

Analyzing the Role of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as an E-Marketing Supportive Tool (Tourism Companies' Websites)

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Abstract

E-marketing has become one of the most effective marketing tools due to the internet and new technologies, which have a great effect on customers' decisions. In fact, if companies aim to gain brand awareness and attract more customers to increase their sales volume, they ought to consider the beneficial role of e-marketing to their business.

Furthermore, search engines are the only mean for browsing information on the web. Search engines marketing became essential tool to meet customers' inquiries, since they provide all the information required in a few seconds through displaying pages containing information that the users look for in an orderly way according to the search results.

The present study aims to evaluate the role of search engine optimization (SEO), as an e-marketing supportive tool, for tourism

companies' websites and their effect on their sales volume and their brand awareness. It also aims to examine the extent to which Egyptian tourism companies are promoting their services via search engines. Finally, it explores the mechanism of successful SEO and its algorithm.

This study adopts a quantitative research approach by deploying a survey method to collect and analyze the pertinent primary data. It also analyzes data collected about tourism companies' websites afterwards applying a google query of "Egypt Tours" to explore SEO mechanism to fulfill the study objectives. The results proved the significant effect of using search engine-marketing on increasing website traffic, brand awareness and sales volumes. It is also highlighted that, within Egyptian tourism companies,

search engine marketing can play a key role as an effective marketing tool.

Keywords: SEO, Search Engine Optimization, Search Engine-marketing

Introduction

In the last decade, the internet grew rapidly and nowadays it is offering a wide range of information for internet users (Simmons and Saleh, 2011). In fact, it became one of the most important sources of information, where over 7.000.000 pages are published daily on it (Raisinghani, 2005). Statistics show an increase in the number of internet users worldwide. They reached over 3.9 billion particularly in China, while India and the United States rank ahead in terms of the internet users (Internet Usage Statistics, 2019).

The internet provides significant potential benefits to consumers worldwide. More choices, lower prices and the latest products and services have become available online to consumers who are physically far away from the world's traditional companies and commercial centers (Teo, 2006).

On the other hand, the features of the global electronic market constitute a unique opportunity for companies to reach the existing and potential customers more efficiently by replacing traditional retail stores with web-based business (Limayem et al., 2000).

With reference to tourism, travel agencies seize the natural first point of contact for shopping by travel consumers. Customers begin to search destinations and travel suppliers online. They choose their destination, hotel, and excursions before

visiting the travel agency. Alternatively, they can simply book directly with suppliers (IATA, 2017).

Currently, tourism services and destinations are promoted via websites and online platforms, since they are cheaper than any other promotional tools and much more easily accessible for online consumers (Pradhan, 2012). As a result, tourism companies and stakeholders should be mainly interested in tourists' needs and try to provide it online through their websites or platforms, using new technologies to promote and market their services (Shih et al., 2013). In return, this will achieve worldwide competitiveness for companies and destinations and increase their market share.

Websites can easily gain traffic if they are well optimized for search engine (Stokes, 2011). Internet users have vast choices of available search engines to be used in getting information. Therefore, search engines need to develop their services and become faster to gain user satisfaction (Enge et al., 2012). The search engines can rank website pages according to users search queries, and sort results based on user experience on websites (Seymour et al., 2011). Most websites are not optimized adequately because their owners or developers do not consider search engine ranking factors when they establish/develop their websites (Chotikitpat, et al., 2015). This leads to a definite negative effect on their website traffic, brand awareness, credibility, and their sales volume.

Therefore, this study objects to evaluate the usefulness of Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as an e-marketing tool for Egypt tourism companies' websites by examining

the relationship between SEO, as an e-marketing tool, and the increase in the company's sales volumes. Then, to explore SEO mechanism within some tourism companies and analyze their effectiveness within the case of google query named "Egypt Tours".

E-marketing in the Travel Industry

The diffusion of ICT in the tourism industry has profoundly modified the outlook of tourism processes, information search, business in the tourism sector and competition in the market (Singh and Kasvana, 2005; Connolly and Lee, 2006). Adding, a drastic change in tourist behavior regarding the advent of new technology which enabled users plan and book their vacation in a few minutes (Datta, 2020). The tourism industry has been changing rapidly since the internet has enabled customers to search for and book their travel products online (Kavoura and Stavrianeas, 2015). Imber and Betsy (2000) defined the internet marketing as "the process of building and maintaining customer relationships through online activities to facilitate the exchange of ideas, products, and services that satisfy the goals of both buyers and sellers."

In the last few years, the internet without any doubt had a great impact on tourism and provided a two-way communication system 24 hours a day. The information-intensive nature of the tourism industry suggests an important role of the Internet and web technology in destination promotion and marketing (Doolin et al., 2002). In addition, using the internet as a marketing tool provides an alternative distribution channel that can cut out the middleman (Martorell and Gabriel, 2004). In other words, the internet has facilitated the development of

new business relationships and has opened cross-border market opportunities for companies (Mathews et al., 2016).

Kim (2016) pointed out that 148.3 million people make a booking on the internet each year; the percentage of people who book via the website is 57% and those who make a last-minute reservation from a smart phone is 65%. According to a report from the National Observatory for Telecommunications and the Information Society website (ONTSI, 2017) sales through websites and apps have reached 34.4%. In this regard, tourism products are among the top trending product categories to sell online (hotel reservations have settled as the first product category and travel tickets as the fourth) (San-Martín et al., 2020). Therefore, it appears clear that most customers make their reservation via the website rather than visiting a travel agent or personally attending the hotel (Rosli et al., 2017).

The study gives credence to the following e-marketing definition: "E-marketing refers to the use of the internet and the related technology to carry out a range of procedures with the internet to identify and anticipate the needs of consumers, deliver requested products or service to them in a timely convenient and profitable manner, and achieve e-marketing objectives and strategies with the help of digital technologies" (Yannopoulos, 2011; Rehman and Khan, 2013). Similarly, this definition, according to (Atshaya, 2016), is parallel to internet marketing with a few add-ons focusing on the relationship building with customers, which is significant in the tourism sector. Besides, e-marketing became more popular because of the widespread of e-commerce. In other words, the main

reason of using digital marketing in businesses nowadays is the lower cost associated with it and reachability compared to traditional marketing (Paavola, 2017), whereas the biggest challenge is to combine the most appropriate channels of e-marketing to maximize benefits and reduce the cost (Kotler and Armstrong, 2010).

In Egypt, according to Ezzat et al (2019), USA is the most popular market buying tourism services via Egyptian travel agents' websites by 66.6%. While 33.3% who are buying tourism services via Egyptian travel agents' websites are from Europe. Thereby, Egyptian Travel Agents should customize and personalize the electronic tourism services to face the demographic differences of tourists and their changed needs and requirements. There are still some reasons that hinder increasing their online market share. For instance, there is no source in Egypt for e-tourism statistics to know numbers of e- tourists and their online behaviors. There is also no legislation and laws for practicing e-tourism activities in Egypt. Also, there is no license or laws for online travel agents and tourism websites in Egypt (Ezzat et. al.2019).

Most Popular E-marketing Tools and Platforms

Undoubtedly, digital technology has been transforming tourism globally. It is generating a new paradigm-shift in marketing. Travel service providers use digital tools such as websites, mobile applications, and social media for attracting new consumers (Mariani et al., 2014), improving customer service, enhancing operational efficiency and consequently, increasing revenue (Amaro et al., 2015). This has motivated travel agencies to use e-

marketing. The most popular e-marketing tools used by service providers are:

E-mail: Despite being less trendy these days, e-mail is considered the primary and most important tool for communication. This economical and cost-effective tool assists in communication with the vendors and customers and assists in creating a strong database (Ho and Lee, 2015).

Social Media Platforms: Innovations in web technology and smart phones have evolved social media usage (Bruhn et al., 2012). Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram are the most attractive platforms since customers use them very frequently (wall and Vis, 2017). Facebook is regarded as a vital tool for customer engagement (Malhotra et al., 2013) and for the generation of queries and leads. Small travel companies use these less expensive platforms for the generation of lead to create a digital presence in the market (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). The tourism industry has changed dramatically with reference to this overwhelming emergence of social media platforms. Due to the nature of a travel product most people share their travel experience via social media platforms that can be used to market tourism companies' services (Buted et al., 2014).

Web Blogs: They became among the popular forms of online consumer-opinion platforms and exchanging information among tourists (Wenger, 2007). Certainly, the growth in travel blogs and new trends in blogging technology has facilitated the introduction of electronic marketing, which offers new ways of affecting and serving consumers in the travel market (Huang et al., 2011). Overall, blog marketing helps improve a website's rankings in search

results and is often used for Search Engine Optimization (SEO) purposes (Rajamanickam, 2020).

Websites: Basic or static websites are exploited by the travel companies for the authentication of the company and for creating their presence in the online market. Websites are not just for communicating with consumers, but they are also a tool for authentication. Websites assume that the travel suppliers are genuine. In fact, booking portal websites is now becoming more convenient for consumers as they can directly book through them and thus generate more revenue to travel companies (Dehghani and Tumer, 2015). Practically, 65% cruise travelers, in the tourism sector booked their cruise online via websites (ITB World Travel Trends Report 2018/2019), and 65% of the travelers made hotels reservations for the same day through mobile devices (Kim, 2016).

The emergence of these e-marketing tools and the application of new technologies particularly in the tourism sector has associated with search engine-marketing which ensures that websites are as accessible to search engines by selecting keywords and search terms on a website to target the internet users by using these keywords (WTO, 2008). Nevertheless, creating websites does not actually refer to using website designers/developers to search engine marketing because they still do not have a secure clue on how to make the site easy for search engines to work with (Clay and Esparza, 2011).

Search Engine Optimization (SEO)

Nowadays, the tourism industry depends mainly on search engines since it dominates

over 60% of leisure travelers who use search engines to get information and 55% of business travelers who use them in research and planning (Think with Google, 2014).

According to Learn with Google (2019), search engine" is a tool that indexes and returns relevant digital content in response to users' keywords". The most popular internet search engines are Google, Yahoo, Bing, Yandex and Baidu.

There are various search engines available on the internet, each with its own techniques and specialties (Jain, 2013). Currently, many popular search engines are being used, such as Google, Bing, Yahoo MSN, AOL and ASK (Krunić,2013; Khraim,2015). Today according to Stat counter Global stats (2020) Google is the most widely used representing 92.4% of the total users.

According to Vignesh and Deepa (2014), the web users' search engine preferences and behaviors, in turn, influence web marketers' SEO strategies and search engines' rankings. Sharaf (2013) and Swati et al., (2013) stated that the best search engine for internet users is the one that gives them the right results according to their search queries with the minimum of just one or two keywords.

Consequently, this study focuses on Google search engine owing to its greatest market share (statcounter, 2019). Furthermore, Google is regarded as one of the top search engines for its widespread range all over the world and for frequently updating their algorithms and search engine results according to user queries (Neralla et al, 2014).

The World Tourism Organization and the European Travel Commission (2008) declared that Search Engines Optimization (SEO) is "the process of improving the volume and quality of traffic to a website from search engines through natural search results". This implies that a website is accessible to search engines, selecting key search terms to target, and manipulating the site content.

Yalçın and Köse, (2010); Jain (2013), agreed that SEO is a kind of a program named as spiders or robots, which collects data about websites with website URL (Uniform Resource Locator), some keywords or keyword groups that define the content of the web site. These programs move through the website using the hyperlink structure of the web. Likewise, Jones et al (2011); IATA (2017) have defined Search Engine Optimization (SEO): "As a marketing strategy that involves designing your website in such a way that it can be easily indexed and located by search engines". These definitions explain the mechanism of the search engine, how it works, and its main goal (improving the volume and quality of traffic to a website).

Search engine optimization technique can be divided into three main categories, Organic SEO, Paid Search Engine Optimization and Local Search Engine Optimization. Organic SEO is a series of modifications and techniques, which make it easier for search engines to crawl, index, and understand the content of a website (Sfetcu, 2014). While the obvious example of paid SEO is the google Ads (Ciomek, 2016).

Additionally, according to Khraim (2015), organic (natural) SEO is crucial as it enables the company to be ranked in the top 10

without any disturbance. Users are most likely to choose from the addresses appearing on the first page of results, and if your website ranks on the first page, your site becomes easier to be found and reached by users, thus your website traffic increases. Also, the first organic result in Google Search has an average click-through rate of 28.5%, Second result 15.7% and the third 11% (Southern, 2020).

SEO is a good investment in the long run. Thoroughly, search engine-marketing can be successful if it generates steady levels of traffic to the website, and enhances awareness of the brand (Shih et al., 2013).

Hence, SEO becomes cost effective if the site is properly designed and optimized. Compared to conventional marketing, Search Engine Advertisement (SEA) and pay per click advertising (PPC), SEO saves much time and money and can continue longer than other tools. Further, SEO leads to the increased brand visibility of the website, the more times a company's website is visible in the search results, the better the company's online visibility is (Fahlström and Jensen, 2016). Besides, the improvement of website SEO increases accessibility, which leads to higher sales for products and services (Moreno and Martinez, 2013).

SEO, as Nazar (2009) mentioned, is a very important internet marketing strategy that should be adopted by every company to increase its revenue. On-page and off-page optimization along with paid advertisements is essential for having a better SEO campaign. Moreover, Singh et al., (2011), in their research about the impact of 'Search Engine Optimization' on advertisement, pointed that Companies using the SEO for

the purpose of advertisement are getting more new customers than the companies using the other methods, and companies using the SEO for the advertising are generating more revenue than the other companies.

Conversely, it appears that the results achieved by SEO strategies are slow and uncontrollable as Google and other search engines frequently change their algorithms and standards for optimization (Evans, 2007). Therefore, it is important to become familiar with all the updates related to search engines. There is also a lack of standard among search engines (Nazar, 2009). Therefore, analyzing the website traffic sources can present important information concerning the main search engine that is used. The website content must be updated from time to time to have a better chance to be ranked higher in search engines for related keywords (Ziakis et al., 2019). Finally, high traffic or increased rate in a business, with PPC (page per click) advertising, leads to a pause in advertising which might cause an immediate drop in business, traffic, or sales (Weller and Calcott, 2012).

Search Engine Algorithm

Search engine is designed to search for specific keywords and group them according to user search query and website content (Clay and Esparza, 2011). To rank websites, the search engine uses information gathered from crawling algorithms and data mining methods on the Internet (Berman and Katona, 2013).

Accordingly, Sharaf (2013); Berman and Katona(2013) ; IATA (2017) algorithm of a search engine consists of three major

elements; Crawler, index and ranking. The best search engine is that which provides all web pages on the Internet, as well as a priority for the best result, which matches with the user's search query available at the top pages' results.

The first step in the search engine is crawling. Webpage search engines begin to crawl well known high-quality websites. They then start to index and visit all links on this website to discover other web pages (Enge et al., 2012). These web crawlers are known as robots or "spiders" (IATA, 2017).

The next step is to index a website, where a robot or crawler starts from a known point of origin to follow links between web pages, and caches page text, content, and other text-based information as it moves about the web. Once the engines retrieve a page during a crawl, their next job is to parse the code and store selected pieces of the pages of massive server, to be ready to be recalled from users search queries at any time needed (WTO and European Travel Commission, 2008).

The following step in this quest occurs when the search engine returns a list of relevant pages back on the web most likely to satisfy the user. This process requires the search engine to scour its corpus of hundreds of billions of documents to achieve two main things: firstly, return only the decided results that are related to the searcher's query; and second, rank/sort them out (Xing and Lin 2006; Enge et al., 2012).

Search engines need from three to five months to index a new optimized website since the robots used by search engines must crawl through almost 50 million new ones each year (West, 2016).

Finally, there are several ranking factors upon which search engines rely, to rank website pages, such as domain age, exact match domain, Website Secure Socket Layer (SSL) certificate, mobile friendly, accelerated mobile page, load time factor, keyword appearance in H1 tag, keywords in both title and full text, Keyword in Uniform Resource Locator (URL)..... etc. (Dean,2020). These ranking factors can be used to assess the effectiveness of SEO of the website (Luh et al.,2016)

Research Methodology

According to the purpose of this study, it is mainly evaluating the usefulness of using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) as an e-marketing tool for Egyptian tourism companies' websites and exploring SEO mechanism within the case of "Egypt Tour" as Google query to analyze and identify the algorithm of SEO.

The study adopts a quantitative research approach by using the survey method, which aims to collect and analyze pertinent data to achieve the research objectives and provide an eventual framework to use Search Engine Optimization as a supportive-marketing tool for tourism company websites.

The study uses a convenience sample. The population of the present research consists of tourism companies in Cairo and Alexandria, which have active websites and use Search Engine Optimization to market their services. Based on the analysis of the Egyptian travel agencies association website: <https://www.etaa-egypt.org>, The sample of the study consisted of 72 companies (19 in Alexandria and 52 in Cairo).

Primary data collection relied on a questionnaire which is designed for respondents to record their answers to closely defined or open-ended questions. It is considered an efficient data -collection mechanism when the researcher knows exactly what is required and how to measure the variables (Gay and Diehl, 1992; Day, 1995; Tauliatos and Compton, 1998). The questionnaire includes main sections like; uses of tourism companies to search engine-marketing as an e-marketing tool, the importance, and benefits of the use of organic and paid SEO marketing for tourism companies and their effect on sales volume, as well as the obstacles being faced when applying search engine optimization marketing. The questionnaire was distributed among travel agencies that have an active website and could use SEO to examine whether they use search engine optimization marketing to promote and market the services they provided, in addition to its effectiveness on company's sales. The questionnaire was distributed using online techniques and analyzed using the Statistical Package for The Social Sciences (SPSS) program to achieve the study goals.

Moreover, the study relied on collecting primary data on the Case of Google query of "Egypt Tours" to ensure reaching significant results concerning SEO mechanism.

Data Analysis and Discussions

▪ The questionnaire

Table (1) shows (Descriptive statistics for the Usage of tourism companies for search engine-marketing), which represents that the highest average was awarded to

question 1: (Your company hires people to be responsible for e-marketing department) with a mean of 4.19, and question 3: (The Most traffic on your website comes from Social media websites Facebook - Twitter - Pinterest - etc...) came in the second highest average with a mean of 4.11. Followed by question

5, (Most visits on your website come from (Google - Yahoo - Bing) organic search engine) came in the third highest average with a mean of 3.89. The lowest average was awarded to question 6, (Most visits on your website come from paid search engine ads) with a mean of 3.47.

Table (1) Usage of search engine-marketing by tourism companies

Using search engine-marketing	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	% Mean	Rank
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
Your company hires people to be responsible for the e-marketing department	26	36.1	34	47.2	12	16.7	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.19	83.8	9
Your Company relies on an outsourced-marketing agency to market their services	3	4.2	34	47.2	33	45.8	2	2.8	0	0.0	3.53	70.6	19
The Most traffic on your website comes from social media websites (Facebook - Twitter - Pinterest - etc...)	18	25.0	45	62.5	8	11.1	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.11	82.2	11
Your company market its services via search engines with a good budget:	7	9.7	48	66.7	16	22.2	1	1.4	0	0.0	3.85	77.0	15
Most visits on your website come from (Google - Yahoo - Bing) organic search	8	11.1	50	69.4	12	16.7	2	2.8	0	0.0	3.89	77.8	14
Most visits on your website come from Paid search engine ads	6	8.3	43	59.7	21	29.2	2	2.8	0	0.0	3.74	74.8	17
Most Visits on your website are from													
A. Google	15	20.8	49	68.1	7	9.7	1	1.4	0	0.0	4.08	81.6	12
B. Yahoo	1	1.4	19	26.4	41	56.9	9	12.5	2	2.8	3.11	62.2	21
C. Bing	2	2.8	5	6.9	46	63.9	16	22.2	3	4.2	2.82	56.4	22

It is apparent from these results that the main traffic source to tourism company's website come from search engines, social media platforms and that most visits came from Google engine then Yahoo and Bing. These results came to agreement with the findings of Mortzoukou (2008) and Kaur et al., (2011). Similarly, most visits to website were generated from organic then paid search engine as shown at question 5, 6 and it shows that most companies that use search engine to promote their service spend a reasonable budget as shown in question 4(Your company market its services via search engines with a good

budget), Singh et al (2011) supported this view. In addition, the idea that most companies hired employees responsible for

the e-marketing department also these companies may rely on outsourced-marketing agencies came to agreement with Ollila (2012).

Table (2) The importance of using search engine-marketing to tourism companies

The importance of using search engine optimization marketing	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	% Mean	Rank
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%			
Is it necessary for tourism companies to have an e-marketing department to market their services?	46	63.9	25	34.7	1	1.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.63	92.6	1
It is necessary for tourism companies to have a website to Keep up with new technology.	35	48.6	37	51.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.49	89.8	3
Your visitors can book services provided by your company through your website online.	11	15.3	36	50.0	18	25.0	7	9.7	0	0.0	3.71	74.2	18
It is enough to just have a website to be competitive with the other websites on the Internet.	6	8.3	13	18.1	12	16.7	25	34.7	16	22.2	2.56	51.2	24
It is important now for tourism companies to market their services via paid search engines ads.	23	31.9	44	61.1	5	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.25	85.0	8
Optimizing your website pages' results on a search engine (organic) can increase visitors to your website.	17	23.6	50	69.4	5	6.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.17	83.4	10

Table (2) reveals that the highest average was awarded to question 1: (Is it necessary for tourism companies to have an e-marketing department to market their services) with a mean of 4.63. Question 2 has the second highest average: (It is necessary for tourism companies to have a website to keep up with new technology) with a mean of 4.49. Then question 5 is at the third highest average, (Using search engine-marketing has a great effect on increasing the sales value and brand awareness for companies) with a mean of 4.33. While the lowest average was awarded to question 4, (It is enough to just have a

website to be competitive with the other websites on the internet) with a mean of 2.56. The table exposes the importance of having an e-marketing department and having a website to keep up with new technologies. These results agree with the findings of (Alkarableiah, 2014). The third and sixth questions also expose that using search engine marketing can increase brand awareness and sales volumes via booking companies' service from their website. These results are consistent with the findings of (Efendioglu and Igna, 2011; Johansson, 2012).

Table (3) Obstacles to apply Search Engine Optimization marketing

Obstacles to apply Search Engine Optimization marketing	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree		Mean	% Mean	Rank
The high cost of search engine ads is one of main reasons your company refused to set up paid ads campaign	11	15.3	36	50.0	21	29.2	4	5.6	0	0.0	3.75	75.0	16
Inefficiency of search engine ads is one of main reasons your company refused to set up paid ads campaign	3	4.2	12	16.7	24	33.3	31	43.1	2	2.8	2.76	55.2	23
Inability to observe your search engine ads is one of main reasons refused your company to set up paid ads campaign	6	8.3	34	47.2	22	30.6	10	13.9	0	0.0	3.50	70.0	20
Paid ads campaign has a great effect on increasing sales value and website traffic for your company	16	22.2	41	56.9	15	20.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.01	80.2	13
It is necessary for diversity and interconnection of e-marketing tools to gain benefits of search engine-marketing on your company's website	24	33.3	44	61.1	4	5.6	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.28	85.6	7
Optimizing your website pages results according to users search query (keywords) on search engine (organic) can increase Company sales value and brand awareness	32	44.4	37	51.4	3	4.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.40	88.0	5
Result of your website pages on search engine pages may be change from time to time	35	48.6	35	48.6	2	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.46	89.2	4
You must be aware of new search engine updates to guarantee the rank of your website to be within the top results of search engine pages	44	61.1	28	38.9	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	4.61	92.2	2

Table (3) displays (The obstacles of applying Search Engine Optimization marketing), it is obvious that the highest average was awarded to the question 8: (You must be aware of new search engine updates to guarantee your website at the top results of search engine pages) with a mean of 4.61. Question 7 has the second highest average (Sort of your website pages results on search engine may be change from time to time) with a mean of 4.46. Question 6; (Optimizing your website pages results according to the search query users (keywords) on search engine (organic) can increase Company sales value and brand awareness) goes after at the third highest average with a mean of 4.40. While the lowest average assigned to question 2, (Inefficiency of search engine ads is one of

main reasons to ignore your company to set Paid ads campaign) with a mean of 2.76.

Within the results concerning "the obstacles of applying Search Engine Optimization marketing" it is apparent that the top obstacle is "to be aware of new Google updates". Moreover, changing the ranked page in search engine for time to time to enhance website rank according to user experience is another important obstacle. This result was supported by (Lievonon, 2013).

Additionally, the high cost of search engine ads was considered one of the main problems to apply Paid search engine campaigns (Q1 with means =3.75), this result agrees with the findings of (Martzoukau, 2008). Also, results indicated

that the inefficiency of search engine ads is the cause to why companies refuse to create Paid ads is not a strong cause (Q2 means=2.76). These results agree with the findings of (Martzoukau, 2008).

The upcoming section will declare the correlation between the main elements of the questionnaire via Pearson coefficient which measures the existence (given by a p-value) and strength (given by the coefficient r between -1 and +1) of a linear relationship between two variables (Samuels and Gilchrist, 2014). If the outcome is significant, this means that a correlation exists. According to Cohen (1988) an absolute value of r of 0.1 is classified as small, an absolute value of 0.3 is classified as medium and of 0.5 is classified as large.

Table (4) Correlation between using Search Engine Optimization marketing and the benefits of using it for tourism companies. (n = 72)

The benefits of using search engine-marketing for tourism companies		
The use of search engine-marketing in tourism companies	r	P
	0.666*	<0.001*

Table (4) presents the correlation of using search engine marketing and its benefits for tourism companies, the result shows that there is a strong positive Pearson correlation significance between the variables "using Search Engine Optimization marketing" and "the benefits of using it for tourism companies" with P <0.001 So, it can be concluded that the benefits of using (SEO) for tourism companies increases when the scale of using search engine-marketing increases.

Table (5) Correlation between using Search Engine Optimization marketing and the obstacles of applying search engine optimization marketing for tourism companies. (n = 72)

The obstacles to apply Search Engine Optimization marketing		
Using Search Engine Optimization marketing for tourism companies	r	p
	-0.477*	<0.001*

Table (5) summarizes the result of correlation analysis variables between "using search engine optimization marketing" and "the obstacles of applying search engine-marketing for tourism companies". (n = 72): the analysis showed a negative correlation between the two variables. As the obstacles to apply search engine-marketing for tourism companies increase, using search engine-marketing decrease.

Table (6) Correlation between different study parameters

	Increasing tourism companies' sales value and using paid Search Engine Optimization marketing		Increasing tourism companies' sales value and using organic Search Engine Optimization marketing	
	r	p	r	p
Using search engine-marketing for tourism companies	0.710*	<0.001*	0.785*	<0.001*
The importance of using Search Engine Optimization marketing	0.722*	<0.001*	0.567*	<0.001*
Obstacles to apply Search Engine Optimization marketing for tourism companies	-0.609*	<0.001*	-0.537*	<0.001*

Pearson correlation analysis indicated a significant relation among the number of study variables. (Table 6) "Using search engine-marketing tourism companies" was significantly related to "an increase in

tourism companies sales value via paid and organic (not paid) search engine optimization marketing as arrow "; sig. = .0710, sig.= 0.785.

There is an apparent positive correlation between using tourism companies paid and organic SEO marketing and the increase in their sales value. This comes in line with Johansson (2012), Nazar (2009) and contrasts with Efendioglu (2012), who suggested that effective advertising is via (banners, text ads, etc.), All these communication tools are ignored by online users as they considered very annoying, untrustworthy, and unattractive.

Unsurprisingly, "the importance of using paid/organic search engine-marketing " is significantly related to an increase in tourism companies' sales value via paid / organic search engine-marketing with level of significant; sig. = 0.722 and sig. = 0.567. There are strong positive correlations between the importance of using paid/organic search engine-marketing and the increase of companies' sales value. This agrees with the findings of (Ghajarzadeh et al., 2010) as he stated that e-consumers are familiar with online ads, which leads to higher effectiveness of sales value and brand awareness

There is also a notable negative relation between the obstacles of applying paid/organic search engine-marketing for tourism companies and using paid/organic Search Engine Optimization marketing with a significant level as; sig. = -0.609, sig. = -0.537. The analysis showed a negative correlation between the obstacles to applying paid/organic search engine-marketing for tourism companies and using paid/ organic SEO marketing. This finding is complete

those of Martzoukiu (2008) who stated that experienced search engine users shared less appreciation for the value of more complex search engine optimization strategies (such as organic SEO). This is because internet users may use incorrect search quires formatting on search engine.

▪ Case Study of "Egypt Tour"

Within this case, the researcher intended to analyze the top three organic website results in the Google search engine for "**Egypt Tours**" search query. In fact, this study uses this query related to services provided by tourism companies that has good search traffic in Google search engine as a Google keyword planner tool. Actually, (<https://ads.google.com/home/tools/keyword-planner/>) appeared to be their monthly average search volume worldwide from 10.000 to 100000 users search with this keyword in Google. The analysis aimed firstly, to obtain the most important Google ranking factors which depend on sorting webpage results Secondly, to identify the website techniques used by these websites to get the first rank on Google page results using "Egypt Tours" keyword to extract SEO mechanism which can be applied on tourism websites for successful SEO strategy. Data was collected from 15 July 2019 to 30 May 2020 (since results may change according to Google updates). After getting the monthly average search for "Egypt Tours", the keyword will be searched on Google search engine to decide the websites at the top rank. "Google Chrome incognito" browser has been used to avoid saving any previous information in browsing history, website cookies, site data and information full in form, that may affect Google results. Additionally, Google NCR (no country redirect) has been used as this research does

not determine any target country. As Shown in Figure (1) The top three website page' results for Egypt tours search query are

ranked in the following order, Memphis Tours, Egypt Tours Portal and Emo Tours, Egypt.

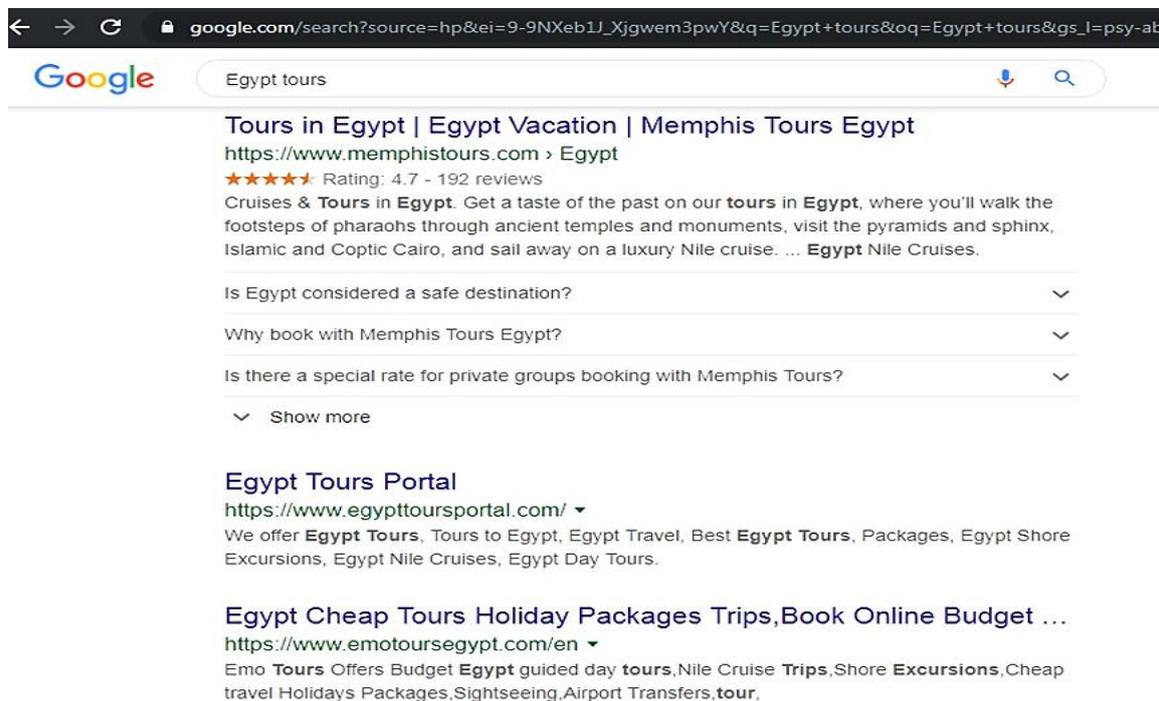


Figure (1) Google Search engine results for Egypt tours search query

As displayed in Table (7) Memphis Tours website gets the first rank since it patronizes Google ranking factors and optimizes their webpage to Google search engine. The Domain Age of Memphis Tours website is

older than that of the two others, since it was created in December 1999, while Egypt Tours portals was created in December 2009, and Emo Tours was created in March 2010.

Table (7) The top three sites according to main Google ranking factors

	Factors	Memphis tours	EMO Tours Egypt	Egypt tours Portal
1	Domain Age	19 Years	9 Years	9 Years
2	Website SSL certificate	USE SSL	USE SSL	USE SSL
3	Mobile Friendly	YES	NO	YES
4	Site /Page Speed for desktop	63/100	18/100	37/100
5	Site /Page Speed for Mobile	29/100	2/100	6/100
6	Accelerated mobile page	Valid AMP page	Not an AMP page	Not an AMP page
7	Title tag	Valid	Valid	Valid
8	Bounce Rate	33.5	60.6	34.2
9	Keyword Appears in H1 Tag	YES	YES	YES
10	Keywords in both title and full text	YES	YES	YES

11	Canonical	Use Canonical	No canonical found	Use Canonical
12	Keyword in alt tag	Yes	NO	Yes
13	Keyword in anchor text	Yes	Yes	Yes
14	Keyword in URL	NO	YES	YES
15	Back Links	219	64	29
16	Internal Links	Yes	Yes	Yes
17	Site Map	Yes	Yes	Yes
18	Public vs. Private domain information	Public	Public	Public
19	Related content with Key word	Yes	Yes	Yes
20	Use Meta Code (keyword/Description)	Yes	Yes	Yes

Likewise, Memphis Tours exceeds Emo Tours and Egypt Portals in using AMP (accelerated mobile pages) to enhance the user's experience using mobile and tablet devices. Moreover, this provides valuable content for users to meet all their needs. The bounce rate for Memphis Tours site, as indicated by website analysis was 33.5%, followed by Egypt Tours portal 34.2% and Emo Tours 60.6%. This indicates that a great number of visitors spend time on Memphis tours website and don't switch directly to other websites.

Memphis tours website also has a strong internal structure by using internal links between web pages, in addition to strong and trusted back links from external websites that refer to Memphis tours website as Alexa metric shows there were 219 Back links referring to Memphis, 64 back links referring to Emo Tours Egypt, while 29 back links refer to Egypt Tours Portal. In addition, using Meta code and improving web pages and website speed tools made Memphis Tours website acquire precedence and reach the top rank on search engines' result pages (SERPS).

Table (8) Alexa Metric for top three websites

Websites	Global Rank	Bounce Rate %	Daily page view per visitor	Daily time on site	Search traffic %	Total Sites linking in
Memphis Tours	50,792	28.7%	9.5	14:41	21%	219
Egypt tours Portal	119,630	32%	8.7	22:53	24.9%	64
Emo Tours	278,223	57.1%	2.2	3:10	41.1%	29

Table (8) highlights Alexa Metric analysis for top three websites that appear in Google search engine for "Egypt Tours" search query. Alex Metric is a global pioneer in the world of analytical insights, and provides web analytics services (Alexa, 2019). Alexa web analysis ranked Memphis Tours

website to be the first compared to the other candidates as it got the 50792 ranking worldwide, followed by Egypt Tours Portal with its rank 119630 and Emo tours website in 278223. The bounce rate for Memphis website is lower than other competitors which refer to valuable content on this site.

Table (9) Similar web Traffic overview and site referring

Websites	Monthly Visits	Traffic by county	Traffic source	Top Referring Site
Memphis Tours	212,506	United States 16.21% Italy 13.96% Egypt 16.68% Brazil 13.05% Spain 05.19%	Direct 13.69% Email 0.92% Referrals 1.13% Social 0.75% Organic Search 69.29% Paid Search 13.95% Display ads 0.26%	google.com 21.95% valor.globo.com 12.55% folha.uol.com.br 12.55% luxeadventuretraveler.com 10.37% app.similarcontent.com 7.00%
Egypt Tours Portal	27,820	Egypt 34.95% United States 26.89% Spain 03.66% UAE 03.59% United Kingdom 02.77%	Direct 21.50% Email 14.28% Referrals 01.96% Social 06.04% Organic Search 56.22% Paid Search 0.00% Display ads 0.00%	medium.com 61.24% marketwatch.com 11.19% cilisos.my 7.12% artstation.com 6.58% inspector.ryte.com 4.62%
Emo Tours	20,766	United States 18.02% Egypt 18.01% Italy 07.66% Spain 06.88% Canada 05.39%	Direct 24.51% Email 0.78% Referrals 1.03% Social 0.04% Organic Search 72.24% Paid Search 01.41% Display ads 0.00%	google.com 79.86% valor.globo.com 20.14%

Table (9) displays Similarweb metrics analysis for top three websites that appear in Google search engine for “Egypt Tours” search query. Similarweb is a website that provides web analytics services for business like website traffic volumes, referral sources and it also includes keyword analysis (similar web, 2019). The percentage of visitors from organic (unpaid) SEO is 69.29%, while visitors' engagement through paid search engine-marketing is 13.95%. On the other hand, Egypt Tours Portal received 56.22% visitors through Organic SEO while visitors' engagements through paid search engine-marketing presented 0%, which revealed that this site does not use paid search engine-marketing. As for Emo Tours, 72.24% visitors came through organic SEO,

while visitors coming through paid search engine-marketing represented 1.41%. Memphis tours domain name is not an exact matching domain for "Egypt Tours" query even though it has achieved the first result. It can be deduced that using organic and paid search engine marketing can increase visibility, traffic on websites, and increase sales volumes which is consistent with the result of (Singh et al.,2011; Mazánek, 2013).

Results & Conclusions

Search engine optimization is becoming a more and more critical medium due to the rapid growth in customers' search activities. Search engine optimization marketing utilizes search engines as marketing tools to achieve top search positioning and increase

visibility through organic search engine-marketing and paid sponsored links. It can release a significant opportunity to attract potential customers for companies' websites, products, and services information.

The study results revealed that tourism companies which use search engine marketing hires people to be responsible for the e-marketing department with an acceptance of 83.8%. Some companies rely on outsource-marketing agency to market their services with an acceptance of approximately 70.6%. The results showed that most of the visits to tourism websites emerged from (Google, Yahoo and Bing) organic search marketing with an acceptance of approximately 77.8%, while the visits to websites which emerged from paid search engine marketing was with an acceptance of about 74.8%. This asserted the importance of using (paid and organic) search engine-marketing to gain more traffic to website.

Also, the results indicated that most of traffic to websites emerged from Google search engine with an acceptance of percentage of 81.6%, then Yahoo search engine with acceptance 62.2% and from Bing search engine with acceptance 56.4%. This result affirmed that Google search engine has the biggest market share, and internet users prefer to use it and trust its results.

It has been demonstrated that it is necessary for tourism companies to have an e-marketing department for their services with an acceptance of 92.6%. Besides, the importance of having a website also has an acceptance of 89.9%. This result certified the importance of having an e-marketing department and an active website to keep up with new technology and meet the customers' desires who book their holidays

services online. However, it is not enough to just have a website on the internet (51.2%) of responses accepted this. It is important to optimize website pages well to search engine to get a top rank and gain more traffic and increase sales volume.

Besides, tourism companies realized the importance of using organic search engine marketing to increase website traffic (84.4%) of responses had accepted this. 85% of the responses from the questionnaire responses aware of the importance of using paid search engine marketing. Also using search engine marketing, (organic and paid) plays an important role to market and spread brand awareness with acceptance of 86.6%. These results asserted the first objective of the study and proved the usefulness of search engine optimization marketing as an e-marketing supportive tool for Egyptian tourism companies' websites.

Results too exposed that high cost of search engine ads is considered as one of the reasons for companies to neglect paid search engine marketing, this came with an acceptance of 75%, the inefficiency of paid search engine campaigns had an acceptance of 55.2%, and the inability to observe the paid search engine ads gained an acceptance of 70%. While these obstacles of applying paid search marketing do exist, paid search engine marketing is very important to increase website traffic and increase sales volume. This has an acceptance of 80.2%. These results sustained that there is a positive relationship between using search engine optimization marketing and increasing the company's sales volumes. There are some other obstacles to applying search engine marketing. For example, the website pages results on search engine may change from time to time this has an

acceptance of 89.2%. New search engine updates which affect the ranked pages which has an acceptance of 92.2%. Responses also exposed that the reason of changing website pages results are frequent updates from search engine according to user experience on websites. So, it is necessary to be aware of any new updates of website optimization and to follow the guidance of these updates to guarantee top rank to these websites. Despite the difficulties of applying search engine-marketing, the tourism companies are aware that it is necessary to diversify and interconnect the e-marketing tools to gain benefits of search engine-marketing (This has an acceptance of 85.6%). Optimizing website pages according to the users search queries can increase sales volume and brand awareness has an acceptance of 88%. This indicates the importance of diversifying and interconnecting with the e-marketing tools to gain search engine-marketing benefits. Companies should use the same (keywords) which are used by customers to find the company's services and insert them to their own website to gain more traffic, increase sales volume and spread awareness of the brand.

It is vital for tourism companies to adopt search engine marketing to lure more customers and spread their branding to increase their revenue. As the objectives of this study have been fulfilled. There is a perceptible effect for using SEO as an e-marketing supportive tool for tourism companies to increase their sales volume, website traffic and spread their brand awareness.

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