

ANALYSIS OF TOURISM PRODUCTS OFFERED BY ROMANIAN TRAVEL AGENCIES. CASE STUDY: EGYPT TOURIST DESTINATION

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***Abstract:** The purpose of the study is to analyse the tourist packages offered by the most representative travel agencies in Romania in order to observe the tourist products that contain Egypt as a tourist destination. In this sense, 50 travel agencies from Romania were selected based on the economic results obtained in 2020 and their popularity at national level. The study is based on observation, the investigation instrument used being the observation sheet. Through the fact sheet, information was collected on tourist packages that include Egypt as a tourist destination, such as type of tourism product, services included, duration, tourist sights, and availability. The information was obtained by consulting the websites of travel agencies. Egypt is a tourist destination that has become very attractive for Romanian tourists in recent years, and travel agencies offer tourists a wide range of tourist packages that include this destination.*

Key words: *tourist packages, travel agencies, Romania, Egypt*

INTRODUCTION

The Arab Republic of Egypt covers an area of 1,002,000 km², houses 103,181,707 people and has a developed tourism sector with a significant improvement in Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Index 2019 edition (TTCI) ranked globally on 65th (of 140 countries), 3.9 overall score, and ranked regionally 6th (of 15 countries in the Middle East and North Africa - MENA). [4,15]

The tourism and travel industry is considered one of the most important sources of national income in Egypt, as it provides job opportunities either directly in the tourism industry itself or indirectly in other industries related to and complementary to the tourism industry. Therefore, Egypt exploited many of its natural, archaeological, heritage, and cultural resources in the tourism and travel industry.[8,11]

According to World Travel & Tourism Council, in 2019 the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP was 8.8% and the total contribution of Travel & Tourism to Employment was 2,415,200 jobs (9.2 % of total employment).[9,10]

Egypt is recognized as the leading tourist destination in the Middle East and according to official figures, 13.1 million tourists visited Egypt in 2019, with total revenue of \$13.3 billion and 1,000 USD receipts per arrival. [4,13] Most of tourists (89%) visited Egypt in 2019 for leisure. [10]

Whereas, Egypt is one of the most important tourist destinations for the tourism markets in Europe. Therefore in 2019, the percentage of European tourists in Egypt reached 64.3 % of all visitors, also the percentage of tourist nights for Europeans in the same period was 53.5%. [13]

Foreign tourists who visited Egypt in 2019 come from Germany (14%), Saudi Arabia (7%), United Kingdom (5%), Italy (4%), Libya (4%) and 66% from rest of the countries.[10]

According to information provided by Statistical Yearbook – tourism, tourists who visited Egypt in 2019 are from Europe (64.3%), America (4.2%), Arab countries (24.3%), and other countries (7.2 %), during their visiting the spending nights distribution was 53.5% for Europeans, 5.4% for Americans, 34.5% for Arabs and 6.6% for others.[14]

Related to the way of getting to Egypt, most of the tourists choose air transport (87.0 % of total arrivals), some of them use land transport (11.2 % of total arrivals) or sea transport (1.8 % of total arrivals). In 2018, the accommodation capacity of Egypt was 1,143 thousand hotels and resorts (with 135,612 thousand rooms and 272,277,000 beds) and 49 floating hotels (with 3,385 thousand rooms, 5,868 thousand beds). Also Egypt has about 20 professional tour guides in the Romanian language.[13]

Egyptian tourism is based on a variety of elements and tourist capabilities, including tangible cultural heritage as well as historical and archaeological monuments from the Pharaonic era, such as the pyramids of Giza and Luxor City, and the Greco-Roman era, such as the city of Alexandria, and the Christian time in Egypt, with its unique churches and monasteries, as well as the Holy Family's journey in Egypt and then the period of Islamic civilization, with its mosques, castles, palaces, and finally contemporary Egypt, with its museums displaying its ancient history and civilization.[2,3,4]

Intangible cultural heritage such as handmade crafts, popular and religious festivals, music, traditional dance, and finally natural capabilities like the Nile River, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean.[13]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

To study the offers of travel agencies, using the observation as a research method and the observation sheet as a research tool, the following steps were followed:

- selection Romanian travel agencies which will be subject to study;
- elaboration of a form with the information which wants to be obtained;
- analysis of the offers of the travel agencies selected by accessing the websites;
- completing the observation sheet;
- centralization of information;
- interpretation of the data obtained.

The selection of the agencies under study was done in several stages:

- identification of the number of existing tourist agencies in each county, respectively development region;
- determining the share held by each development region in the total number of existing travel agencies at national level;
- establishing the number of travel agencies to be analyzed in the 8 development regions, depending on the share held by each development region;
- establishing the travel agencies that will be analyzed, depending on the financial results (turnover) obtained in 2020 and the existence of a website with travel offers.

These steps were taken in the selection of travel agencies as the study was intended to cover the entire territory of the country, the results can be seen in figure 1.

After establishing the number of agencies to be analysed, the eligible travel agencies for each development region were identified, taking into account the turnover and the existence of a website with travel offers. In this sense, a number greater than the number established by the travel agencies for each development region was identified, the travel agencies that registered the highest turnover in 2020, and then the agencies that have websites that there are tourist offers. The reason for opting for a larger number of eligible agencies was that some travel agencies no longer have websites with travel offers or are no longer active in the market and there is a risk that the selection process for travel agencies will be difficult. In the end, the travel agencies were chosen for each development region according to the imposed requirements.

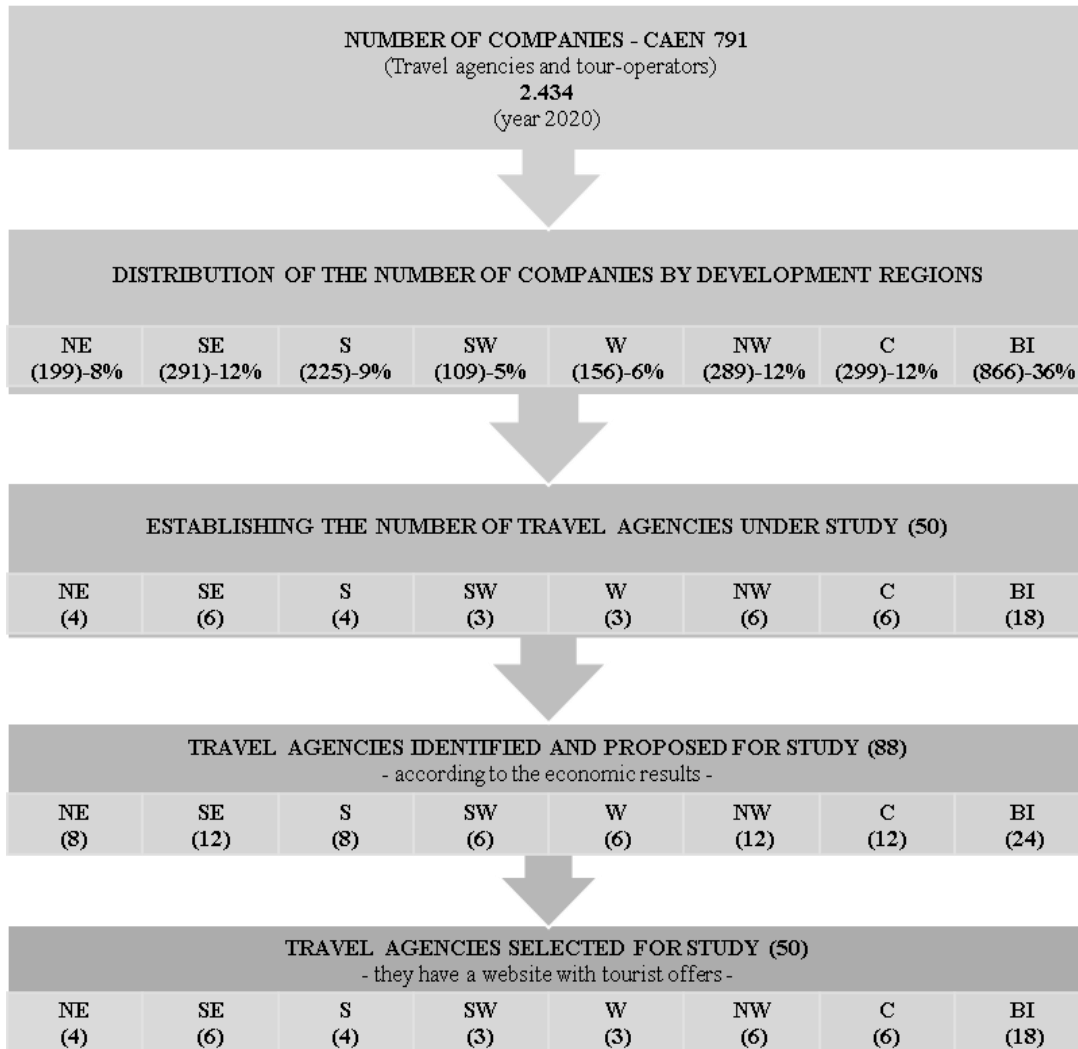


Figure 1. Steps taken to select travel agencies

Source: information retrieved and processed from www.risco.ro

The observation sheet was realized in tabular form and contains information on the existence in the offers of travel agencies of tourist products which include Egypt as tourist destination and information related to content of tourist packages like type of tourism product, services included, duration, touristic sights, price and availability.[6]

RESEARCH RESULTS

In 2020, 2,434 tourist and tour-operator agencies were registered in Romania, with a turnover amounting to 1,096,285,222 lei (226,645,694 euros). Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the turnover of this sector decreased by 70.88% compared to the previous year. According to estimates, as official data cannot be accessed yet, in 2021 the turnover of companies in this sector increased by 147.60% (2,714,372,272 lei, 561,168,549 euros).[7]

The restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic have made some tourist destinations more difficult to reach, while other tourist destinations have been more permissive.[1] This has attracted a large number of tourists to some tourist destinations. In this context, Egypt has become one of the favourite destinations of Romanian tourists, travel agencies adapting their offers to the requirements of tourists. Table 1 shows the results obtained after consulting the websites of the travel agencies selected to be studied.[12]

Table 1.

The results obtained after consulting the websites of selected travel agencies

Travel agency	Is Egypt found in the offer of the travel agency? (yes/no)	Type of tourism product (stay, circuit, cruise)	Duration (no of nights)	Services included	Tourist sights	Availability
1	yes	Stay	7, 14, 21	Charter Accommodation on 3*4*5* hotel AI	Hurghada/ Makada Bay/ Safaga	May - December
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane 5* vessel AI	Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
2	no	-	-	-	-	-
3	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotel AI	Hurghada, Sharm El Sheikh	April - December
		Circuit	6	Transport by plane Airport transfer Accommodation on 5* hotel + 5* vessel HB+AI Touristic guide	Cairo/ Luxor/Hurghada	June
4	no	-	-	-	-	-
5	no	-	-	-	-	-
6	no	-	-	-	-	-
7	no	-	-	-	-	-
8	no	-	-	-	-	-
9	yes	Stay	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 3*4*5* hotel airport transfer AI	Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Sharm el Sheikh	June-October
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane 5*Vessel AI	Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
10	no	-	-	-	-	-
11		Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI Touristic guide	Hurghada	June
12	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 3*4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh	April-October
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane 5*Vessel AI	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
13	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh	May-October
14	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
15	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
		Circuit	6	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5* vessel AI Touristic guide	Hurghada Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
16	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam, Safaga/ Soma Bay	May-October
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*5* hotels BB/HB Touristic guide	Hurghada/ Cairo/ Alexandria	May-October
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5* vessel AI	Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
17	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5*	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/	May-October

				hotels AI	Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*5* hotels BB/HB Touristic guide	Hurghada/ Cairo/ Alexandria	May-October
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane 5* vessel AI	Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
18	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
		Circuit	11, 12, 13	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5* vessel BB/HB/AI Touristic guide	Cairo/ Aswan/ Luxor/ Hurghada/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo	April
19	no	-	-	-	-	-
20	no	-	-	-	-	-
21	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
22	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
		Circuit	12	Transport by plane Accommodation on 5* hotels+ 5*vessel BB/HB/AI Touristic guide	Cairo/ Aswan/ Luxor/ Hurghada/ Edf/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- November
23	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	May-October
24	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	May-October
		Circuit	13	Transport by plane Transport by plane Accommodation on 5* hotels+ 5*vessel BB/HB/AI Touristic guide	Cairo/ Aswan/ Nill cruise/ Luxor/ Hurghada	April-October
25	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 3*4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh	May-October
26	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	April-October
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* 5* hotels BB/HB Touristic guide	Hurghada/ Cairo/ Alexandria	May-October
27	yes	Circuit	13	Transport by plane Accommodation on 5* hotels+ 5*vessel AI	Cairo/ Aswan/ Luxor/ Hurghada/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April, September, October
28	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	April-October
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5*vessel+sleeping train BB/HB	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom-Ombo/ Aswan/ Cairo	April-October
29	yes	Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5*vessel AI	Aswan/ Luxor/ Hurghada/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/	April - November
		Stay	7, 14	Transport by plane Accommodation on 3*4*5* hotels	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/	April- December

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				AI	Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	
30	yes	Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*5* hotels HB/AI	Hurghada/ Cairo/ Alexandria	April - November
31	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	El Gouna/ Hurghada/ Makadi Bay/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Safaga/ Soma Bay	April- December
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*5* hotels+ vessel 5* BB/HB	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom-Ombo/ Aswan/ Cairo	April-October
32	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*5* hotels BB/HB	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom-Ombo/ Aswan/ Cairo	April-October
		Cruise	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4* hotels+ 5* vessel AI	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom Ombo/ Aswan	April- October
33	yes	Stay	7, 14	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
34	no	-	-	-	-	-
35	no	-	-	-	-	-
36	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam,	April- December
		Circuit	7	Transport by plane Accommodation on 4*hotels + 5*vessel AI Touristic guide	Hurghada/ Luxor/ Edfu/ Kom-Ombo/ Aswan/ Cairo	October, November
37	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam/ Makadi Bay/ Safaga/ Soma Bay, Abu Soma, Sahl Hasheesh	April- December
38	no	-	-	-	-	-
39	no	-	-	-	-	-
40	no	-	-	-	-	-
41	no	-	-	-	-	-
42	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
43	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
44	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
		Circuit	10	Charter Airport transfer Accommodation on 4*5* hotels + 5*vessel AI	Cairo/ Hurghada/ Nile Cruise	August/ September/ October
45	no	-	-	-	-	-
46	no	-	-	-	-	-
47	no	-	-	-	-	-
48	no	-	-	-	-	-
49	yes	Stay	7	Charter Accommodation on 4*5* hotels AI	Hurghada/ Sharm el Sheikh/ Marsa Alam	April- December
50	no	-	-	-	-	-

Source: own researches

Of the 50 travel agencies and tour operators selected to be analysed in this study, 32 travel agencies (64%) have stays, tours or cruise offers for Egypt. Among them, a number

of 31 travel agencies offer directly on their website, tourist products of stay type, 16 agencies have available tourist products of circuit type and 6 travel agencies offer tourist products of cruise type.

Services included in the agency's travel agency offerings include air transportation, airport transfer, lodging and meals depending on the tourist's choice. The most popular destinations for this type of tourist product are Hurghada, Sharm el Sheikh and Marsa Alam, the duration of the stay is 7 nights, with availability between May and December 2022 departing from Cluj Napoca, Timisoara, Bucharest, Iasi, Sibiu, Baia Mare and Oradea. In April, due to very high demand, charter flights were limited, which led to the exhaustion of seats in terms of transport to the destination.

The travel agencies' offers for circuit tourism products include transport departing from Bucharest, transfer from the airport, accommodation at a 4* or 5* Hotel and on a 5* cruise ship, meals: AI, and visits are included to sights in Hurghada, Luxor, Edfu, Kom-Ombo, Aswan and Cairo. Departures are available from April to November with a duration ranging from 7 to 13 days.

CONCLUSIONS

Egypt's tourist map is based on a variety of elements and tourist capabilities, including tangible and intangible cultural heritage. Egypt is considered one of the best tourist destinations for Europeans. In recent years Romanian travel agencies have included Egypt in their offerings. Egypt's permissiveness for foreign tourists during the COVID-19 pandemic has attracted a greater presence of this tourist destination in the tourist packages offered by Romanian travel agencies.

The touristic offer of most of Romanian travel agencies is very diverse when referring to Egypt as a tourist destination. Most of touristic packages are available in spring, autumn and winter.

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