

## Heritage, Innovation and Sustainability: Linking the Past, the Present and the Future in the Egyptian Hotels to Improve the Tourist Experience

التراث، الابتكار والاستدامة: ربط الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل في الفنادق المصرية لتحسين تجربة السائح

Mohamed Kamal Abdien<sup>1</sup> | Gamal El-Din Abdel Razek<sup>2</sup> | Amr Mohamed Khairy<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

الملخص

The study explores how Egyptian hotels can combine heritage, innovation, and sustainability to provide an unforgettable experience for their guests, considering the evolving expectations of tourists. The study employed a mixed-methods strategy that included both quantitative and qualitative data. First, the data from the hotel guests using a structured questionnaire was collected via a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The research subsequently collected data from tourist reviews about two specific hotels (Tulip Hotel in Aswan and the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor) through online booking platforms. The researchers also interviewed the management of the two hotels in order to acquire a better understanding of the heritage discourse.

The results demonstrate that blending heritage, innovation, and sustainability results in a truly immersive and unforgettable experience for tourists, as seen at the Tulip Hotel in Aswan and the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor. Through these components, hotel guests experience the past, present, and future in a unique and valuable way. The findings are consistent with the reality that tourists visit Egypt to meet a variety of expectations; they want to see the great civilization, but they also demand innovative service and sustainable practices.

This study may contribute to theoretical knowledge by providing a more comprehensive approach to the tourist experience, rather than focusing just on facilities and services. The study also has practical consequences for hotel managers and decision-makers in terms of strategically optimizing the guest experience, which reflects Egypt's overall image.

تستكشف الدراسة الحالية كيف يمكن للفنادق المصرية دمج التراث والابتكار والاستدامة لتوفير تجربة لا تُنسى لضيوفها، حيث الأخذ في الاعتبار التوقعات المتطورة للسائحين. اعتمدت هذه الدراسة على جمع البيانات من خلال الاستبيان عبر تقنية أخذ العينات الملائمة غير الاحتمالية، كما جمعت الدراسة بيانات من مراجعات السائحين حول فندقين (فندق توليب في أسوان وفندق وينتر بالاس في الأقصر) من خلال منصات الحجز عبر الإنترنت، بالإضافة لذلك فقد قام الباحثون بإجراء مقابلات مع إدارة الفندقين من أجل الحصول على فهم أفضل عن دورهما في الحفاظ على التراث داخل الفندقين.

وتظهر النتائج أن دمج التراث والابتكار والاستدامة في الفنادق يؤدي إلى تجربة فريدة وقيمة للسائح، حيث يتم الجمع بين الماضي والحاضر والمستقبل، كما هو الحال في فندق توليب في أسوان وفندق وينتر بالاس في الأقصر. تتوافق النتائج مع الحقيقة بأن السائح يزور مصر لتلبية مجموعة متنوعة من التوقعات؛ فهو يريد الاستمتاع بالتراث والثقافة المصرية العظيمة، لكنه أيضاً يحتاج خدمة مبتكرة وممارسات مستدامة.

تساهم هذه الدراسة في إثراء المعرفة النظرية من خلال تقديم نهج أكثر شمولاً لفهم تجربة السائح، بدلاً من التركيز فقط على المرافق والخدمات. كما تقدم الدراسة أيضاً ممارسات عملية بالنسبة لمديري الفنادق وصانعي القرار من أجل تحسين تجربة السائح في الفندق بشكل استراتيجي، مما يعكس الصورة العامة للسياحة للدولة المصرية.

**Keywords:** Heritage; Innovation; sustainability; Egyptian Hotels; Tourist Experience.

الكلمات الدالة: التراث؛ الابتكار؛ الاستدامة؛ الفنادق المصرية؛ تجربة السائح

<sup>1</sup>Associate Professor in Hotel Studies Department, Faculty of Tourism & Hotels, Alexandria University.

<sup>2</sup>Professor in Tourist Guidance Department, Faculty of Tourism & Hotels, Alexandria University.

<sup>3</sup>Assistant Professor in Tourist Guidance Department, High Institute of Tourism and Hotels in Alexandria (EGOTH).

## 1. Introduction

Cultural heritage tourism, a significant component of global tourism, accounts for 40% of all journeys, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO). It involves visiting historical sites, museums, art galleries, and cultural activities (Brooks et al., 2023; Saeed and Al Atrees, 2024) and is a vital asset in the tourism industry, especially in Egypt, where tourists interact with a destination's cultural heritage in both monumental and spiritual ways, since the past can be seen in modern behaviors and traditions (Brooks et al., 2023).

Egypt's intangible cultural heritage spans thousands of years, with ancient structures like ancient palaces under the Muhammad Ali dynasty being a key component of the government's commitment to preserving architectural heritage (Saeed and Al Atrees, 2024; عامر، ٢٠١٢). These palaces, a blend of European and ancient Egyptian traditions, showcase the achievements of the time and provide insight into the lifestyle of the time. Renewing these palaces respects their historical worth and significantly impacts the Egyptian economy, particularly tourism (Hasanen, 2023; عرابي، ٢٠٢٣، وأخرون).

Palaces have been transformed into historical hotels, attracting prominent figures and contributing to the national economy (Ahmed, 2016; النحاس وأخرون، ٢٠٢٢). These unique interiors demand meticulous attention to detail, with spaces used differently at the reception lobby, waiting areas, and rooms (Ching and Binggeli, 2012). Designing heritage settings at hotels incorporates local characteristics, traditional practices, and materials, using diverse arts, ceramics, stone carving, woodwork, reed work, pottery, and handicrafts to enhance the places (Abdulrahman, 2017).

From the other side, organizations and destinations are shifting from a product- and service-oriented approach to a focus on designing great experiences (Abdien and Helmy, 2024; Jiang and Kim, 2015). This shift is crucial in the service industry, where managing customer experiences is seen as a vital feature for establishing customer loyalty (Ihtiyar et al., 2018; Jensen and Prebensen, 2015; Minkiewicz et al., 2016). In the hospitality industry, customers seek amazing experiences and creative service, and service innovation is becoming an important aspect of the hotel industry's customer experience (Harkison et al., 2018; Ravishankar and Christopher, 2020). As technology and social media use increase, customers are becoming more aware and demanding, anticipating individualized and unique experiences (Uwase et al., 2024). The introduction of new or enhanced services or processes is critical for achieving these expectations and increasing consumer attractiveness and loyalty (Jensen and Prebensen, 2015).

Research on experience management is crucial to understanding the tourist experience and hospitality management concepts (Hwang and Seo, 2016; Kandampully et al., 2018; Mccoll-Kennedy et al., 2015). However, there are gaps in existing literature, particularly in combining heritage tourism, innovation, and sustainable practices in hotels. A holistic framework is needed to explore how heritage and innovation can enhance the tourist experience while upholding sustainability principles. This study aims to fill these gaps by investigating tourists' perceptions of heritage, innovation, and sustainability in Egyptian hotels and exploring their interactions to improve the overall tourist experience. Consequently, the current study highlights the role of hotels as tourist guides linking the past, the present, and the future.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Heritage Conservation in Hotels

Heritage is becoming increasingly important as an indicator of tourist pleasure (Edensor, 2008; Modlin et al., 2011). Cultural heritage has emerged as a major way of attracting tourists and addressing their needs (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020). It is viewed as a source of fun and amusement among leisure travellers and as a mark of distinction among luxury travellers. A staged heritage setting that replicates the architecture of that period, on the other hand, might convey sentiments and an

atmosphere associated with a certain historical period (Gardiner et al., 2022; Munjal, 2023; Yan and Li, 2023). When someone conjures a previous moment or recounts a compelling narrative, it provides a unique environment in which to share, engage in, interact with, learn about, and get immersed in the visited setting, as well as bond with the local identity (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020). Historical structures are vital in heritage tourism, as they serve as a way for tourists to engage with the events and figures of the past, allowing them to fully immerse themselves in history and establish emotional connections with people from earlier times (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020; Modlin et al., 2011).

Hotels and heritage are interconnected, with three categories: original, simulated, and converted. Original hotels maintain their unique character; heritage hotels are modeled after historical features, while converted hotels transform historical buildings like castles, cathedrals, and palaces into hotels, adding economic and symbolic significance (Marghany et al., 2023). The connection between heritage and hospitality extends beyond ancient hotels, with the extensive use of heritage throughout a hotel or its sections (Abd Elghani, 2012; Marghany et al., 2023). Both old and new buildings can reflect heritage, and luxury and regular hotels have the ability to reflect heritage as well (Abd Elghani, 2012).

In particular, Egypt is home to a wide range of historical hotels, including former royal palaces like the renowned Mena House Hotel, which have been converted into luxurious accommodations. Other luxury hotels like the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor were built by companies like Thomas Cook to cater to royalty, presidents, and the wealthy. Another instance is Tulip Hotel Aswan; although it is not classified as a historical hotel, it showcases influences from the ancient Egyptian civilization (<http://tolipaswan.com>).

## 2.2 Perception of Heritage and Tourist Experience

Hotels have the potential to greatly improve the cultural tourism experience by investing in local heritage throughout their various components like decor, furniture, lighting, hotel design, handicrafts, amenities, linen, and towels (Abd Elghani, 2012; Marghany et al., 2023; Timothy and Nyaupane, 2009). Tourists are driven by the desire to explore and engage with unfamiliar cultures, frequently searching for genuine and immersive opportunities (Özdemir and Yolal, 2017). Hotels can showcase physical or non-physical aspects of culture, or a combination of both, in order to offer authentic experiences to meet the interests of tourists (Munjal, 2023).

Incorporating historical elements into contemporary design can enhance visitor experiences and increase the likelihood of staying at a hotel again (Lu et al., 2015). Egyptian culture is being threatened by human activities, climate change, globalization, political instability, and tourism development. However, integrating cultural authenticity with contemporary hospitality can provide a unique and immersive experience (Gardiner et al., 2022; Marghany, 2023). Historical hotels can display historical artifacts and handicrafts as souvenirs, attracting tourists who seek escape and novelty. This approach can provide a rich tapestry of history, art, culture, and local customs, attracting luxury-seeking guests and enhancing their overall experience (Kempiak et al., 2017; Khalil and Kozmal, 2020; Sadek, 2021). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H1:** Conservation of heritage in hotels has a positive impact on the tourist experience

## 2.3 Perception of Innovation and Tourist Experience

Innovation involves enhancing a product, service, process, or other things to provide additional value to customers (Elmakkawy and Abdien, 2021; O'Sullivan and Dooley, 2008; Schmidt and Rammer, 2006). Innovation involves making changes to gain a distinct advantage and stand out from others (Marion and Fixson, 2021; Gomezelj, 2016). The next part describes how the hotel can attain innovation by enhancing the lobby and rooms and incorporating cutting-edge technology to enhance their guests' experiences.

*Innovation in hotel lobbies* is crucial as it serves as a pathway to hotel outlets, a designated waiting area, and a hub for social and cultural interactions. Unsuitable layouts in reception, lounge, or interior entrance can cause tourists to switch to a different hotel (Naqshbandi and Munir, 2011). In today's

globalized world, vintage interiors in hotels help convey regional identity through historical structures and authentic details (Bondarenko and He, 2021). Decorative elements within the lobby can establish a feeling of openness (Pirnar et al., 2020; Huang and Tsaih, 2022; Pytharoulakis and Zouni, 2020). The historical background of the object also influences the identity of the new hotel. The historical reliability of hotels in old buildings is undeniable, as they safeguard authentic items and serve as the foundation for creating businesses with different purposes (Bondarenko and He, 2021).

*The guest room* plays a significant role in the overall hotel experience (Alrawadieh and Law 2019; Dehghan Pour Farashah et al., 2021). Satisfied hotel guests mentioned innovation and room quality, including size, color, amenities, bathroom, design, and cleanliness, as the most discussed aspect (Erdem, 2019; Pirnar et al., 2020). Effective guest rooms create a cozy and welcoming atmosphere, similar to a home, by being warm and comfortable (Dehghan Pour Farashah et al., 2022). The way a room is designed and decorated has a direct impact on the guest's experience during their stay (Sadhale and Sathe, 2021). The rooms in a hotel might reflect the rich culture and heritage of the city, province, or specific ethos they are known for. These themes are often evident in penthouse suites and signature suites of the hotel (Erdem, 2019; Sadhale and Sathe, 2021).

In the modern era of *technological advancement*, tourists are increasingly seeking digital services and in-person interactions to enhance their tourism experience (Fan et al., 2019; Trauthwein, 2012). They expect streaming services, intelligent smart devices, voice assistants, and internet-connected equipment (Buhalis and Moldavska, 2022; Hollebeek et al., 2021; Jabeen et al., 2022). Hotels are also expected to go above and beyond their promises by incorporating in-room technology, such as mobile check-in, keyless entry, and virtual concierge services (Barker et al., 2003). These technologies help guests access their rooms quicker, minimize wait times, and enhance their overall experience (Bilgihan et al., 2016; Liu et al., 2021). The use of innovative technologies like artificial intelligence and service automation has led to significant changes in how hotels provide service to guests. Technological innovation helps hotel managers cater to customers and offer unique experiences (Elmakkawy and Abdien, 2021; Sharma, 2016). Given the information provided, the following hypothesis is suggested:

**H2:** Innovation in hotels has a positive impact on the tourist experience

#### **2.4 Perception of Sustainability and Tourist Experience**

The concept of sustainability encompasses various economic, environmental, and socio-cultural policies and actions carried out by governments or companies, including practices such as environmental conservation, climate change mitigation, support for local economies, poverty reduction, and promoting social sustainability related to health, human rights, and ethics (Fischer et al., 2020). Environmental sustainability is now seen as a key aspect of the hotel industry, alongside communication and marketing. Tourists generally have a favorable outlook on the environmentally friendly practices of hotels, commonly known as "green hospitality", such as reducing the carbon footprint (Duric and Topler, 2021; Koiwanit and Filimonau, 2021; Salehie et al., 2021). Hotels' environmental sustainability efforts, along with other initiatives, impact tourists' experiences in a positive way (Moline et al., 2019; Sharrock et al., 2020). Therefore, the study proposes the following hypothesis:

**H3:** Sustainability in hotels has a positive impact on the tourist experience

#### **2.5 Innovation and Sustainability**

Cutting-edge technologies, like energy-saving appliances and sustainable energy sources, help improve efficiency and preserve resources, leading to environmental sustainability (Delgado et al., 2021; Wicki and Hansen, 2019). Smart technologies have been recognized as crucial for encouraging cleaner and more sustainable methods, including the utilization of sensors and AI for managing energy and water consumption (Antonova et al., 2021) and for enhancing efficiency in daily processes and timetables (Ivars-Baidal et al., 2021). This contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 9, which

focuses on innovation and infrastructure, and has ramifications for Sustainable Development Goal 11, which aims to create sustainable cities and communities. Aboelmaged (2018) stresses the importance of environmental innovation in achieving sustainable development and economic advancement. Hotels should prioritize creating and executing plans for innovation to keep sustainability (Rubio et al., 2024). Therefore, the study puts forth the following hypothesis:

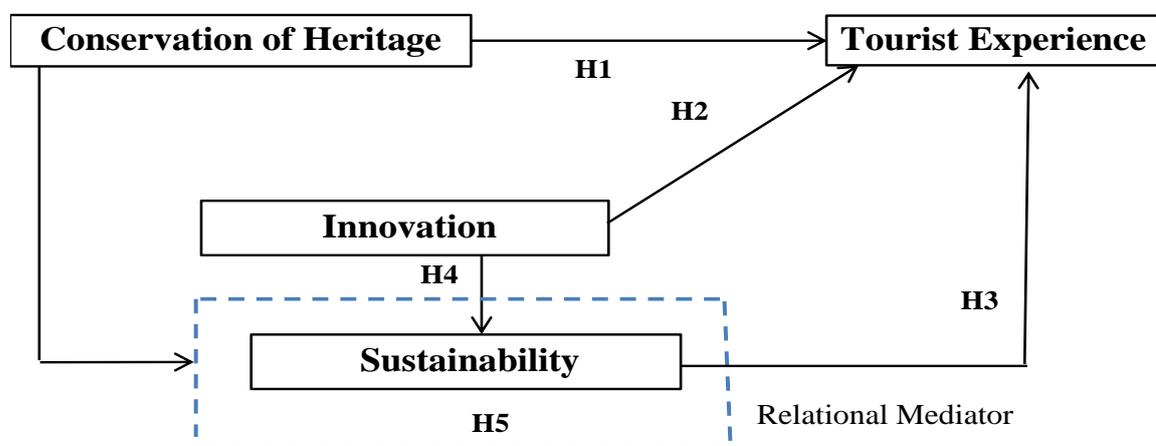
**H4:** Innovation in hotels has a positive impact on the perception of sustainability

## 2.6 Heritage, Sustainability and Tourist Experience

Preservation of historical structures is crucial for preserving community identity and preserving the aspirations, customs, and glory of the past (Auclair and Fairclough, 2015; Salameh et al., 2022). Historical architecture helps individuals understand history, culture, society, and tradition, making them more conscious of their identity (Salameh et al., 2022). Intelligent hotels can offer improved tourism services, sustainable benefits, and human interaction, enhancing their connection with customers and enhancing operational duties and sustainable benefits (Casais and Ferreira, 2023). Understanding tourists' cultural identity towards cultural heritage is crucial for developing and marketing products, preserving cultural heritage, boosting tourism development, and promoting long-term sustainability in the region (Agrusa et al., 2010; Zhang et al., 2020). Heritage conservation has positive impacts on sustainability and environmental and socioeconomic aspects (Salameh et al., 2022). Sustainable tourism involves protecting cultural heritage, upholding traditional values, and providing genuine experiences for tourists (Lee and Chhabra, 2015; Yan and Li, 2023). Accordingly, the tourist's perception of heritage leads to sustainability, which in turn results in a positive tourist experience in the hotel. Therefore, the study suggests the following hypothesis:

**H5:** Sustainability mediates the relationship between conservation of heritage and the tourist experience.

The framework of the research is shown in (Fig. 1).



**Fig (1):** The framework of the research

## 3. Methodology

This study employed a mixed-method approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to create a thorough grasp of the research issue. The research performed a case study of two hotels: Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor and Tulip Hotel in Aswan. Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor is a historical hotel that has served as a destination for presidents and important tourists. It is widely considered one of Egypt's oldest and most opulent hotels. Furthermore, while Tulip Hotel Aswan is a contemporary hotel, the impact of ancient Egyptian architecture was taken into account throughout its development, as seen by the hotel's magnificent design and ornamental components. The study planned to base their research on a historical hotel that has maintained a sumptuous style from its inception, as well as a modern hotel that clearly exhibits the influence of ancient Egyptian architecture. The study also looked at how these hotels are utilized to promote various archaeological sites in Egypt and induce more guests to stay in this form of lodging.

Initially, data was gathered via a survey conducted with tourists who were staying at these hotels. The data from the hotel guests was collected using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The questionnaire was handed out in person to tourists and also made available through a Google form. Getting in touch with enough guests from the two hotels was challenging, prompting the researchers to need the assistance of numerous tour guides who had connections to tourists staying at these hotels. Additional information was gathered from the reviews of the tourists from the online booking platforms regarding these hotels. Additionally, the researchers conducted interviews with the managers of the two hotels and collected images from their website to gain further insight into the preservation of heritage within their establishments.

For the survey, the study modified measurements used in previous research to suit the hospitality industry. Eight heritage measurement items were adapted from Adnerlin et al. (2015). Covin and Slevin (1989) created a 5-item scale to measure perceived innovation. The perceived sustainability was measured using a ten-item scale developed by Millar and Baloglu in 2008. In order to assess the tourist experience, five items from Moliner et al. (2019) were utilized. Appendix 1 shows the measures of the study variables. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used for responding to the questions. In conclusion, age, gender, marital status, educational attainment, and frequency of trips to Egypt are considered as control factors. In order to verify instrument validity, enhance survey construct organization, and adjust question phrasing for effective participant replies, pilot research including twenty surveys was carried out.

## 4. Results

### 4.1 The Results of the Quantitative Data

#### 4.1.1 The respondents' profile

Table 1 presents the profile of the sample. The study includes both men and women. The sample included individuals from all age ranges. Roughly more than 75% of the participants were in the age range of 18 to 29 years old (34%) and 30 to 39 years old (40.2%). The remaining quarter of the sample also depicted the other age categories. The sample included individuals from all levels of education, with roughly half holding a bachelor's degree (56.7%) and the rest holding a master's or doctoral degree (12.5%), while nearly a quarter were high school graduates (26.8%).

Table 1: The respondents' profile (n = 335).

		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	160	47.8%
	Female	175	52.2%
Age	18–29	114	34%
	30–39	135	40.2%
	40–49	45	13.4%
	50–59	20	5.9%
	60 and above	21	6.2%
Marital Status	Single	190	56.7%
	Married	117	34.9%
	Other	28	8.6%
Educational level	High school graduate	90	26.8%
	Bachelor's degree	189	56.4%
	Master/Ph.D degree	42	12.5%
	Other	14	4.2%

#### 4.1.2 Model fit assessment

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was carried out to evaluate the adequacy of the defined model and the construct validity of the variables in the study. As suggested by Hair et al. (2019), four measures are employed for evaluating model fit: Chi-square and Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA) for Absolute Fit, Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Normed Fit Index (NFI) for Incremental Fit and Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI) for Parsimony Fit. Table 2 shows that all criteria are being met. Therefore, it can be concluded that the measurement model successfully met the criteria for acceptable model fit.

Table 2: The fit indices of measurement model

Fit indices	Value
Chi-square/ degree of freedom ( $0.5 \leq 5$ )	3.02
Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) ( $\leq 0.08$ )	0.06
Normed fit index (NFI) ( $\geq 0.9$ )	0.932
Comparative fit index (CFI) ( $\geq 0.90$ )	0.954
Parsimony Goodness-of-Fit Index (PGFI) $\geq 0.5$	0.834

#### 4.1.3 Reliability and validity

This study found that heritage, innovation, sustainability, and tourist experience all have Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability values exceeding 0.7 (Table 3). This indicates that the reliability of scale items' internal consistency is high. Next, the findings from the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) analysis for the variables heritage, innovation, sustainability, and tourist experience indicate values exceeding 0.5, confirming the validity of the data from these variables. It can be stated that the value satisfies the requirements for convergent validity.

Table 3: Reliability and validity

Variables	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Heritage	0.927	0.928	0.821
Innovation	0.902	0.898	0.754
Sustainability	0.913	0.918	0.767
Tourist experience	0.868	0.863	0.835

#### 4.1.4 Testing hypotheses

Examining the path coefficient in the initial test unveils the value and direction of the connection between the identified latent variables. It is well-established that each variable link in the previous diagram has a positive path coefficient. Therefore, it can be inferred that a positive correlation exists between the three predictors and the outcome variable. The findings ( $B = 0.343$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ) indicated a significant impact of heritage perception on the tourist experience. Further research indicated that the way tourists perceive innovation has a notable impact on their overall experience ( $B = 0.274$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). Additionally, the tourist experience was greatly impacted by the perception of sustainability practices in the hotel ( $B = 0.281$ ,  $P < 0.01$ ). The R-squared test is a follow-up tool used to assess the impact of independent variables on the dependent variable. The findings indicated that the perception of heritage, innovation, and sustainability contributes to 48% of total effectiveness. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 are accepted (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression Tests

Model	R	R Square	B.	P. value	Result
<b>H1</b> Heritage---the tourist experience	.343	.118	.493	.000	Accepted
<b>H2</b> Innovation--- the tourist experience	.433	.188	.274	.000	Accepted
<b>H3</b> Sustainability--- the tourist experience	.247	.061	.281	.000	Accepted

In order to determine the mediating function of online sustainability in the relationship between heritage conservation and tourist experience, the indirect impacts were also evaluated based on the mediation analysis (Table 5). The VAF evaluates the mediation according to Hair et al. (2019); values above 80% indicate full mediation, and values between 20% and 80% suggest partial mediation, while values below 20% indicate no mediation force. Sustainability partially mediates

the relationship between heritage conservation and tourist experience (30%). As a result, hypothesis H5 has partial support.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis

Path			Significance			VAF	Outcome
			Direct effect	Indirect effect	Total effect		
<b>Heritage</b>	<b>---Sustainability</b>	<b>---</b>	0.284	0.196	0.649	30%	Partial mediation
<b>Tourist Experience</b>							

#### 4.2 Results of the Tourists' Reviews

The researchers analyzed the reviews of the hotels Tulip Aswan (111 reviews) and Winter Palace Luxor (279 reviews) from 2018 to 2024, which were recorded on hotel online booking platforms (booking.com and tripadvisor.com) by tourists from different countries. The reviews demonstrated the hotels' attempts to retain their antique architecture and décor. Tourists complimented the hotels' ability to deliver a genuine and immersive historical experience. The hotel's affiliation with prominent historical individuals and use as a shooting site were recognized in reviews. Tourists also lauded the hotels' Nile-side position and the amazing views they provide.

The reviews also took into account the hotels' proximity to popular tourist attractions, showing that Winter Palace Luxor Hotel is conveniently located near Luxor Temple and Karnak Temple, while Tulip Aswan Hotel is close to Philae Temple, Kom Ombo Temple, and the Aswan High Dam. The analysis of tourists' feedback showed that heritage is a critical factor in tourists' preferences and plays a major role in their travel decisions and overall contentment with the destination. The upcoming part provides a thematic analysis of the reviews given by the tourists:

– *Theme 1: The overall location and the proximity to archaeological sites*

Around 51% of Winter Palace Luxor Hotel guests and 70% of Tulip Aswan Hotel guests agreed that having a hotel near archaeological sites is extremely desirable. This might be because it provides for quick access to these locations without the need for lengthy traveling durations. Furthermore, being close to historical sites might provide for a more immersive and authentic vacation experience. It may offer opportunities for learning about local history, culture, and traditions (Crespi-Vallbona, 2020). Furthermore, some archaeological sites provide one-of-a-kind activities or events to enrich visitors' experiences. However, the value of this aspect may vary according to individual traveler preferences. Some people may place a higher value on other facilities or characteristics, whilst others may choose lodging based on its closeness to archaeological sites. For example, business visitors may emphasize location and accessibility, whereas leisure tourists may favor facilities and atmosphere (Aziz et al., 2018; Lu et al., 2021).

– *Theme 2: the historical architecture and the hotel decoration*

It was observed that historical architecture was the subject of 48% of the reviews for Winter Palace Luxor Hotel and 28% of the reviews for Tulip Aswan Hotel. While the significance of historical architecture in a hotel may differ for each traveler based on personal preferences and travel objectives, it still offers a special chance to delve into the cultural heritage of a destination. Many people who travel are attracted to historical buildings because they find them visually pleasing and intriguing. Choosing to stay in a historical hotel can provide a unique and unforgettable experience that differentiates it from contemporary lodging options. Exploring historical architecture offers chances to discover a location's past and traditions (Kempiak et al., 2017). Nevertheless, historical architecture is not a top priority for all travelers. Some individuals may choose modern conveniences or a more up-to-date environment (Lu et al., 2021).

The tourists commented positively on the hotel's decor. According to the reviews, it plays a major part in shaping a memorable and pleasant tourist experience. The decoration has the ability to elicit particular emotions or sensations like opulence, calmness, or thrill. An aesthetically pleasing hotel can improve the overall impression and satisfaction of the guests. Adding local elements to the

decor can enhance guests' sense of connection to the destination. Genuine decorations can make the cultural immersion experience more rewarding for tourists. Attractive and visually appealing decorations can draw in guests and set the hotel apart. An aesthetically pleasing hotel has the ability to make a lasting impact on visitors. Overall, decorating hotels is an essential factor in forming a memorable and pleasant tourist experience. It can improve the ambiance, help guests experience the culture, and leave a meaningful impact on visitors.

– *Theme 3: Celebrity visits to the hotel*

The hotel's proximity to key archaeological sites in Luxor would have made it convenient for Carter to access his excavation sites. The review mentioned that The Winter Palace has a long history going back to the 19th century. Given his background as a historian and archaeologist, Carter probably valued the historical importance of the hotel.

### 4.3 The Results of Interviews with Hotel Managers

The researchers conducted interviews with hotel managers to explore their means for maintaining heritage in their establishments. The researchers gathered and scrutinized numerous photos of the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor and Tulip Hotel Aswan from their official websites. The responses from the hotel managers and the analysis of pictures from the websites verified that their hotels maintain heritage in various areas like rooms and lobbies. Therefore, the following part will clarify the results.

#### 4.3.1 Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor

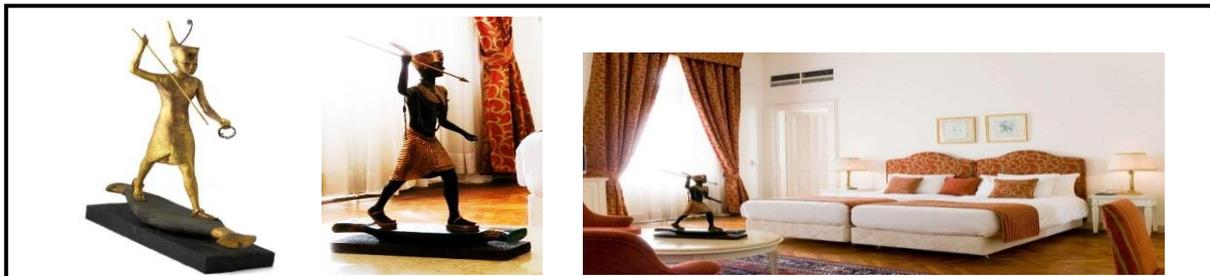
– The Front Office

At the Front Office, the capitals of the columns at the Winter Palace Hotel show influences from the Corinthian style (**Fig. 2**); this originated in Greece during the latter half of the 5th century BC. This design resembles an upside-down bell and features acanthus leaves on each side, culminating in a spiral tip. It is characterized by having four faces (Scahill, 2004; أحمد, ٢٠٠٧, ص ٣٨٠).



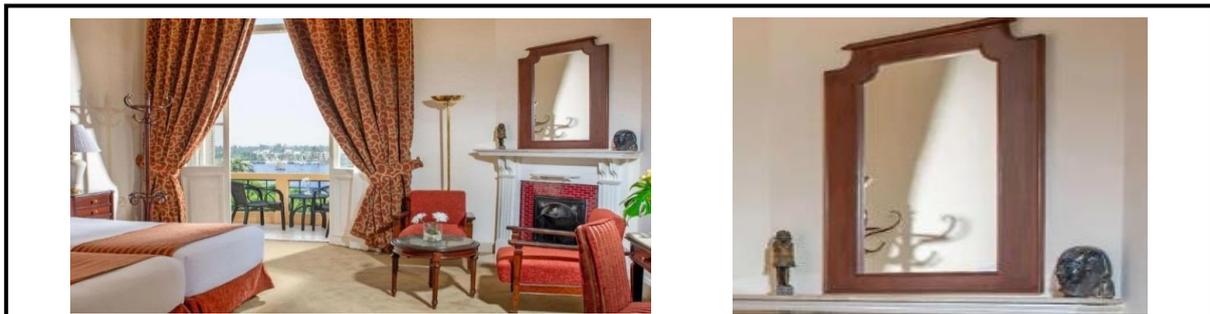
– The Rooms

In addition, in one of the rooms at the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor, a statue has been discovered that resembles one of the statues of King Tutankhamun, although it is not an exact replica (**Fig. 3**). The statue depicts the king holding a crook in one hand and standing on a papyrus boat, wearing the red crown (على وأخرون, ١٩٩٩, ص ١١٤; Bongioanni et al., 2001), while another room is adorned with various forms of ancient Egyptian statues (**Fig. 4**).



**Fig (3):** Figure displays a non-original replica of King Tutankhamun's statue on the right, located in one of the rooms of the Winter Palace Hotel, while the original statue can be seen on the left, safely housed in the Egyptian Museum.

**Source :** <https://sofitel.accor.com> (accessed 23/7/2024); Bongioanni et.al. (2001)



**Fig (4):** Figure illustrates several ancient Egyptian statues found in one of the rooms of the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor

**Source:** <http://sofitel-winter-palace-luxor.luxor-hotels.net/en/> (accessed 23/7/2024)

– The Backyard

Moreover, a model statue inspired by Greek art at the center of the back staircase leading to the backyard, there stands a statue in the Greek style (**Fig. 5**).



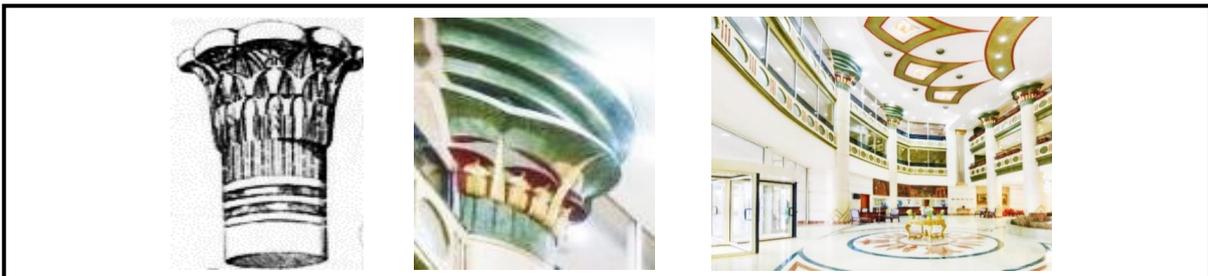
**Fig (5):** Figure depicts a Greco-Roman statue positioned in the middle of the back staircase of the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor

**Source:** <http://sofitel-winter-palace-luxor.luxor-hotels.net/en/> (accessed 23/7/2024)

### 4.3.2 Tulip Hotel Aswan

– The Front Office

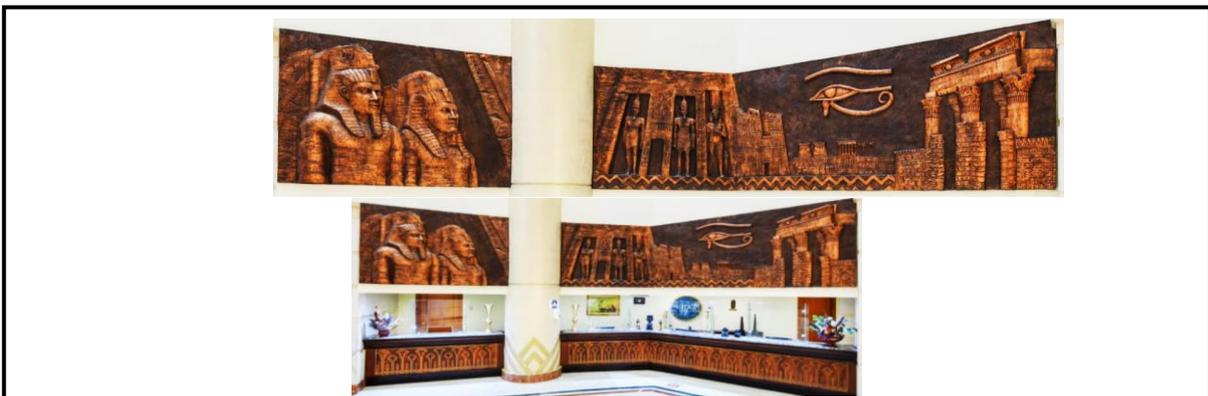
The column capitals at the front office at Tulip Hotel reflect influences from ancient Egyptian architecture (**Fig. 6**). Columns were a vital part of ancient Egyptian architecture, especially in temples, known for their varied capital designs, most of which draw inspiration from plants (محمود، ٢٠٠٢).



**Fig (6):** On the left, a representation of a column capital from the Philae Temple, next to a similar design at the hotel front office. This clearly illustrates the strong influence of ancient Egyptian architecture on the style of the column capital.

**Source:** <http://tolipaswan.com> (accessed 25/7/2024): (محمود، ٢٠٠٢)

In addition, temple Designs at the Front Office are clear in this hotel, as the upper section of the front office at Tulip Hotel features depictions of several temple facades (**Fig. 7**), starting from the right with the Temple of Kom Ombo, located on the eastern bank of the Nile River about 45 km north of Aswan, dating back to the Greek and Roman periods. Next is the Temple of Philae, an island in the middle of the Nile located about 7 km south of Aswan, also dating from the Greek and Roman periods. Following that is the Temple of Edfu, approximately 100 km from Aswan, which dates back to the Ptolemaic period (ص٧٧، ٨٧، ٩٧ (كامل، ٢٠٢٣، ص٧٧، ٨٧، ٩٧). The view concludes from the north with the temples of Abu Simbel, built by King Ramses II of the nineteenth dynasty around 1227 BC (ص٩١، ٢٠٠١، حواس).



**Fig (7):** The image highlights the upper section of the front office at the Tulip Hotel Aswan, featuring the following temples from right to left: Kom Ombo Temple, Philae Temple, Edfu Temple, and Abu Simbel Temple.

**Source:** <http://tolipaswan.com> (accessed 25/7/2024)

Further, the Eye of Horus refers to the eye of the ancient Egyptian god Horus. It has been a significant emblem in Egypt since ancient times, representing protection and power. (ويلكنسون، ٢٠٠٧). Interestingly, this same symbol was seen at the restaurant of the Tulip Hotel in Aswan (**Fig. 8**).



**Fig (8):** On the right, there's a depiction of the Eye of Horus at the front office, while on the left, an original amulet of the same eye can be found in the British Museum.

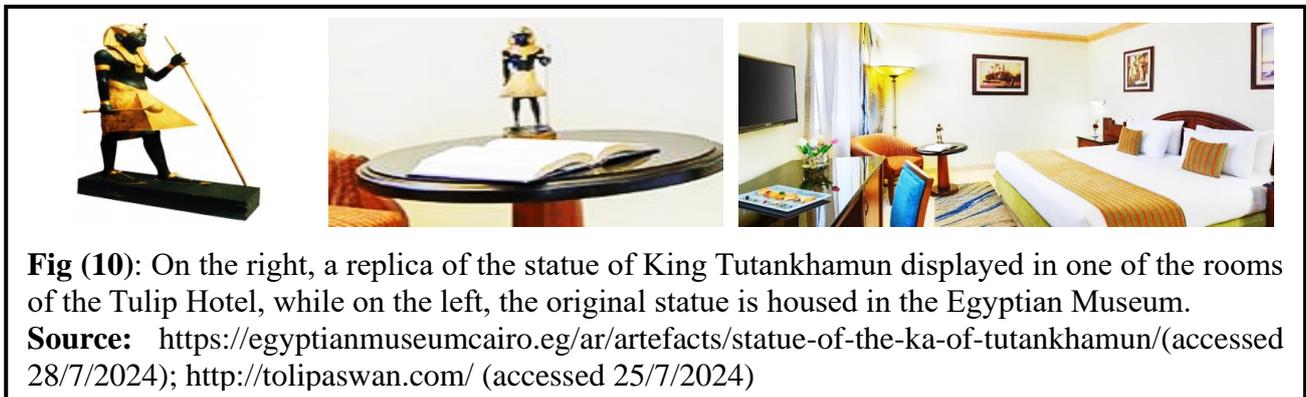
**Source:** [https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\\_EA27556](https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y_EA27556) (accessed 28/7/2024 11): <http://tolipaswan.com> (accessed 25/7/2024)

Furthermore, the lotus flower is a powerful symbol of Upper Egypt, with several varieties. The blue lotus is noted for its delicate buds and narrow petals, while the white lotus features round buds and broader petals. There's also the red lotus, introduced from Persia during the late period, which became quite popular during the Hellenistic era. The lotus is symbolic of the sun and creation; it closes at night and sinks underwater, only to rise and bloom at dawn. It appears frequently in offering scenes (وېلكنسون، ۲۰۰۷؛ الصغير، ۱۹۸۵، ص ۴۱) and a decorative lotus basin is depicted at the front office (نور الدين، ۲۰۰۷، ص ۳۴۳) (**Fig. 9**).



#### - The Rooms

A statue of King Tutankhamun occurs in one of the rooms at the Tulip Hotel (**Fig. 10**). This statue is a replica of the original ones preserved in the Egyptian Museum. At the moment of the tomb's discovery, two life-sized guardian statues stood at the entrance of the burial chamber, symbolizing protection for the king (Bongioanni et.al., 2001؛ على واخرون، ۱۹۹۹، ص ۱۱۲).

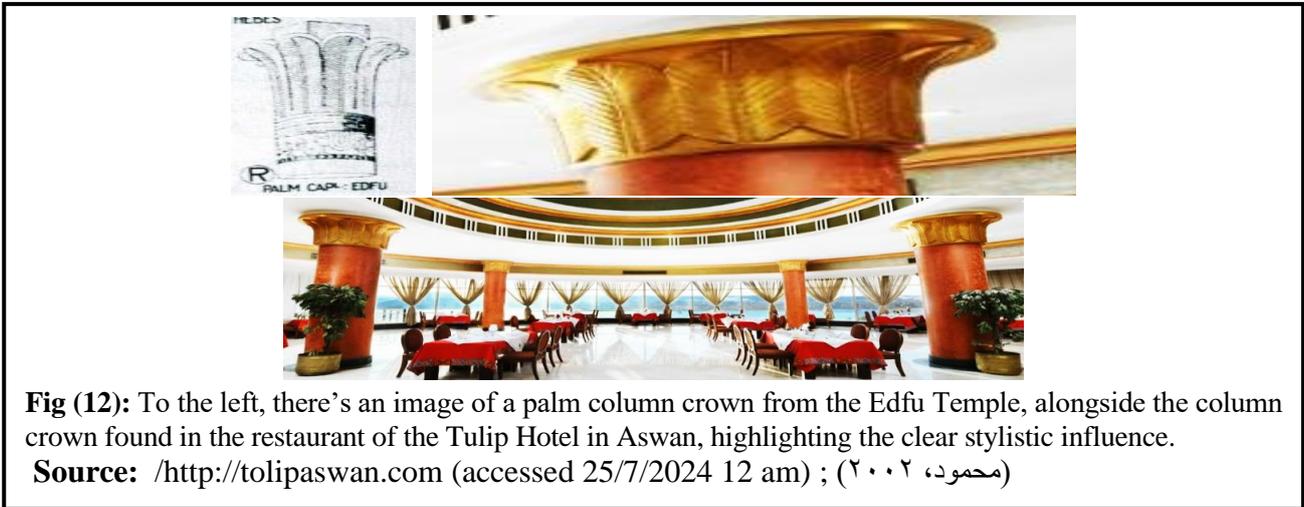


Also, the Winged Sun Disk is a symbol, representing the god Horus, is associated with protection, and is often placed on temple facades for safeguarding purposes (كامل، ۲۰۲۳، ص ۷۹). This same symbol was seen on the bed in one of the rooms at the Tulip Hotel in Aswan (**Fig. 11**)



- The Restaurants

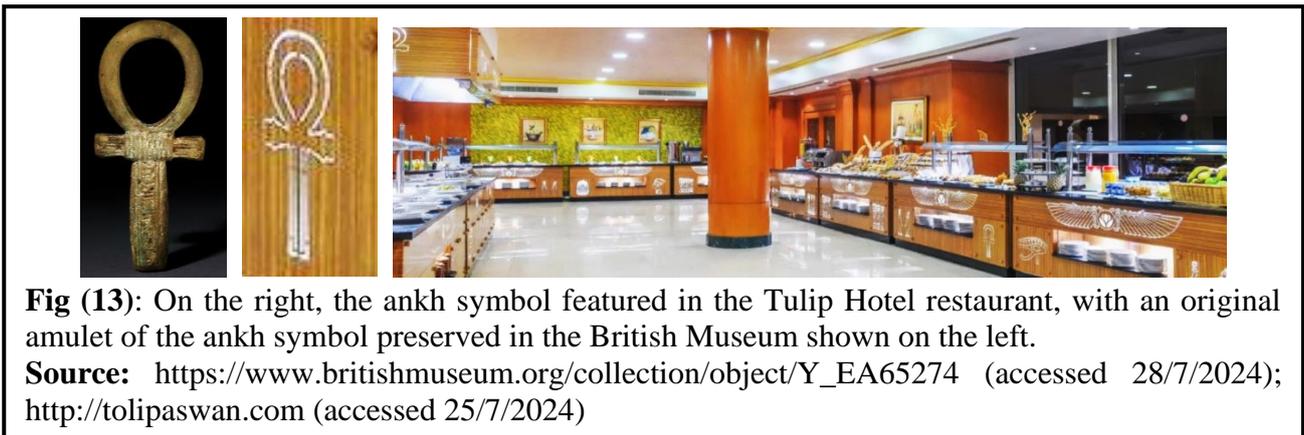
Palm Column Capitals can be seen in the Lebanese Restaurant at the Tulip Aswan Hotel (**Fig. 12**). The ancient Egyptian artist drew inspiration from the shape of palm trees for these capitals. Each column has a cylindrical shape, topped with tied palm fronds (محمود، ٢٠٠٢).



**Fig (12):** To the left, there’s an image of a palm column crown from the Edfu Temple, alongside the column crown found in the restaurant of the Tulip Hotel in Aswan, highlighting the clear stylistic influence.

**Source:** /http://tolipaswan.com (accessed 25/7/2024 12 am) ; (محمود، ٢٠٠٢)

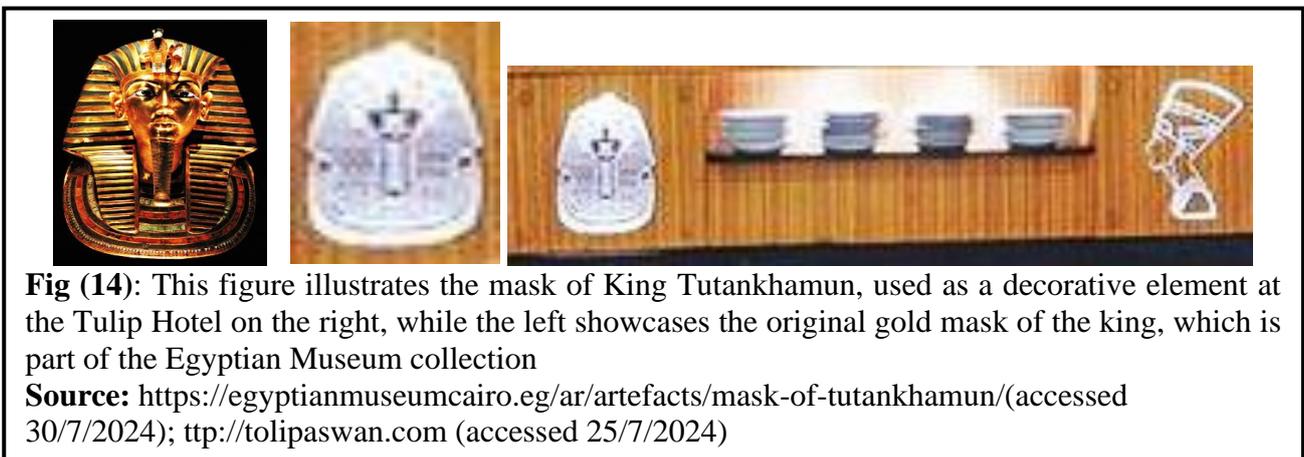
Also, the ankh symbol was highly significant in ancient Egyptian culture. It served as a protective amulet, representing eternal life, and was commonly depicted on temple walls (ويلكنسون، ٢٠٠٧). The same symbol occurs in the restaurant of the Tulip Aswan Hotel (**Fig. 13**).



**Fig (13):** On the right, the ankh symbol featured in the Tulip Hotel restaurant, with an original amulet of the ankh symbol preserved in the British Museum shown on the left.

**Source:** https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/Y\_EA65274 (accessed 28/7/2024); http://tolipaswan.com (accessed 25/7/2024)

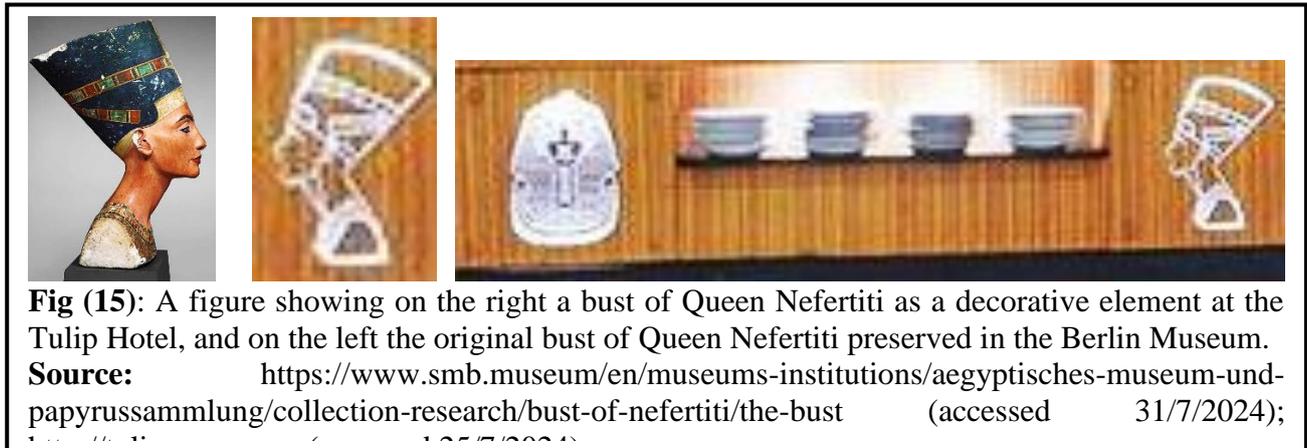
Besides, a similar version of Mask of King Tutankhamun is featured in the restaurant of the Tulip Aswan Hotel (**Fig. 14**). The original mask of the King Tutankhamun, made of pure gold and weighing around 11 kg, was discovered on King Tutankhamun's mummy in his tomb located in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor. It is currently preserved in the Egyptian Museum (Bongioanni et.al., 2001).



**Fig (14):** This figure illustrates the mask of King Tutankhamun, used as a decorative element at the Tulip Hotel on the right, while the left showcases the original gold mask of the king, which is part of the Egyptian Museum collection

**Source:** https://egyptianmuseumcairo.eg/ar/artefacts/mask-of-tutankhamun/(accessed 30/7/2024); ttp://tolipaswan.com (accessed 25/7/2024)

Moreover, the Bust of Queen Nefertiti has emerged as a decorative feature in the Tulip Hotel restaurant (**Fig. 15**). The original bust, which is life-sized and stands about 47 cm tall, was found in the Amarna region of Minya on December 6, 1912, and is now displayed in the Berlin Museum in Germany (<https://www.smb.museum>).



## 5 Conclusion and Implications

The current study highlights that both Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor and Tulip Hotel in Aswan effectively blend what is old and what is new, maintaining heritage while introducing innovative and eco-friendly offerings to enhance the overall tourist experience. Hence, the study emphasizes that blending heritage, innovation, and sustainability has the potential to produce a highly engaging and unforgettable tourist experience. Additionally, the findings demonstrate that taking sustainability into account in hotels serves as mediation between how heritage is perceived and the experience of tourists. Hotels can provide a distinct and valuable opportunity by maintaining history, embracing current trends, and envisioning the future. The research indicates that hotels now play a crucial role in shaping the tourist experience, going beyond just providing a place to stay and acting as helpful tourist guides.

### 5.1 Theoretical Implications

The study provides a comprehensive perspective on the tourist experience, focusing on the unique Egyptian context. It highlights how hotels serve as a link between past, present, and future, optimizing tourists' experiences. To the best of the authors' knowledge, no research has looked into how the interplay of these three elements improves the tourist experience in the field of the hotel sector. This combination allows the study to go beyond the typical focus on facilities and services and provide a more comprehensive perspective of the tourist experience. The current study also highlights the distinctive Egyptian context—characterized by its rich heritage and continuous efforts toward innovation and sustainability—and offers a unique case study of two hotels, which are Tulip Hotel in Aswan and the Winter Palace Hotel in Luxor. The study aids to the knowledge of heritage, innovation, and sustainability in the light of the SDGs.

### 5.2 Practical Implications

The current study emphasizes the influencing role of hotels in linking the past, the present, and the future to enhance tourists' experiences. Relating to the past, the study suggests that hotels can preserve cultural heritage by integrating local culture into design, amenities, and services. Hotels in Egypt should use local materials, serve authentic local dishes, incorporate cultural artifacts, design themed rooms with specific themes, and offer art crafts and mementos made by local artists to help tourists discover the region's traditions and to provide them with unique and unforgettable experiences for guests, according to the study results. They should also inform visitors about the region's history and culture through exhibits, tours, and educational events.

Relating to the present, hotel managers should provide innovative products and services. Egypt's hotels must continue to adopt cutting-edge technology, such as robotics, augmented reality, and virtual reality, to enhance tourist experience. These technologies allow for better room management, lighting adjustments, and access to services. Interactive features like digital displays and touchscreens in lobbies can engage hotel guests and promote community connection. Additionally, tailoring the hotel's website and mobile application for mobile devices is crucial. Innovation has a significant impact on the tourist experience, according to the present results.

Relating to the future, hotels can attain sustainability by putting into practice approaches like energy efficiency, water preservation, waste minimization, sustainable food and beverage, green building design, and eco-friendly projects. Some of the tactics are utilizing LED lights that are energy-efficient, smart thermostats, renewable energy, and eco-friendly appliances. Furthermore, it is important for them to inform visitors about water conservation, utilize plants that can withstand drought, and encourage sustainable methods such as composting and sourcing locally. These initiatives may draw in environmentally aware tourists and help build a more sustainable tomorrow. According to the results, sustainability has a significant impact on the tourist experience.

## 6 Limitation and Future Research

The study explored the relationship between heritage, innovation, and sustainability in the hotel industry, but its applicability may be limited by cultural context. Future research should explore cultural factors influencing heritage preservation, innovation promotion, and sustainability practices across different settings and consider evolving consumer tastes.

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## Electronic sites

- [https://sofitel.accor.com/en/hotels/1661.html?merchantid=ppc-sof-nom-msn-ww-en-searandsourceid=bp-cenandutm\\_source=bingandutm\\_medium=cpcandutm\\_campaign=ppc-sof-nom-msn-ww-en-ww-mix-sear-bpandutm\\_term=nomandutm\\_content=ww-en-EG-V7366andmsclid=3fb834845f0f16b5aff6521ba54bb41e](https://sofitel.accor.com/en/hotels/1661.html?merchantid=ppc-sof-nom-msn-ww-en-searandsourceid=bp-cenandutm_source=bingandutm_medium=cpcandutm_campaign=ppc-sof-nom-msn-ww-en-ww-mix-sear-bpandutm_term=nomandutm_content=ww-en-EG-V7366andmsclid=3fb834845f0f16b5aff6521ba54bb41e) (accessed July 23, 2024)
- <http://tolipaswan.com/> (accessed July 25, 2024)
- <https://egyptianmuseumcairo.eg/ar/artefacts/statue-of-the-ka-of-tutankhamun/>(accessed July ٢٩, 2024)
- <http://sofitel-winter-palace-luxor.luxor-hotels.net/en/>(accessed July 31, 2024)
- <https://www.britishmuseum.org/> (accessed July 31, 2024)
- <https://amusementlogic.com/general-news/hotels-of-the-world-sofitel-winter-palace-luxor-egypt/>(accessed July 31, 2024)

### Appendix

Table A1: Measures of the study variables

Variable	Scale items	Source
<b>Heritage</b>	<b>HER1:</b> The historical features at the hotel are highly valued.	Adnerlin et al. (2015)
	<b>HER2:</b> The heritage features are unique.	
	<b>HER3:</b> The historical architecture is highly valued.	
	<b>HER4:</b> The cultural heritage sites in the region of the hotel are attractive to visit	
	<b>HER5:</b> The cultural activities in the hotel are very interesting to me.	
	<b>HER6:</b> The cultural heritage is conserved very well in this hotel.	
	<b>HER7:</b> The cultural heritage is well interpreted in this hotel.	
	<b>HER8:</b> The cultural heritage activities in the hotel reflect the identity of the country.	
	<b>HER9:</b> I have the opportunity to buy souvenirs related to cultural heritage.	
<b>Innovation</b>	<b>INN1:</b> This hotel strongly emphasizes on technological advancements.	Covin and Slevin (1989)
	<b>INN2:</b> This hotel provides highly standardized services based on its brand.	
	<b>INN3:</b> This hotel maintains its market share by providing quality goods and services.	
	<b>INN4:</b> This hotel has marketed a lot of new products and services in previous years.	
	<b>INN:</b> This hotel usually experience quite dramatic changes in product and service lines.	
<b>Sustainability</b>	<b>SUS1:</b> Hotel has a recycling policy in place.	Millar and Baloglu (2008).
	<b>SUS2:</b> Hotel makes an effort to purchase green products and supplies.	
	<b>SUS3:</b> Water saving devices in public spaces	
	<b>SUS4:</b> Purchase products from local supplier	
	<b>SUS5:</b> Water saving devices in guest rooms	
	<b>SUS6:</b> Energy saving bulbs throughout the hotel	
	<b>SUS7:</b> Occupancy sensors used to control lighting throughout the hotel	
	<b>SUS8:</b> Key cards that turn power to the room on and off	
	<b>SUS9:</b> Dispensers instead of individual containers	
	<b>SUS10:</b> Hotel encourages guests to reuse towels and bed linen	
<b>Tourists' experience</b>	<b>TE1:</b> I enjoyed the experience in this accommodation.	Moliner et al., 2019
	<b>TE2:</b> The experience made me feel very good.	
	<b>TE3:</b> During my stay in the accommodation I forgot my daily problems.	
	<b>TE4:</b> At all times I felt that I was in control of what was happening.	
	<b>TE5:</b> It was a unique experience	