, and independent than the previous generation. Their lifestyle is based more on entertainment and the enjoyment of traveling in their leisure time than those of the past (Hung & Petrick, 2009). Moreover, they tend to demonstrate that they are willing participants in new and adventurous activities and are opting for more physically challenging and 'adrenalin-driven' experiences (Patterson & Pegg, 2009). On the other hand, despite the stereotype regarding their competencies in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), it is proven that grey tourists are open for using ICT in heritage sites and museums including mobile applications, Virtual, Mixed, and Augmented Reality. ICT facilitates for them both physical and mental accessibility to the heritage (Pesonen *et al*., 2015).

2.3. Travel Motivation of Grey Tourists

Motivation has been described as "*the state of need that pushes the individual toward actions that are likely to generate satisfaction*" (Vigolo, 2017, p. 66). While some researchers argued that travel motivations for senior tourists remain stable over time (Cleaver *et al*., 1999), other recent studies demonstrated that travel motivations for senior tourists continue to develop and expand over time (Vigolo, 2017, pp. 66-70). There is a consensus that there are two main dimensions for the travel motivation of older tourists, which are '*pull*' and '*push*' factors (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021; Vigolo, 2017). Thus, it is assumed that "older tourists" are pushed by their own needs and motivations and pulled by the elements of destination attractiveness" (Vigolo, 2017).

Push factors are described as the internal motivations for older tourists to make travel decisions such as spiritual and social motivations, health conditions, enough time, personal finance, etc. (You & O'Leary, 1999; Norman *et al*., 2001). Tourism literature has listed plenty of factors and

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reasons directing senior tourists to travel among them are (Vigolo, 2017; You & O'Leary, 1999; Huang & Tsai 2003): ***Social reasons***: senior tourists seeking for social interaction to socialize and spend time with family and friends which frequently leads to happiness and satisfaction. This is the most quoted reason for travel, in both domestic and international travel. ***Relaxation***: older tourists tend to travel to get rest and relax. ***Health and well-being***: health and wellness are important motives for older tourists, as they tend to enhance their health condition and well-being (Kim *et al*., 2003). ***Self-fulfillment***: senior tourists are animated by self-fulfillment, '*to give self a treat'*, which could be interpreted as a kind of self-fulfillment desire. **Escapism**: older tourists tend to break out of their daily life routine and stressful environments. ***Physical activities***: senior tourists are motivated to travel to engage in physical exercise.

In contrast, the pull factors are more concerned with the attributes of the destination including its attractiveness, location, weather, services and facilities, aesthetics factors, and hospitality among others. (Zielińska-Szczepkowska, 2021; Sangpikul, 2008). In an approach to developing marketing strategies to satisfy senior tourists' needs and desires, tourism literature recorded many endeavors to investigate travel motivations for the senior tourism segment. The following table outlines some of the previous work to identify motivating factors for the travel of older tourists:

Authors	Motivation Factors for the Travel of Older Tourists (Push Factors)
Guinn (1980)	"Rest and relaxation" "Association with friends and family" "Physical exercise" "Learning experience" "Self-fulfillment"
Mannell and Iso-Ahola (1987)	"Escaping" from routine, city hustle and bustle "Seeking" personal/interpersonal reward
Cleaver et al. (1999)	"Nostalgias" "Friendlies" "Learners" "Escapists" "Seekers" "Status-seekers" "Physicals"
Norman et al. (2001)	"Escape" "Education" "Family" "Action" "Relaxation" "Ego"
Horneman et al. (2002)	"Traveling while their health is good" "Spending time with family and friends" "Visiting places" "Having a break from routine"
Huang and Tsai (2003)	"Get rest and relaxation" "Meet people and socialize" "Spend time with family" "Visiting new places" "Seeking intellectual and spiritual enhancement"
Hsu et al. (2007)	"External Conditions", such as "societal progress", "personal finance", "time", and "health". "Internal Desires", such as "improving well-being", "escaping routines", "socializing", "seeking knowledge", "pride and patriotism","

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	personal reward", and "nostalgia"
Sangpikul (2008)	"Novelty and knowledge-seeking"
	"Rest and relaxation"
	"Ego-enhancement"
Le Serre and Chevalier (2012)	"Social motivation"
	"Relaxation"
	"Sport"
	"Intellectual motivation"
Ward (2014)	"Escaping"
	"Exploring"
	"Spiritual and social"
	"Physical and entertainment"
	"Family focus"

Table (1)
A classification for travel motivations studies about senior tourists
published between 1980 and 2014

In sum, senior tourists are motivated to experience new adventures and active leisure pursuits including travel to get entertained, gain social recognition, and escape from everyday routine. It is generally accepted that travel contributes to the quality of life for older tourists. Travel satisfaction affects leisure life satisfaction, which in return influences an individual's quality of life and thus revisit intentions (Kim *et al*., 2015). Of note, 'knowledge-seeking' is also considered one of the most important motivations by senior tourists, especially among older women, while 'novelty and knowledge-seeking' is an important push factor for traveling to overseas destinations. 'Escapism' and 'seeking' also stemmed as key travel motivations in several tourism studies (Vigolo, 2017).

2.4. Types and Forms of Grey Tourism
It is very preferable for grey tourists to travel in groups, as it has considerable advantages such as making connections with the people they meet when traveling, social engagement, and group discounts among others (Kofler, 2010). Littrell et al. (2004) identified three main profiles for senior tourists, which are, 'active outdoor/cultural tourists', 'cultural

tourists', and 'moderate tourists'. Active outdoor/cultural tourists and cultural tourists, usually, are interested in cultural-related activities, namely visiting museums and galleries, attending theatre and festivals, enjoying recreational activities, and eating at interesting local restaurants. Further, they tend to appreciate nature, as they enjoy eco-tours, camping, and sports activities. As for the moderate tourists, they are less interested in travel activities mainly outdoor cultural events and sports3.

In a similar fashion, You and O'Leary (1999) proposed three types of grey tourists; 'passive visitors' in which senior tourists are motivated to visit friends and relatives for social cohesion; 'the enthusiastic go-getters' who are seeking novelty, knowledge enhancement, and escapism; 'the culture hounds' in which seniors enjoyed active involvement in heritage and cultural activities.

Based on the analysis of Kim et al. (2003) older tourists are classified into four main types, namely, 'active learner' mainly female, motivated by the desire to learn; 'relaxed family body' mainly female with lower incomes, motivated by relaxation and family visits; 'careful participant' mainly males with higher incomes appealing health and well-being activities; 'elementary vacationer', mainly males with higher, motivated by embracing new experience. With all of these series of elements that characterize Grey Tourism including free time, money, good health, seasonality of travel, and lifestyles, the market of this segment is becoming rich and active with a large potential source of economic growth.

2.5. Destination Attributes Attracting Grey Tourism

There is no consensus on a universally accepted set of attributes of a

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[3] Littrell *et al*. (2004) linking shopping patterns with travel activities in an approach to assist tourism destinations in developing integrated marketing strategies for attracting senior tourists. He suggested that the first and two profiles of senior tourist are active in shopping alongside cultural events while the third profile is very limited in it.

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destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004). A destination comprised several multidimensional attributes of its unique sources that tourists may choose to visit and experience. In the senior tourism context, multiple studies have been conducted on destination attractiveness for seniors among them are; Lee & King, 2016; Chen *et al*., 2013; Jang &Wu, 2006; Kim *et al*., 2003.

The main findings focused on the importance of particular attributes such as barrier-free public transport, accommodation, tourism sites, and services. The results also revealed that accessibility is the major contributor to the tourism attractiveness of a senior-friendly destination, followed by amenities and complimentary services. Cultural and historical attractions, travel arrangements and facilities, shopping and leisure activities, safety, and cleanliness are deemed to be equally important for senior tourists (Jang &Wu, 2006).

2.6. Grey Tourists' Constrains, Needs, and Expectations

Even though senior tourists are becoming more active, it is argued that seniors as they become older, require special assistance to meet their aging needs (Daniel, 2016). Further, financial security, health care, and enabling environment are major concerns for senior tourists (Vigolo, 2017, p.7). Older adults are ready to travel should they have finance in advance, are healthy, and can move freely in a barrier-free environment. Tourism studies revealed that there is a coherent relationship between disposable income and travel intention (Jang *et al*., 2004). Thus, financial security is a crucial condition to secure not only the travel but further the selection of the tourism destination by the senior tourists. In the same view, Sibi (2017) underlying that safety can act as a travel barrier for older tourists. Safety and security represent another important concerns for this age group.

Health condition is also considered to be travel constraints for older people with physical impairments. At the same time, health is a key travel motivation for senior tourists, as discussed earlier, who are animated by wellness and well-being motives (Kim *et al*., 2003). Therefore, *'wellness tourism'* has been significantly widespread at the end of the past century

among all cohorts including senior tourists (Chen *et al*., 2013).

Seen from this perspective, the accessible tourism supply chain is an essential issue in increasing the usability and enjoyment of tourism destinations by senior tourists (Porto et al., 2018). However, because of the noticeable heterogeneity and diversity of seniors, they often require more diversified travel experiences than previous generations of cohort groups. The spectrum of travel experiences is quite wide ranging from soft adventure travel that they can simply organize themselves, to booking travel on the Internet to inclusive group package tours where all the travel arrangements are carried out by a travel agency (Patterson & Pegg, 2009). Whether they are independent travelers or package tourists, the destination should be adopting an 'Aging-friendly approach' and 'enabling environment' to enhance the participation of older people in all aspects of tourism experiences. Such an approach requires integrating economic, political, and social structures to remove socio-environmental barriers and increase social participation by older tourists.

Finally, one can conclude that the provision of a safe and age-friendly approach that includes accessible public transportation, barrier-free facilities, and other tourism-related accommodation options dedicated exclusively to older tourists is essential for any destination that wishes to pursue this market. Accessibility for seniors should be available throughout the tourism chain.

2.7. *Tourism Accessibility Chain*

The elements of the chain are precisely listed in *"Recommendations on Accessibility of Tourism"* developed by the UNWTO and published in 2013. The chain has seven stages (and sub-stages); each stage includes a few indicators to ensure the usability of all sites, services, and facilities by disabled people and older adults through the followings:

A. Tourism destination management

B. Tourism information and advertising

I- Promotional Materials

II- Reservation systems

C. Urban and architectural environments

     I. Parking areas

II. Communication

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IV. Horizontal movement

V. Vertical movement

Elevators

Stairs and ramps

VI. Public hygiene facilities

VII. Prices

D. **Modes of transport and stations**

I. Modes of transport

II. Stations, passenger terminals, and related facilities

III. Major thoroughfares

E. **Accommodation, food service, and conventions**

I. Accommodation facilities

II. Food service establishments

III. Conference facilities

F. **Cultural activities**

I. Museums and other buildings of tourism interest

II. Theatres and cinemas

G. **Other tourism activities and events**

I. Excursions to surrounding areas

II. Sports

III. Green spaces and natural environments

IV. Beaches

It is necessary to understand that each element of the chain influences and depends on the others: if one of the elements is weak or missing the basic accessibility measures, the holiday can be strongly compromised as a whole.

2.7. Grey Tourism in Egypt

On a domestic level, it is estimated that the number of Egypt's older adults in 2020 is 6.8% of the total population, namely, people aged 55-64 (male 3,160,438/female 3,172,544), while people aged 65 and over have reached 4.44% ((male 2,213,539/female 2,411,457) (CIA, 2022). Based

on the report of the United Nations of the World Population Ageing (2015), the statistic of the number of older persons in Egypt — those aged 60 years or over —is projected to grow between 2015 and 2030, and that growth will be faster in 2050 **(Table 2).**

	Year	The Percentage of the total population
Population aged 60 or over	2015	7.9 %
	2030	9.9 %
	2050	20 %

Table (2)
Percentage aged 60 years or over in Egypt
(UN 2015)

As mentioned earlier, the global demographic has witnessed a major transition toward an aging population. This transition is demanding Aging-friendly products and services, including tourism products and services (Lee & King, 2016). Although the emerging market of senior tourists has been embraced by and has evolved in, developed countries, the Egyptian tourism sector has yet to react proactively to this issue, nor has it developed special policies and services specifically targeting the old tourists' needs. This resulted in a lack of data on the estimated and projected number of senior tourists traveling to Egypt and what they imply for future potential support of the tourism industry, as well as the indicators for tourism providers/practitioners to act strategically to attract this booming market. Further, misguided ideas and negative stereotypical images of older people have still prevailed among services providers and in marketing practices. Given the importance of the senior tourism segment globally, most of the tourism practitioners in Egypt are still unaware of the diversity, travel characteristics, motivations, and great capacity of grey tourists.

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3- Research Methodology

3-1 Description of the Case Study

Declared to be the capital of African culture, Aswan, as one of the main tourist destinations in Egypt, gained more recognition in cultural tourism. Aswan has unique touristic attributes that give the city a wide fame as a magnificent tourist destination with a remarkable tangible heritage that encompasses rich cultural properties, historical monuments, and indigenous cities, along with distinctive natural landscapes (Morkot, 2001, pp. 151-153). Further, the city is also wealthy with significant repositories for intangible heritage reflected in the famous traditional crafts, popular customs, folk art, and much more of the artistic cultural forms of Aswan (UNESCO, 2016).

Thus, the fundamental attractions of the city include but are not limited to rich cultural heritage, warm weather, unpolluted environment, picturesque landscape, modern landmarks, and the purist part of the Nile River. Significantly, the Nile River forms the lifeline of Aswan city together with its unique archipelago (UNESCO, 2016) that provides splendid magical and natural scenery making the city a must-see site in Egypt.

Aswan is a city in Upper Egypt, about 899 km south of Cairo **(Figure. 1).** It is situated on the eastern bank of the Nile, located strategically at the north end of the first Nile Cataract, near numerous mineral deposits (now at the Northern Tip of Lake Nassar) (Morkot, 2001, pp. 151-153; Shaw & Nicholson, 1995, pp. 43-44; Bains & Malek, 1980, p. 77). The modern name of Aswan is derived from the Greek word *Syene* and ultimately from Egyptian *Swnw* which is translated as 'trade/conducting business' (Morkot, 2001, pp. 151-153), since the city served as the hub for trade exchange with Central Africa from ancient times. The region of Aswan is also renowned as a major source of granite. There was much quarrying of Granite from islands on the river that may have served for providing granite for many ancient Egyptian monuments while cleaning the river

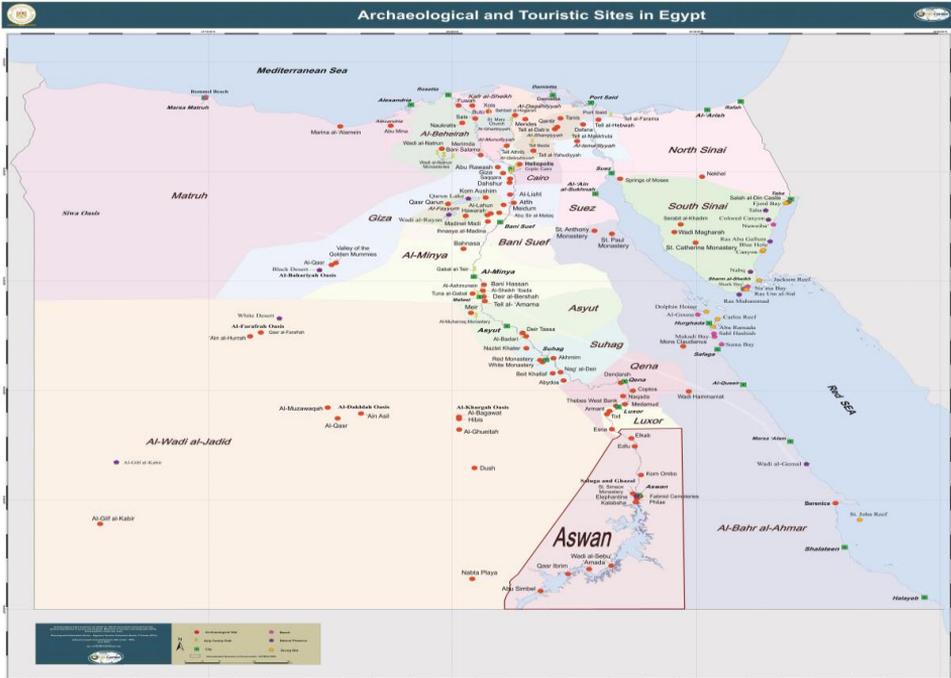channels as well (Morkot, 2001, pp. 151-153; Bunsen, 2002, p. 58).

Fig. (1)
Egypt's map elaborates Aswan city with places of cultural, historical, and natural interest
(MoTA, GIS Center, 2022)

The earliest settlement of Aswan was on Elephantine- an Island in the center of the Nile River- which was a trading center in the pre-dynastic times of Egypt (Shaw & Nicholson, 1995, pp. 43-44). As early as the Old Kingdom onward, Aswan had an important role as a defender of the southern frontier and the starting point for many military and trading expeditions into Nubia (Morkot, 2001, pp. 151-153), and remained as the southern gate of Egypt. The city has a multifaceted culture that spans the

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history of Egypt from Pharaonic, Graeco-Roman, and Byzantine (Coptic), to the Islamic and Modern Era (Morkot, 200; Shaw & Nicholson, 1995).

These diverse phases of history produced a rich legacy with priceless monuments, i.e., temples, tombs, obelisks, Nilometers, historic settlements, a wealth of intangible cultural manifestations, and much more authentic traits making the city one of the main tourist destinations in Egypt that pulled with elements of destination attractiveness including natural, cultural, and historical factors among other pull factors **(Figure. 2).** These elements along with the good weather conditions and the city's tranquility are very notable reasons for the seniors to go on holiday to Aswan and enjoy rest and calm.

Fig. (2)
Detailed map for Aswan illustrates the rich legacy of the city's cultural properties
(Shaw & Nicholson, 1995, p. 43)

3-2 Research Design

Based on the previous literature review, this research aims to offer valuable insights into the debate on the availability of an accessible tourism chain for senior tourists visiting Aswan by asking the following

Research Questions:

Research Question 1: To what extent the accessibility chain would represent a determinant for the Grey Tourism industry in Aswan?

Research Question 2: To what extent the tourism offerings of Aswan would enable the city to attract grey tourists?

Research Question 3: Which senior-friendly attributes in Aswan could be the unique selling propositions for this segment?

A well-planned research strategy was designed to answer these questions using an extensive review of literature provided in the previous section to propose some theoretical contributions to the aging phenomenon from a tourism marketing perspective. The research was drawn upon existing theories and empirical studies on the challenges and opportunities of the Grey Tourism market, socio-demographic and travel characteristics, senior tourist motivations, constraints, and behavioral patterns.

Further, the research adopted a qualitative approach using developed semi-structured interviews with 17 representatives from different authorities. The aim was to identify the special needs and requirements of grey tourists in Aswan city and to evaluate the tourism chain in Aswan in terms of its efficiency to assure accessibility for senior "grey tourists'. To this end, the elements of the chain developed by the UNWTO in "Recommendations on Accessibility of Tourism" published in 2013 were adopted as the term of reference used to precisely identify the attributes of the destination that enable accessibility for elderly tourists[4].

3-3 Measurement Instrument

The needs of senior visitors in each element of the tourism chain, which is previously discussed in the literature review, has been evaluated through a developed qualitative study based on the semi-structured interviews with the authorities, services providers, and other relevant stakeholders to evaluate the tourism offerings that can be points of attraction for grey tourists as well to identify the areas that need improvement.

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[4] Some sub-elements are not being tackled due to the unavailability in Aswan.

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The semi-structured interviews were conducted both face-to-face and virtually using the Zoom platform. The interviews enabled the authors to seek new insights and ask questions to deeply dig into the needs of the market under study from different perspectives. They also enlighten the research with in-depth knowledge of the case study's influential factors and consequences.

3-4 Data Collection

The data collected for the qualitative approach was from a sample of stakeholders, authorities, and service providers in Aswan. The stakeholders were divided into nine groups (Aswan Governorate and Municipality, Tourism Promotion Authority, Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities Local Office, Chamber of Travel Agencies, Chamber of Hotels/Hotels, Tourist Attractions, Train Station, Airports, and Restaurants). Key persons from each group were selected to conduct a one-to-one interview. A set of basic services and facilities that enable an adequate level of accessibility for elderly tourists were identified for each group of respondents according to the elements of accessibility developed by UNWTO. The interviews were conducted in both English and Arabic since the respondents were from different backgrounds. The authors translated the extracted quotes.

The respondents were asked about the availability of the accessible services and facilities related to their unit of the tourism chain based on a checklist that was previously developed by the authors within the framework of the UNWTO recommendations. They were also asked about areas for improvement to meet the needs of senior visitors. **Table (3)** illustrates the set of questions tailored to each group of stakeholders in relation to the elements of the accessibility chain so as to deeply investigate the gap between Aswan's accessibility offerings compared to the basic accessibility tourism chain.

Chain Element	Sub-elements	Stakeholders Involved	Questions (not included in the table
Tourism destination management	*Coordination*	*The local office of the Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities (MoTA)*	*Does the tourism authority (TA) have a strategy for accessible tourism?* *Does the TA have measures to evaluate the services and facilities provided to Grey tourists?* *Does the TA have the mechanisms to coordinate between different stakeholders?*
	Awareness	*Tourism Promotion Authority*	*Are there any efforts that have been done to educate tourism staff on how to care about grey tourists?*
Tourism information and advertising	Promotional Materials	*Tourism Promotion Authority*	*Do the promotional materials include clear indications of accessible services and facilities?* *Do the promotional materials state how to contact the establishment through accessible media using alternative formats?* *Is there a list published for accessible medical services?*
	Reservation systems	*Chamber of Travel Agencies Chamber of Hotels*	*Does the reservation system state clear information on the level of accessibility of services and facilities?* *Are there any appropriate booking procedures?* *Are the websites designed following the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?*
Urban and architectural environments	Parking areas	*Aswan Municipality*	*Are there special parking spaces as near as possible to the entry/ exit of the tourist establishments?*
	Signage	*Aswan Municipality*	*Are the information, check-in, and ticket sales counters clearly marked and have an accessible area reserved for use by the elderly?*

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			Are the services and facilities clearly marked with easily understandable symbols of an appropriate size and color that contrasts with the background? *Are the emergency instructions designed to be easily read?*
	Horizontal Movement	*Hotels Airports Tourist attractions*	*Can elderly people move independently around the venue?* *Are the passageways and corridors free of physical or visual barriers?*
	Vertical Movement	*Hotels Airports Tourist attractions*	*Is there an adequate number of elevators at the tourist establishment?* *Are there enough ramps in case of a change in the floor level?*
	Public hygiene facilities	*Hotels Airports Tourist attractions*	*Are there accessible toilets?* *Are they designed to allow elderly people to move and maneuver easily?*
	Prices	*Hotels Airports Tourist attractions*	*Are the services and facilities designed to increase accessibility for elderly tourism affect the price?*
Modes of transport and stations	Modes of transport	*Travel Agencies Local office of MoTA*	*Are the modes of transport designed to allow safe, comfortable, and equitable transport of the elderly?*
	Stations, passenger terminals, and related facilities	*Airports Train stations*	*Do elderly people have easy access to all transport services to and from all terminals, stations, and other related facilities?* *Do the information providers use visual and acoustic formats?*
	Major thoroughfares	*Aswan Municipality*	*Are there equipped rest stops at the main thoroughfares and toll highways?*
Accommodation, food service, and conventions	Accommodation facilities	*Hotels*	*Do the accommodation establishments have a reasonable number of rooms that are fully accessible without the need for*

			assistance?
	Food service establishments	*Hotels Restaurants*	*Are the food services establishments designed with extra spaces to allow easy movement for the elderly?* *Do the menus use easy-to-read- text?* *Do the menus include additional options for people with different types of food intolerance?*
Cultural activities	Museums and other buildings of tourism interest	*The local office of MoTA*	*Do elderly tourists have access to museums and heritage sites' materials and cultural activities in accessible formats?* *Do they provide horizontal and vertical access?* *Are the staff trained to communicate easily and provide assistance to the elderly?*
Other tourism activities and events	Excursions to surrounding areas	*Chamber of Travel Agencies*	*Are the coaches used for excursions outfitted to accommodate elderly tourists?* *Are the guides/ interpreters trained to communicate easily and provide assistance to the elderly?*
	Sports	*Hotels Sports Establishments*	*Do the accommodation and sports establishments encourage elderly tourists to engage in sports activities?*
	Green spaces and natural environments	*Aswan Governorate*	*Are there enough seats in the gardens and other greenery areas?* *Are there accessible toilets?* *Are there accessible food and beverage services?*

Table (3)
Set of questions tailored to each group of the stakeholders in relation to the elements of the accessibility chain
Created by the Authors

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3-5 Data Analysis sections

A preliminary analysis was conducted in the first part derived from the review of the literature and focused on the demographic characteristic, travel motivations, attitudinal, behavioral patterns as well as travel constraints of senior tourists as one of the most important segments in the tourism industry that demands a shift in the current services and facilities to meet the needs and motivations of this segment.

In the second part, a comprehensive analysis was undertaken using the in-depth qualitative interviews combined with observational notes taken during the interviews. The collected data was analyzed according to the materials gathered in the interviews, notes, and video recordings and based on the frame-structure of the UNWTO's chain elements of "Recommendations on Accessibility of Tourism" of 2013 evaluate the level of accessible tourism in Aswan mainly the degree of access and the number of accessibility products and services offered. To this end, the analysis tackled the seven elements of the chain: a-*tourism destination management*; b-*tourism information and advertising*; c-*urban architecture and design*; d-*modes of transport and stations*; e-*accommodation and food services*; f-*cultural activities*; and g-*other tourism activities and events*.

Several fundamental issues related to the application of the UNWTO's chain were investigated and analyzed to first investigate the appeal of Aswan city as an elderly- tourist destination as well as its attributes that could be fundamentally attractive for this segment, and second to determine the adequate accessibility services that its ecosystem is currently required to attract the senior tourists including destination management, tourism infrastructure, environmental constraints, quality of services and facilities, adequate information, promotion, and marketing information among others.

3-6 Results and Presentation of Findings

The results of the study revealed that the city of Aswan possessed an exceptional tourism attractiveness of an age-friendly destination which

gives the city a unique potential to become an accessible tourism destination for the Grey Tourism market **(Figure 3)**, yet the pull factors of an age-friendly destination such as barrier-free services and facilities are still untapped. Essential factors still need to be considered to improve accessibility levels and the enabling environment, most importantly, the government's capacity to support tourism infrastructure and services that cater to senior tourists. To this end, significant measures are suggested for advancing and developing the gray tourism market in Aswan in compliance with the accessible tourism chain of UNWTO.

Fig. (3
Aswan's Attributes as a Grey Tourism Destination
(as reported by the interview respondents)

The following findings were identified from the answers of the interview respondents:

3.6.1 Tourism Destination Management

Despite that tourism authority has an ambitious vision to develop barrier-free tourism attractions for people with disability and elderly tourists, yet, it has not formulated a strategic plan with sustainable measures to assure

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the tourism accessibility chain nor does it use national codes or measures to assess services and facilities needed for Grey Tourism. On the ground, the Egyptian tourism sector has yet to develop an overarching strategy aimed at investigating the Grey Tourism market (behaviors, motivations, and needs) nor has it researched the potential of tourism suppliers and service providers in the context of accessible tourism.

The absence of published data or statistics on the number of elderly tourists traveling to Egypt is one of the key challenges facing this market in the tourism sector. Most of the respondents stated that there might be a kind of coordination noticed between stakeholders, yet there are no legally binding instruments to regulate barrier-free accommodation facilities and other tourism services to ensure accessibility in the tourist establishments. On the level of awareness-raising, there are indeed some training programs designed by Tourism Promotion Authority to educate the labor force in tourism to care about elderly tourists, yet on a quite small scale.

3.6.2 Tourism Information and Advertising

ICT is recently recognized as a key driver for older tourists to plan their travel with specific regard to information searching, booking, and experiential moment at the destination. Egyptian Tourism Authority has launched several marketing campaigns to promote Egypt's tourism detestation in the Arab market as well as in the international market. A few of the promotional materials used in this campaign include clear indications for accessible services and facilities, particularly in five- stars hotels and cruises. Apart from this good practice, the majority of the respondents agreed that the reservation systems in most tourist establishments have yet to provide clear information on the level of accessibility of services and facilities.

Even though some of the five-star hotels have available physicians there is no published list of accessible medical services. Further, the websites are not designed in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), as well as no internet-based applications are designed particularly for seniors. Therefore, there are several accessibility

issues that need to be seriously tackled to create more accessible digital offerings including inclusive websites for a wider range of people with disability and senior tourists.

3.6.3. Urban and Architecture Design

Most of the respondents could notice some older-friendly services that allow people with specific access requirements such as people with disability and older adults to use the tourist establishments such as accessible parking spaces which are available near the entry/exist in some establishments; an adequate number of elevators, ramps, and accessible toilets in some of the tourist establishments. There is also some accessible signage used in the parking spaces and toilets. Nevertheless, the development of more accessible elements is still required including but not limited to wide corridors and doors and grab bars in bathrooms and more signage needs to be used to identify other accessible services. In terms of design, it obviously lacks the key requirements of mounting and tactile characters.

3.6.4. Modes of Transport and Stations

Accessible transportation and a barrier-free environment are very significant for the movement of senior tourists. There is a consensus among almost all the respondents that there is an apparent lack of accessibility in the transportation connections and routes. Additionally, there are many environmental barriers in the passageways between sites that do not allow the seniors with limited mobility to move freely except for only one touristic passage between the Philae Temple and the Unfinished Obelisk that allows easily accessible movement. Likewise, the modes of transport that allow safe, comfortable, and equitable transport for the elderly are only available by prominent travel agencies. Further, there is a lack of good public transportation services.

3.6.5. Accommodation and Food Services

The results of the interviews revealed that accessible accommodation is deemed by all the respondents as another barrier for seniors in Aswan since there is little to offer by the tourist establishments to meet their needs. Despite that, very few hotels have a reasonable number of rooms that are accessible without the need for assistance, yet there is still a wide range of accommodation and special services is still inaccessible to

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elderly people (sports rooms, comfortable modern amenities, a direct accessible connection between indoor facilities, etc.). For the restaurants and cafes, there are extra spaces to allow easy movement for elderly tourists, but the menus do not use easy-to-read-text as well as don't include additional options for people with different types of food intolerance; however, there is a possibility to offer special meals on request.

3.6.6 Cultural Activities

It is noticeable by respondents that interpretive labels, panel texts, and other intellectual provisions at the museums and heritage sites of Aswan are not designed in accessible formats for elderly visitors. There is a lack of aids for visually impaired seniors or audio induction loop systems for hard-of-hearing seniors. Similarly, there is a lack of assistive devices for seniors with limited mobility at the heritage sites except for two wheelchairs at the Nubian Museum to facilitate their access.

3.6.7. Other Tourism Activities and Events

Responding to questions related to the preparedness of other tourism activities and events to embrace the senior tourists' segment, most of the respondents agreed that information on the usability of outdoor amenities i.e., parks, landscape, greenery areas, and outdoor spaces is still remarkably inaccessible. The majority of the outdoors services still have environmental barriers including inaccessible roads, non-standard sidewalks, non-standard ramps, few parking places, few seats exist, and almost no accessible toilets. There are very few well-equipped sports facilities for seniors available in the 5-stars hotels. As for the staff training, very few of them are adequately trained to communicate easily with senior tourists and provide them with the appropriate assistance.

3.6.8. Areas for Improvement

Based on the respondents' feedback, there are areas for improvement suggested to offer more accessible accommodations for grey tourists in Aswan. The authors classified them into marketing-related actions and services and facilities measures. The former includes; a) promoting Aswan as '*a destination that has it all';* b) considering pricing

mechanisms to trigger tourists in off-seasons, and c) adapting the tourism operators marketing strategies to spark the attention of this emerging market. The latter includes some measures to improve the tourism chain to accommodate the senior segment including; a) securing safe and easily accessible transportation modes; b) providing customized travel routes and a variety of public transport options; c) designing barrier-free facilities and services; d) developing world-class medical centers and health care; e) providing club cars in the heritage sites, and f) designing menus with a variety of options for elderly people. The services and facilities measures were, according to the respondents' viewpoints, broad enough to also include providing awareness and training programs to the staff of the tourist establishments as well as considering more coordination among service providers and stakeholders.

4- Discussion

Based on the obvious lack of accessibility measures witnessed in most of the elements of the tourism chain, some key actions are proposed to increase the Egyptian market share of the Grey Tourism segment and generate an age-friendly destination in Aswan:

- An understanding and acknowledgment of the Grey Tourism segment should be advocated by the MoTA coupled with a comprehensive analysis of the elderly tourist segment including their numbers, travel patterns, motivations, and behaviors.
- A methodology is needed to impose legal frameworks and government capacity to implement regulation that supports tourism infrastructure and services.
- MoTA should develop a set of accessibility measures for both first, the investment in the infrastructure environment, and second, design a system for monitors and evaluation.
- A special marketing strategy should be formulated to promote Aswan as a *'destination that has it all'* for the Grey Tourism segment.
- Marketing campaigns need to change the stereotypes of seniors and focus on their potential.

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- Mechanisms should be developed to coordinate the efforts of all tourism stakeholders as well as relevant ministries to complete the accessible tourism chain

5- Conclusion

Today, senior tourists or grey tourists are completely different than the previous generations. They are active, dynamic, more educated, healthier, more flexible, live in better conditions, and have good access to widely available information. Their market is growing increasingly, having tremendous significance on the global tourism industry and thus special measures have to be taken to satisfy their experience.

This research sheds the light on some crucial aspects related to the Grey Tourism market and the possibility of attracting senior tourists, especially in Aswan city since it is deemed as a great opportunity for economic, social, and cultural growth in Egypt. Probably the most important conclusion revealed from the study is the obvious lack of recognition of seniors' tourism as a business case and a prime example of a niche market that has high potential in the tourism industry. As could be expected, there is an absence of study on the grey tourist segment in Egypt. In so doing, it is a priority for the national and local authorities to deeply investigate this market, mainly their figures, statistics, travel motivations, patterns, and characteristics to capture its high potential and thus improve the current services and facilities so as to accommodate the senior tourists' needs and expectations.

Aswan city is an ideal destination for elderly tourists as it has almost all the attributes that commonly trigger the grey market segment. Adopting the seven stages of the accessibility chain and its stages will effectively contribute to improving management, information and communication, mobility, staff training, and quality of services, and thus would increase the usability and enjoyment of Egyptian touristic sites, services, and products as well as capturing a new segment. A detailed checklist for the accessibility chain could be developed to evaluate to which extent the elements of the chain are senior-friendly and to assess the preparedness of

the eco-system of the destination for the barrier-free approach.

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