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**Studying the Challenges of Geotourism Development as
New Form of Tourism**

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master Science in Tourism Studies**

By

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ABSTRACT

Due to its novelty as a new distinctive form of tourism, geotourism has not been studied much. However, the Middle East consists of a rich geodiversity, which is regrettably not well known by the public. Despite the development of geotourism, very few studies have investigated issues pertaining to it in the Middle East, particularly, in Egypt. Therefore, this research has made to identify the concept of geotourism and how to develop it, also to explore the challenges of geotourism development as a new form of tourism. It concludes the potential benefits of geotourism development for different kinds of stakeholders involved in the tourism industry in Egypt.

This research adopted a quantitative approach by using single case study to achieve the aim, objectives and research questions and to explore the importance of geotourism development and the challenges facing it. Data collection involved multiple sources of evidence, i.e. questionnaire, and direct observation. 61.5% was the average response rate. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS, 16) program was used for analysing data.

The results indicated that awareness and knowledge of visitors about the concept of geotourism are still less than the academic and official staff. It also found that the concept of geotourism needs to be known for the local community. The results reported that geotourism development bring different benefits for the geosite including; economic, education and knowledge; preserve geosite; improve the infrastructure; develop local community and provide employee opportunities. The results showed that there were different challenges facing geotourism development in Wadi Al-Hitan.

A major contribution of this study is related to enhance the understanding of geotourism concept. The current study added to the growing geotourism

literature through its review of the pervious academic research, generation of new ideas and interpretation of rich data collected from the different sources. Also, the current study contributes to theory through study extending our understanding of geotourism and its tourists in the Middle East, in particular, Egypt.

Keywords: Geotourism, geotourist, geosite, geology, geomorphology, geotourism development, geotourism challenges, Wadi Al-Hitan.