

# RESEARCH OBSTACLES IN TOURISM: A STUDY APPLIED TO EGYPTIAN UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

Research has a key role in sustainable and comprehensive development for any country. The primary body producing research in Egypt is higher education institutions (i.e. universities). It is claimed that the academic research contribution to tourism industry development is limited. This study aims to investigate the challenges of university research. It examines the effect of research challenges on the tourism industry development. Employing structural equation modeling for analysis purposes of 151 questionnaire forms collected from academics, the findings revealed that lack of clear university research policies, weak financial support, university research environment, researchers-related factors, research output marketing challenges, and field-related challenges are negatively affecting the tourism sector development. This study is useful for research policy-makers to set up research priorities to meet the societal needs.

Keywords- Academic research, Challenges, Egypt, Tourism.

## INTRODUCTION

At its various levels, research exists as one of the most outstanding factors contributing to the comprehensive development process of industry. In the rapidly changing world, societies aspire to provide rising generations with the knowledge necessary for solving problems and dealing with present and future challenges. Because of their crucial impacts, education and research can be considered the society's most critical investment in human resources. Higher education and research hold a key role in promoting comprehensive development and rapid transformation necessary for nations facing the consequences of globalization. There is a dire need in the Arab world for a complete re-examination of higher education, and research policy in order to work towards enhancing their quality to meet needs of the modern society. In the Arab world, research is mostly linked to higher education institutions (i.e., universities). It is believed that higher education and research constitute the best and the most appropriate model with a primary function of producing and providing advanced scientific knowledge enables progress and builds a better future (Bin Tareef, 2009).

Furthermore, research is an essential component for any country to achieve sustainable and global development. It is also essential for social mobility, the achievement of harmony, justice, comprehensive peace, and most importantly the development of human resources (Karimian, Sabbaghian, Salehi, & Sedghpour 2012). Academic research should aim to educate well-aware, autonomous, and responsible citizens committed to national and universal principles, capable of dealing with the challenges of the century and of lifelong learning. It is strongly linked to universities in Egypt where universities are one of the main and popular bodies conducting and producing research. As a result of this linkage between university and research, research was poor in Egypt until 1907 as universities did not exist before that time in Egypt. The establishment of Cairo University in 1908 was the beginning of escalating the number of universities and students joining these institutions (Bond, Maram, Soliman, & Khattab, 2013). Number of universities in Egypt has increased from one public university in 1908 to 27 public universities at present. In addition, 19 private universities, and a small number of public research centers have been established (Ministry of Higher Education, 2014).

Despite the increasing number of universities in Egypt and considering them the main body producing academic research, the Central Auditing Organization, the formal authority of auditing in Egypt, has criticized Egyptian universities for their relatively low output of scientific research compared to universities in other countries (OECD & World Bank, 2010; World Economic Forum, 2011). The global competitiveness report issued by the World Economic Forum in 2011 has ranked Egypt the 113<sup>th</sup> out of 142 countries on the quality of scientific research and 83<sup>rd</sup> on its capacity for innovation (Bond, et al., 2013). This simply leads to the fact that research in Egypt occupies the tail position of global rankings. Therefore, this study investigates the challenges