Evaluating Visitor Management at the Catacombs of Kom Al Shouqafa and Pompey’s Pillars in Alexandria

Nehal Eltayeb
Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Pharos University in Alexandria

Abstract
The purpose of this study is to examine the current situation of Kom Al Shouqafa and Pompey’s pillar visitor management practices, and present recommendations accompanied by suggested implications to achieve more improvement in the area of visitor management. These two sites are considered two of the main attractions in Alexandria. Despite the economic benefits gained by tourism in these sites, deterioration has set in both of them. A field visit is conducted to evaluate and document the visitor management practices at both sites using observation sheet. An observational research method was employed to find out the essential problems that could be overcome. The study concluded that the sites are exposed to wear and tear, no interpretation, signage and displays are in a very bad condition. Suggestions are presented in order to improve visitor management at both sites.

Key words Archeological sites, visitor management, touristic impact and heritage tourism

Introduction
Tourism is a world-wide giant industry which has a high increase rate as stated by UNWTO’s. Egypt saw a rebound in the second half of the year 2014, after a drop in arrivals in the first half; resulting in an aggregate 5% increase for the full year (UNWTO, 2015). The number of tourists that visited Alexandria was 252767 in 2015 which indicates that tourists are still willing to visit Alexandria. (Egyptian Tourist Authority, 2015)

Tourism of cultural heritage is one of the fastest growing specialty markets in the industry today. In September 2002, World Tourism Organization executive Luigi Cabrini told a gathering in Belgium that “cultural tourism is growing faster than most other tourism segments and at a higher rate than tourism worldwide (Mcnulty, 2014). Tourists who are interested in cultural heritage generally want to learn something about the beliefs, practices, struggles and successes that had shaped the shared identity of a people. Some of these tourists may share a degree of ancestry with the people whose history they are interested in (Mcnulty, 2014).

These archeological sites must be managed to protect such a great heritage from over-use, and misuse that might be caused by visitor footfall. If heritage sites are poorly managed and interpreted then there will be a loss in quality of both the heritage resource and the visitor’s experience. Visitors, who are increasingly discerning, may stop coming (UNWTO, 2007).

This paper aims at evaluating management practices within the catacombs of komElshokafa and pompey's pillar, presenting the forms of damages within sites and suggesting some improvements in order to protect these archeological sites.

Background about the sites
Catacombs of Kom Elshokafa
This largest funerary complex of the Greco Roman period in Egypt was discovered in 1990 when a donkey fell down an unsuspected shaft. It is a combination of Roman, Greek and Egyptian architectural forms producing a wonderfully weird décor of death. Its name refers the "Shards" that is the broken pottery the makes up what looks like "a hill". The reason is ancient Roman custom that was prevalent at that time. The custom dictates that relatives who would visit the tomb should bring food and drink with them. The
visitors, not wanting to bring jars and objects made of clay that had been used at a gravesite back to their homes (Haag, 2002).

The Entrance: The entrance leads to a spiral staircase of 99 steps that goes around a shaft, which was used to lower the body of the dead, by means of ropes (Regional Administration of Alexandria’s Monuments, 2016)

The Rotunda
This circular chamber originally leads only to the left, into the Triclinium. In the centre of this hall there is a shaft surrounded by six pillars joined by a low parapet. Between the pillars there are some figures of human heads, some of which have been discovered and transferred to the Greco-Roman Museum in Alexandria. (Empereur, 1995)

The Triclinium
To the left, the rotunda opens into a large chamber that is 8.5 meters wide and 9 meters deep. This is the Triclinium or dining room which was used for meals in honor of the dead. At about head height on the front of two pillars, there is a small cavity into which torches would have been fixed to provide extra lighting for dinners. It was only the family of the deceased who gathered for these commemorative feasts. (Empereur, 1995)

Hall of Caracalla
It is entered through a breach in the rock from the Rotunda. The name of Caracalla comes from an incident in 215 AD, when the emperor Caracalla massacred a young Christian. The tomb contains bones of young Christian men and horses. The reason for their presence together is a matter of complete speculation. (TourEgypt, 2016)

The second level
After you ascend to the hall that passes the Rotunda there is the second level of catacomb Kom el-Shuqafa, (regional administration of Alexandria’s monuments, 2016), where there is the central burial chamber. Standing sentinel within the chamber are two figures in reliefs, one is Anubis with a dog’s head but dressed up as a Roman soldier and the other is Sobek, who, despite being a crocodile, is also dressed in a military costume (Hagg, 2002). The catacombs are considered one of largest public tombs found in Alexandria. This ancient tomb is located in the area of Kom El Shokafa at Karmouz district behind the current Muslims cemeteries. This area is part of the ancient city of Alexandria (Regional Administration of Alexandria’s Monuments, 2016).

The tomb of Tigran
Situated a few meters away from the main entrance to the catacombs of Kom El Shuqafa, the Tomb of Tigran is famous for its colorfully painted backgrounds with decorative trimmings (Hagg, 2002). It dates back to the 1st century AD and it was discovered in 1952 inside a necropolis that was located in Tigrane Pasha Street, that is now called Port Said Street, and then transported to its present location today. (Venit, 2002).

The Tomb of Wardian
It is Located a few meters away from the Tomb of Tigrane. The Tomb of Wardian is named after the district of Wardian in Alexandria, and it goes back to 300 B.C. The Tomb of Wardian has been reconstructed in this present location, and it consists of a small painted chapel that once hosted a marvelous statue of an ancient Egyptian goddess, which was most probably the famous Egyptian goddess, Isis. (Egypt travel expert, 2016)
Pompey’s pillar
This pillar is the tallest ancient monument in Alexandria. It is about 27 meters long, and made of red Aswan granite. It has wrongly been named Pompey’s Pillar by medieval travelers because they thought that the head of Pompey, the Roman commander who fled to Egypt to escape from Julius Caesar and was killed by the Egyptians, had been placed in a jar precious funerary crown above the column (Escoffey, 2012)

It was erected in honor of the Roman Emperor Diocletian in 292 CE. This Roman emperor besieged Alexandria for 8 months, and during that time the city was exposed to famine. So, the emperor ordered returning the wheat that Rome used to collect annually from Egyptians, which led the citizens to construct the pillar in honor of the emperor (Ghoniema, 2002)

It had a NILOMETER: it is to the east of the column, and it was used for measuring water during Floods.

The CISTERNs: there are 12 cisterns from the Roman period, they were used for the storage of rainwater (Regional Administration of Alexandria’s Monuments, 2016)

The Serapeum Temple
The Serapeum (or Sarapeion) was a great temple dedicated to the Greek-Egyptian god Serapis, in ancient Alexandria. It was founded by Ptolemy I around 300 BC, in an effort to unite the religions and cultures of the Egyptians and the Greeks. Ptolemy I invented a new god, and two religious experts in the employ of the king declared the statue to be Serapis. This new religion was centered on the gods Isis, Serapis, and Harpocrates. Serapis was a combination of the traditional Egyptian gods (Osiris and Apis) and for the Greek, it represents the supreme god of divine majesty and the sun Zeus (Escoffey, 2012; Sacred destinations)

Table 1: Number of visitors to Kom El Shokafa

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>No. of Foreigners</th>
<th>No. of Visitors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>109,636</td>
<td>7,937</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>36,975</td>
<td>3,636</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>38,230</td>
<td>5,645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>19,903</td>
<td>4,541</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Regional Administration of Alexandrian Monuments .2016

Visitor management process in touristic sites
It is a detailed planning process designed to provide guidance for planning, managing, developing and established sites. It also emphasizes the use of marketing techniques, such as product development and market segmentation. The outcome of the visitor management process is a management plan related to the selection and creation of opportunities for visitors to experience site settings through appropriate educational and recreational activities. (Brown et.al, 2006)
The visitor management process considers type of visitor, number of visitors, diversity of visitors and where they are recreating. Furthermore it calls for analysing of the experiences and benefits visitors’ desire, and the types of services and facilities they require at various stages within the trip cycle. In addition, the process identifies appropriate interpretive themes, resource values, constraints and sensitivities. The process considers the services and facilities offered and data on visitor satisfaction. (Brown et.al, 2006)

Regarding the visitor management process implemented on the site of catacombs, Kom El Shokafa, the researcher has conducted several field visits to evaluate the situation in both sites. Special forms were used to record visitor management practices and tools in each part of the site. Photographs were also taken for documentation, and through these visits the researcher was trying to identify the week points in these areas in order to evaluate the current situation and suggest recommendation for the improvement of both sites.

**Research methods**
This study adopted a descriptive research and is done by using print media such as articles, books, or manuals and through field visits using an observation form obtained from Mustafa and Balaawi (2013). It is a helpful strategy to collect data on actions and behavior of people. Moreover it involves going into the natural setting of the area, watching, describing, analyzing and interpreting what one has seen (Sekaran& Bougie, 2013). In addition to evaluating the visual and documentary information that is used to describe the current situation of an archeological site (Neuman, 2006). This study was conducted in March 2016 and ended in August 2016.

**Results and discussion**
The following data summarizes the results of the field visits:

**Types of facilities within the area**
These special sites contain special art collections are surely worth visiting. They have some problems regarding touristic facilities, and these include: there are no suitable souvenir shops within both sites, no medical areas, no facilities for wheel chairs, and no people to guide wheel-chair visitors and no parking areas in Pompey's pillar site.

**Security site personnel /rangers /police**
Weak security provided at the site where the personnel of the site are just found at the entrance of the site, at the ticketing is a major flaw. Also there is no monitoring system for visitors’ behavior within the area.

**Behavior and instruction signs for certain activities**
There is no use for behavior signs at the site. The sign may draw attention to a fragile or a perishable monument. For example, there are no signs dictating that visitors should stay off the wall, or not touch them.

**Provision of visitor information and interpretation**
There are very limited and unsuitable leaflets or brochures giving opening times and contact numbers and brief information of the sites, and the interpretive signs are ignored. The free books that are provided in both sites are Islamic books only, they do not display any related information about the sites or about other attractions in Alexandria.
Interpreting specific information to some targeted visitor groups
Some physical disabilities may hinder visitors with special needs from enjoying full access to the centre, so an attempt must be made to allow the fullest possible "intellectual access". Such attempts are not available in the sites. For example, there should be texts available in Braille, offering objects which can be explored by touch, or providing taped guides for use in a "walkman" tape player, and special "Induction loops" can help those who use hearing aids (Beech, 2011).

Accessibility
There are barriers in movements from AbouMandour Street and KhofouStreet that lead from the Pompeys pillar to the catacombs because the street is so damaged, and it is not suitable for pedestrians and cars. In addition to that, Bab ElmloukStreet which is considered the main road that tourist buses use to go to Kom Al Shouqafa is not well paved or well-prepared for buses.
There are barriers in movements in Kom Al Shouqafa because the entrance and exit gates are so close to each other, and the visitors entering have to pass on the X-ray to be checked which is the same place that visitors exit; which confuses the visitors. Adding to this confusion, the exit gate is so close to the ticket window.

Ensuring visitor safety to the site
There are many potential hazards that may happen because there is no staff responsible for guiding visitors within the area. In addition to that, there are no safety signs to warn that the stairs are damaged especially in the main tomb in Kom Al Shouqafa. The visitors enter the tomb by themselves without any guidance. Moreover, the main tomb in Kom Elshokafa has ground water, and the visitors have to pass on wooden bars to move in the tomb.
Figure 2: the wooden bars that the visitors have to pass on and the ground water in the main tomb of Kom Al Shoukafa

Source: Photo taken by researcher in the main tomb Kom Al Shoukafa

Penalties for negative actions (littering, vandalism)
There are no penalties for damaging, or drawing, painting, writing, inscribing, and marking on artifacts or affixing posters and banners.

On-site transport systems
The road that leads to the catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa is extremely damaged and full of vendors (Elamoud Street).

Signs posts and information points
There are no direction signs from Kom Al Shoukafa to Pompey’s pillar and vice versa. The existed information signs are in a very bad quality, as the labels are so lackluster and there are banners with a weak description in the catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa and Pompey’s pillar. Also, there are no labels indicating street names.

Figure 3: a blank sign supposed to show visitors where to start their path in Pompey’s pillar

Source: photo taken by researcher in Pompey’s pillar
Figure 4: Sign of the main tomb of catacomb of Kom Al Shouqafa (in a bad condition, with fading words, and lackluster)

Source: photo taken by researcher in the main tomb of catacomb of Kom Al Shouqafa.

Figure 5: Banners of description of Tigran tombs in Kom Al Shouqafa (paper stuck with glue)

Source: photo taken by researcher in Tigran tombs in Kom Al Shouqafa.

Figure 6: Banners showing a description of Pompey’s pillar (paper printed and stickered)

Source: photo taken by researcher in Pompey’s pillar.
Behavior of groups on the site
There is a bad behavior conducted by local visitors. They are handing and touching walls in addition to sitting and writing on perishable or untouchable monumental objects on the site.

3- Areas of improvement of visitor management at Kom Al Shoukafa and Pompey’s pillar
In order to enhance the site of Kom Al Shoukafa and Pompey’s pillar, the following suggestions should be taken into consideration:

3.1. Infrastructure at catacombs of Kom Al Shouqafa and pompey’s pillar
There should be a significant influence of tourism infrastructure on the development of the area.

Roads
Roads that lead to Kom Al Shouqafa and Pompey’s pillar must be paved; littered garbage on them must be removed from the area, in addition to transferring the street of vendors to other areas.
The touristic buses must be encouraged to take the path of Canal El Mahmoudia instead of the main Karmouz area.

Visitors service installations
-The cafeteria and restaurant: ensuring the existence of a clean restaurant that would provide unique Egyptian culinary and cuisine as a touristic restaurant, in addition to developing one of the cafeterias in front of Kom Al Shoukafa to be suitable for tourists.
-Gift shops: There should be a gifts shop in the area that is suitable for tourists. It should be stocked to sell metallic and wooden crafts of antiquities. They should also sell prints, posters, maps, and books of Alexandria.
-Rest area: the main court should be arranged as a rest place for visitors. A pergola should be established to protect visitors from sun burns.
- **Toilets & rubbish bins:** Toilets should be clean and suitable for visitors and a person should always be responsible for cleaning them at all times. At least 2 rubbish bins should be added in both areas.

- **Parking area:** There should be a suitable parking area for visitors, especially in Pompey’s pillar site.

- **Ground water:** There should be suction of ground water in the main tomb and the third floor of Kom Al Shoukafa. The damaged wooden bars that the visitors have to pass on should be changed, so as to prevent any injuries amongst visitors in Kom Al Shouqafa.

- **Electric lamps:** The Regional Administration of Alexandria’s Monuments should change the electric lamps regularly in the main tombs of Kom Al Shoukafa to enable the visitors to view the paints clearly.

- **Entrance and exit:** Signs should be provided to guide visitors through entrance and exit paths in Kom Al Shoukafa to prevent confusion amongst visitors, and stop them from crowding those paths while entering and exiting the site.

3.2. **Staffing and training**

It is necessary to establish the suitability of a person for a job. This needs considerable care: the staff is responsible for managing the centre smoothly, and they and must have the appropriate skills to do so.

3.3. **Education and interpretation**

Interpretation programmes would lead to a change in the behavior of visitors, and developing cognitive dissonance is a much-needed strategy to help visitors modify their behavior. Interpretation can involve formal and informal educational process as well as a variety of media and presentation forms (Fayall et al. 2008).

The use of codes of conduct is used to enable a combination of education and regulation in the interpretation process (Manson, 2006). Also, people tend to react positively to requests to refrain from certain forms of behavior when they understand the reason.

3.4. **Visitor Centre at catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa to Pompey’s pillar**

There is a need for building a visitors’ center to inform the public about the present situation, background history, and future plans of the site. It could rely on models, words, pictures and maps to tell its story. (Beech G.M, 2011) This can have a critical influence on visitors’ behavior during and after their visit. (Fayallet.al, 2008)

Educational and interpretive facilities can bring local economic benefits by hiring local people, and selling local product. For example, they could sell local handicrafts and souvenir, and provide services such as refreshments (Fayallet.al, 2008).

The involvement of the local community can also be enhanced through the provision of education and interpretation. (Fayallet.al, 2008)

3.5. **Sign posts and information points**

The provision of visitor facilities with direction signs from the catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa to Pompey’s pillar and vice versa is a must.

Signs could be used to help control potentially damaging visitor behaviour. Signs should ask visitors not to walk on or climb up banks. (Jones, 2007)

There should be a suitable leaflet giving visitor information about the site, and a map should be available for the area, in addition to labels on the artifacts with good quality. Also, facilities should be provided for visitors with special needs.
3.6. Security and safety at catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa and Pompey’s pillar
Security people and volunteers should be employed as the area needs to be protected, monitored and secured (UNWTO, 1996). Health services, particularly first aid, should be available at entry points. The staff, and personnel themselves should be trained in first aid, in order to assist their clients in emergency situations, as well as help them contact multilingual physicians if necessary (UNWTO, 1996).

3.7 Management of visitor flow at catacombs of Kom Al Shoukafa and Pompey’s pillar
Management of visitor flow can be done by extending opening hours, increasing the number of staff in high season, restrictive ticketing by requiring pre-booking. Electronic ticketing systems are needed as well. There should also be a website to allow visitors to book their tickets before visiting the site, in order to follow up visitor flows. There should also be discounts on the entrance tickets in low seasons, as the prices of the tickets for Egyptians are high. This could also have an encouraging effect for them to visit the sites. (Fayall et al, 2008).

3.8. Visitors behavior at catacombs of Kom Al Shouqafa and Pompey’s pillar
There should be behavioral signs to prevent visitors from touching, leaning on and writing on the walls, and penalties should be executed for any damage caused by any of these misbehaviors.

An action plan
An action plan to execute the recommendations is presented as shown through the following table number (3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Time frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhancing the facilities and services provided</td>
<td>-Government district -Ministry of Tourism and Ministry of Health -Ministry of Antiquities -Ministry of Antiquities</td>
<td>-Garbage remove -Transfer street Vendors to other areas. -Providing Cafeteria, restaurant, Gift shops, Rest area. -Suitability of toilets. -Parking area -Entrance and exit signs In Kom Alshokafa -Signs from and to kom Alshoukafa to Pompey’s pillar and vice versa</td>
<td>-regularly -2017/2018 -2017/2018 -2017</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Enhancing the infrastructure                                                                 | Persons with Autism and Other Disabilities                                                                 | -Ministry of Transportation  
   - Ministry of Antiquities  
   - Ministry of Antiquities                                                                 | -Pavement of road that leads to Kom Al Shokafa and Pompey’s pillar  
   -Buses take the path of canal EL Mahmoudia instead of Karmouz.  
   - Ground water suction in the main tomb and 3rd floor of Kom Al Shoukafa  
   -Changing Electric lamps in Kom Al Shokafa main Tomb                                                                 | 2017/2018  
   -start 2017- regularly  
   -2017/2018 - Regularly |
| Improving the safety and security                                                                 | -Ministry of interior  
   -Ministry of Health and Ministry of Antiquities                                                                 | -Increase security staff  
   -Staff training on first aids in case of emergency                                                                 | 2017/2018 |
| Management of visitor flow                                                                                                                             | - Ministry of Antiquities  
   - Ministry of Tourism                                                                                                                                  | -Increase staff number in high season.  
   -pre booking requirement  
   -Electronic ticketing systems  
   - Website for booking  
   -Discounts on low season                                                                                                                            | 2017/2019 |
| Managing visitor behavior                                                                                                                             | - Ministry of Antiquities  
   - Ministry of Tourism  
   - Security and Staff                                                                                                                                  | -Behavioral signs  
   - Penalties for negative actions  
   - Interpretation programs  
   - Code of Conducts  
   - Improvement of the wooden bars in the main tomb of Kom Al Shokafa                                                                 | 2017/2018 |
| Development and rehabilitation of human resources to work in tourism field                                                                          | - Ministry of Tourism (Training sector)  
   - Ministry of Antiquities                                                                                                                               | -Education, training and work shops .                                                                 | 2017/2018 |
| Providing visitors information                                                                                                                        | - Ministry of Antiquities  
   - Egyptian tourist Authority  
   - Ministry of Tourism                                                                                                                                  | -Visitor centers  
   - Leaflets or brochures for both areas  
   - Improving banner description and signs                                                                                                           | 2017/2018 |
Reference