



Exploring the Role of Event Management for Destination Branding Post COVID-19 Pandemic: The case study of Egypt

استكشاف دور إدارة الأحداث للعلامة التجارية للوجهة بعد انتشار جائحة COVID-19: دراسة الحالة الخاصة بمصر

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Abstract

الملخص

The travel and tourism sector is suffering significant disruption and is being greatly impacted globally. COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences on economic recession, employment, investment, and demand were not confined to the tourism business only but extended to include other tourism-related sectors such as event management. This study aims to explore the potential role of events on destination branding, from the perspective of the tourism industry stakeholders. The study purposed to answer the research question: how destinations can use successful events, post the COVID-19 pandemic to promote optimism to stimulate tourism helping in mitigating the impact of the crisis, and accelerating recovery while maintaining the destination positive image. The research conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 key event management and tourism stakeholders in Egypt. According to the interviews, seven main themes emerged: Travel restrictions, safety measures and less interaction, promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions, best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis, the need for cooperative planning between the industry key players, the synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts, role of media to support events. With these findings, this study provided recommended plans for destination branding to help take the necessary actions to ensure and prepare for the future recovery of the events market. Consequently, this study contributed practically. In addition, it developed empirical evidence that contributes knowledge, filling in the academic gap found in literature.

يعاني قطاع السفر والسياحة من اضطراب كبير ويتأثر بشكل كبير على مستوى العالم. لم يقتصر جائحة COVID-19 وعواقبه على الركود الاقتصادي والعمالة والاستثمار والطلب على قطاع السياحة فقط بل امتد ليشمل القطاعات الأخرى ذات الصلة بالسياحة مثل إدارة الأحداث. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف الدور المحتمل للأحداث على العلامات التجارية للوجهة، من منظور أصحاب المصلحة في صناعة السياحة. تهدف الدراسة إلى الإجابة على سؤال البحث: كيف يمكن للوجهات استخدام الأحداث الناجحة، ونشر جائحة COVID-19 لتعزيز التفاؤل لتحفيز السياحة مما يساعد في التخفيف من تأثير الأزمة، وتسريع الانتعاش مع الحفاظ على الصورة الإيجابية للوجهة. أجرى البحث مقابلات شبه منظمة مع 12 من المعنيين بإدارة الأحداث والفعاليات السياحية في مصر. وفقاً للمقابلات، ظهرت سبعة محاور رئيسية: قيود السفر، وتدابير السلامة وتفاعل أقل، والترويج للخدمات السياحية التكميلية ومناطق الجذب السياحي، وأفضل وسيلة لاستخدام الأحداث لإعادة بناء العلامة التجارية للوجهة بعد الأزمة، والحاجة إلى التخطيط التعاوني بين اللاعبين الرئيسيين في الصناعة، تضافر جهود جهات التسويق للحدث والوجهة، ودور وسائل الإعلام في دعم الأحداث. مع هذه النتائج، قدمت هذه الدراسة خطاً موصى بها للعلامة التجارية للوجهة للمساعدة في اتخاذ الإجراءات اللازمة لضمان والاستعداد للتعافي المستقبلي لسوق الأحداث. وبالتالي، ساهمت هذه الدراسة عملياً. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، طور الدليل التجريبي الذي يساهم في المعرفة، وسد الفجوة الأكاديمية الموجودة في الأدب.

Keywords: Event Management; destination branding; Post COVID-19; Egypt

الكلمات الرئيسية: إدارة الأحداث؛ العلامات التجارية للوجهة؛ ما بعد COVID-19؛ مصر

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1. Introduction

Event industry can be considered as one of the hardly hit industries by the Covid-19 pandemic throughout the world. Since, main prevention methods of social distancing and banning of getting together reflect the contrast situation to an essential characteristic of events which is assemble of people in one place (Indika, 2021). Due to prolonged quarantine curfew and national and international travel restrictions, lockdowns, banning of human gatherings, large number of international and local events were cancelled, postponed, suspended or downscaled. Event entrepreneurs lost their income, most of companies took a decision to keep their employees on leave without payment until reopening of business activities making the future of the jobs at risk. Moreover, other employees were out from their jobs (Baum and Hai, 2020).

According to this, corporates start to develop its strategies and adapts more flexible ones in order to deal with this current situation (Huang and Jahromi, 2021). In the same manner, Baum and Hai (2020) suggested that post Covid-19, event industry strategies should be developed depending on a holistic approach. These strategies should consider the changing markets, direct marketing and product development, flexibility and adaptability, usage of technology and innovative solutions, safety and health. The development of good strategies also requires the identification of virtual and hybrid events, training on virtual technologies and risk management, development of innovative solutions with immersed experience. It also requires a collaboration of industrial approach, adaptation of international best practices, continuous marketing and providing flexible packages can be recognized as potential strategies.

One of the solutions that industries may depend on is the events and event management. Event management represents non-essential products and services which may lead to address issues of the industry and re-open it at last (Baum and Hai, 2020). Events have become an increasingly significant component of destination branding. Major events draw significant economic and marketing benefits that contribute to the success of the destination brand on the long run (Bazzanella et al., 2019). Jago et al. (2003) note the importance of the longevity/ tradition of an event for a destination when seeking branding opportunities. Ziakas et.al. (2021) further postulates that the frequency in hosting events intensifies the tourist experience, as well as strengthen their destinations brand. The tourism industry supporting events generates employment and economic diversification. Through events, places may attract not only tourists but also investments. Events carry positive impacts in three parallel areas; attracting tourism, improving the place's image, while supporting the local community.

Despite the significance of events in influencing destination choice, vacation activities, and the timing of travel, little is known about how events can help to brand a destination and, as a result, influence long-term visitation to the destination (Jago et al., 2003). This study aims to cover this gap through exploring and interpreting the potential role of events on destination branding, from the perspective of the tourism industry stakeholders, highlighting the importance of achieving a good 'nation brand', which became a valuable asset for any tourist destination. It represents the ability of the destination to continue to trade at a healthy margin for as long as its brand image stays intact. This study explores how destinations can use successful events, post the COVID-19 pandemic to promote optimism in order to stimulate tourism helping in mitigating the impact of the crisis, and accelerating recovery while maintaining the destination positive image.

2. Literature Review

In 2020, the Coronavirus pandemic turned the world upside down (Kaefer, 2020). According to the UNWTO (2020), the disease has transpired a negative curse on tourism. Statistics have showed that tourism is probably the single biggest economic casualty of COVID-19. UN News (2020) indicated

that: “96 percent of all worldwide destinations have put into place travel restrictions in response to the pandemic. Some 90 destinations have completely/ partially closed their borders to tourists, while another 44 are closed to certain tourists depending on their country of origin” (Negm and Elsamadicy, 2021, P93).

The COVID-19 pandemic has confronted the tourism and travel industry with an unprecedented challenge. Almost all tourism businesses were asked to limit their operations to only take-outs. Restrictions placed on travel and stay-at-home orders by the governors of many states resulted in sharp decreases in hotel occupancies and revenues (UNWTO, 2020). While most of the hotels and restaurants have already reopened business, they are operating at a significantly reduced capacity (Bartik et al., 2020). Long term, businesses have to deal with the disastrous reputational damage that has been caused since the start of the pandemic.

Nowadays, the main objectives among governments globally are motivation, continuous workflow, and a positive mind. Accordingly, research assured that nation branding is a vital technique that helps the governments in recovering any crisis (Negm and Elsamadicy, 2021).

2.1 Travel Restrictions and Safety Measures

The coronavirus disease 2019 has had a significant impact on urban life practically wherever it has spread since it initially began to spread widely in December 2019 in Wuhan, China. The objective was reducing density and fostering social distance. As a result, numerous cities throughout the world implemented various types of regulations that limit inhabitants' freedom to travel. In Wuhan, for instance, all public transit was shut down, and locals were not allowed to leave the city without authorization. Later, similar actions were taken all over the world. For a considerable amount of time, these travel-restriction measures substantially altered urban travel patterns. A decrease in travel behavior was seen in terms of trips made. Some cities with a high population density experienced a 50% to 62.9% in overall mobility (Li and Zhao, 2022).

Hospitality and tourism industry is affected significantly by corona virus. Accordingly, the corporates related to hospitality and tourism started to pay a great attention in adopting safety procedures (Nicola et al., 2020). The fundamental safety procedures that employees follow to preserve workplace safety are referred to as safety compliance. These consist of a selection of actions intended to satisfy an organization's safety standards, such as adherence to the organization's safety policies and practices and the use of personal protective equipment (Hu et al., 2021).

Safety knowledge, safety skills, and safety motivation of an individual are influenced by their drive for safety, which in turn is influenced by the safety climate of their organization (Hopkins, 2006). Recent studies (e.g. Rae and Provan, 2019; Amoah and Simpeh, 2020; Purwanto, 2020) have concentrated on how people follow safety protocols rather than just whether they do so. This line of research is inspired by the discovery that employees may follow safety protocols just for the sake of following them, making them a ritualistic or cosmetic activity that doesn't advance the objective of working safely (Hu et al., 2021).

2.2 Event Tourism and Destination Branding

Destination branding is a strategic effort of a city government to project images, shape perceptions, and create strong positioning. It is one of the city's efforts in projecting the image of the city's values regionally and globally (Satyagraha and Mahatmi, 2018). Competition is growing fierce to attract the attention of tourists, investors, and other stakeholders in order to generate economic growth and income for a city (Satyagraha and Mahatmi, 2019). As a result, the international tourist market includes an increasing number of destinations developing a variety of quality tourist offers, and the

notion of branding has started to expand among destination marketing organizations (DMOs). DMOs have a great role in leadership and coordination, product development, planning and research, community relations and involvement, partnerships and teambuilding and marketing and promotion (Morrison, 2013).

As Destination branding is focused on lowering costs, changing the type of visitors, changing the nature or behavior of visitors, but also changing tourism products, integrating stakeholders and communities, avoiding irritations and responding to issues, for instance, created by the present economic crisis, and challenges at the digital level (Oliveira, 2013).

Power of destination branding marketing helps in turning “unknown places” into popular tourism destinations, producing a significant return on investment (ROI) on marketing funding, reversing the impacts of crises on tourism destinations (e.g., Hong Kong Tourism Board (HKTB) marketing during the SARS crisis) and improving the image of a country (Morrison, 2013).

Events can be used for brand marketing and more differentiated marketing efforts, directed to specific target groups or particular segments of the market. Image and identity are important location factors, but cannot by themselves change the general perception of a city or region. Major planned events can be focal points of brand-marketing strategies. In building a brand for a destination, it has been argued that the identity creation should not be restricted to the visual but should create an emotional relationship between the destination and the potential visitors (Morgan et al., 2011). This could be achieved by holding planned events that encourage and attract visitors to the destination.

2.3 Cooperation between Public and Private Sector

Generally speaking, tourism benefits a wide range of economic sectors. For many nations, the GDP is significantly higher than average due to tourism-related activities (Wood and Meng, 2021). Investments in tourism industry require very high expenses. However, it is typically impossible to make significant expenditures in tourism due to budgetary restrictions on the part of governments and individual business owners (Tekere and Tekere, 2012). Therefore, the tourism industry requires some means of government and private sector collaboration. Public-private partnerships are agreements between the government and businesses from the private sector with the aim of co-financing initiatives like the building or improvement of lodging and entertainment facilities. Such partnerships are characterized by the partners splitting the investment amount, risk, duties, and profits. The establishment of such partnerships is typically driven by the need to finance, develop, build, operate, and maintain tourism investments (Haddadi and Khodadadpoor, 2015).

The underlying idea behind forming a partnership is that both the public and private sectors have unique qualities that provide them an edge in terms of providing services or completing projects. Public-private partnerships models combine the advantages of the public and private sectors to deliver services more effectively. Project to project may differ in the partners' roles and duties. For instance, the private sector partner may play a major role in all facets of service delivery in some projects but only a modest one in others. While the roles and responsibilities of private and public sector partners may differ at individual servicing initiatives, the overall role and responsibilities of government generally do not change (Tekere and Tekere, 2012).

2.4 Events and Egypt Post COVID-19

The pandemic should be seen not only as a serious challenge but also as an opportunity to change previous models in tourism which demands innovation and new creative thinking (Richards, 2020). A major challenge for virtual and hybrid events is multitasking virtual audience while tuning in to the event and unfocused attendees (Singapore Association of Convention and Exhibition Organizers and

Suppliers et. al., 2020), most probably, due to non-physical attendance and other factors. In this context, innovative solutions to create unique immersive experiences for audience should be developed considering the type and nature of the events and attendees. Innovative solutions were developed by the event sector throughout the world in new forms of events with creativity and innovative thinking in order to provide event experiences while ensuring safety (Mair and Smith, 2021).

Egypt planned for a couple of high-profile events to spark media attention and publicity, to boost post-Covid-19 recovery and promote Egypt as a tourist destination. According to Ahram Online, the year 2021 has been an eventful one for Egypt. From the launch of landmark government programs, to more economic reforms. Starting with the Pharaohs' Golden Parade of 22 royal mummies through the streets of Cairo the capital. Followed by the inauguration of over 3,000-year-old Avenue of Sphinxes in Luxor in a ceremony that impressed the world. The avenue, which connects an ancient quay on the Nile with the first pylon of Karnak Temple, marked the launch of a major campaign to promote Luxor as one of the world's largest open-air museums. The event attracted the completely global market, developing a strong interest in the ancient Egyptian civilization. Visitors from all over the world, local and foreign, attended this event. According to the Egyptian State Information System, "About 200 international media correspondents accredited in Egypt attended this huge legendary celebration. The celebration witnessed the screening of a documentary film about Luxor Governorate, entitled "Luxor Secret," displaying the city of Luxor, its most prominent monuments, and tourist attractions. It was presented by a group of artists, members of the Luxor local community, and archaeologists who discussed the religious diversity in Luxor. The film concluded with a message from the Minister of Tourism about Luxor, in which he reassured everyone, saying, "Our country is safe."

According to ANSA med, after being delayed for six months due to coronavirus, Egypt managed to hold a successful edition of its largest International Book Fair, accommodating more than 1,218 participating publishers. The Gate Travel Expo, taking place from September 6 to 9 in Cairo, is expected to attract more than 10,000 visitors and 200 companies from at least 56 countries. The UN Cop27 climate change conference in Sharm El Sheikh in November 2022. In addition, the highly anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum, which is scheduled to open at 2023. "These discoveries are very important because they will bring back cultural tourism to Egypt," as said by the famed Egyptologist Zahi Hawass. He pointed out that 2022 will be a very important year for the whole world." It would be the 100-year anniversary since the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb on November 4.

3. Research Methodology

Unlike several previous studies on crises affecting the tourism industry. This study is not focusing on analyzing statistical data to evaluate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic empirically, but rather to explore how destinations can use successful events, post the COVID-19 pandemic to promote optimism. This research depends on inductive approach in which qualitative data is collected in order to reach its aim, which is to review and analyze the current knowledge and concerns about the potential role of events on destination branding, as a tool to mitigate the impact of the crisis, and accelerating recovery based on the perspective of the tourism industry stakeholders.

The research conducted semi-structured interviews with 12 key event managements and tourism stakeholders in Egypt. From those participants, four of them are from the managerial level in Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, two of them are from the managerial level in Ministry of Youth and Sports and six of them are managers and owner of private companies specialized in events organization. Semi-structured interviewing is the process of using a series of predetermined open-

ended questions to explore the experiences and to gain in-depth information from participants who are aware of the phenomena (Doody and Noonan, 2013).

This qualitative research approach, using interviews, seeks to investigate the following key areas: (1) Elements that make events effective to build destination's brand post COVID-19 pandemic. This point came from the assumptions that researchers start to study, which is the tourism impacts and transformational affordance that occurs as a result of COVID-19 and its safety and distance procedures (Sigala, 2020 and Ketter and Avraham, 2021). Accordingly, the effect of events on brand marketing started to be an important field of study (Morgan et al., 2011).

(2) What strategies seem to be tackled using events to build destination's brand post COVID-19 pandemic? Dias et al. (2022) has referred to Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) as a successful strategy that corporates can use in destination brand building. Moreover, Orîndaru et al. (2021) assured of the importance of adopting sustainable strategy that will help in recover any problem faces the tourism industry. According the recent study aims to investigate the most proper strategies that help in building destination branding.

(3) Cooperative planning between the industry key stakeholders. Once tourism industry is an important industry that affects the GDP of the country positively, but at the same time, it requires very high payment, the cooperation between the public and private sector is a must in order to maintain and guarantee a high level of tourism rates (Teker and Teker, 2012 and Haddadi and Khodadadpoor, 2015). Thus, the cooperation between both sectors should be studies will to know its real effect.

A small number of participants in a qualitative study are a viable option when the study aims to gain in-depth data by interviewing knowledgeable participants, implementing the data saturation approach (Patton, 2015). Data saturation is necessary to ensure the validity of qualitative research (Yin, 2018). Data saturation is met when the data collected does not reveal new information, coding, or themes (Patton, 2015). Accordingly, only 12 interviews were conducted due to data redundancy.

Reliability and validity are essential outcomes for a researcher's study. Researchers focus on reliability and validity by using member checking (Patton, 2015). Member checking is the process used by researchers to ensure consistency of what the researcher interpreted from the interviews by requesting that the participants review their summaries of the interviews (Morse, 2015; Yin, 2018). Member checking allows the researcher to validate the interviewing summaries, created from their field notes and audio recordings. Once member checking is complete, the researchers begin the data analysis process, including coding and thematic analysis.

3.1 Steps of Analysis

To analyze the data collected for this study, the researchers conducted thematic analysis to uncover the themes of the study. Thematic analysis allows the researcher to discover essential themes and patterns to answer the research question (Yin, 2018).

Performing a qualitative analysis entails assessing something's quality as opposed to quantity. The qualitative data are used, when the concepts are difficult to be described through using numbers or numerical expressions. Qualitative analysis aims to measure thoughts, feelings, and perceptions and it seeks to understand what drives people and why they behave the way they do (Chandra and Shang, 2019). The current study applies a thematic analysis through using NVivo program, where the analysis is done through five steps (Clarke et al., 2015):

Step (1): Becoming familiar with the data: In this step, each word in the content of the interviews should be correctly transcribed, as the placement of a comma might alter the meaning perceived from a piece of information. Researchers emphasize the importance of reading the scripts several times in order to become familiar with all aspects of the data.

Step (2): Create initial codes: The researcher is going through the transcript of each interview and underlining anything that sticks out as significant or perhaps fascinating. As the researcher continues reading the text, new codes may be added while also underlining all the words and phrases that correspond to these codes. Information is also classified into groups that are identified by codes after reading the text in its entirety. Finally, the main ideas and meanings were quickly summarized in the data using these codes

Step (3): Collate codes with supporting data: the researcher works on grouping all the extracts pertaining to a particular code into a single category. If the study is conducted with paper and pen, cut out the snippets and arrange them by code. If research is carried out utilizing software like NVivo, this thematic analysis coder will automatically compile them together.

Step (4): Group codes into themes: Throughout this phase, the research will want to keep an eye out for any themes or patterns in the codes. The change from codes to themes is not always seamless or easy. As the study becomes more familiar with the data, leading to applying different codes or themes in accordance with the brand-new information. It learns Seven themes are developed in the current analysis, which are: theme of travel restrictions, theme of safety measures and less interaction, theme of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions, theme of best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis, theme of the need for cooperative planning between the industry key players, theme of the synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts and theme of role of media to support.

Step (5): Review and revise themes: This step occurs after the themes have been thoroughly defined and the final analysis has been done by writing and reporting on them, as follows:

3.2 Theme One: Travel Restrictions

Travel restrictions represent the first theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of two codes; travel ban and Russian Ukrainian war. Tourism has started to recover globally with the easing of travel restrictions, now that 60 percent of the world's population is vaccinated against Covid-19. Countries have largely adapted to living with the pandemic. It was actually up to each country to define whether to apply any restrictions or not. With the aim to mitigate the spread of the Corona Virus, all destinations worldwide introduced travel restrictions (UNWTO, 2020). In reason of preserving public health, governments all over the world chose to close their borders entirely for a period. Other countries decided to ban entry to nonresidents (e.g., India, Malaysia, South Africa) (Nunes, 2020), and prevent their citizens from traveling either internationally (e.g., Germany, Italy) or even domestically by applying a lockdown between local regions (e.g., Oman). These points are clearly discussed in the codes of travel restrictions.

Travel Ban: this is the first code of travel restrictions theme. It is noticed that the travel ban that the countries had imposed due to Covid-19 still had a significant effect on the tourism context. This point is clearly identified in the interviews three and seven, where they indicate that;

"The travel ban that started since 2020 due to Corona virus had cause negative effects on the tourism context and we can say that this effect still exists till nowadays. Also this impact has decreased but it still needs time to disappear" R3

*"One of the reasons of **travel** restrictions is the **travel ban** that countries use to impose among their citizens" R7*

Russian Ukrainian War: this is the second code of travel restrictions theme. Another real challenge that affects the touristic rates is the Russian Ukrainian war. Any war occurs in a certain country had an effect on different contexts all over the world. This point is shown in the interviews. The evidence regarding this point is shown in interviews four and twelve.

*"In addition to all **challenges**, the **Russian** invasion on Ukraine represents a real **challenge** that affects the **tourism** sector not only in **Egypt** but all the countries around the world" R4*

*"A challenging economic environment coupled with the **Russian-Ukrainian** war pose a downside risk to the ongoing recovery of international **tourism**" R12*

Interviews have also focused on another important point, which is Russian Ukrainian war and its effect on the Egyptian tourism, where Egypt uses to receive large number of Russian and Ukrainian tourists every year. Therefore, the war has decreased the number of tourists coming from Russian and Ukraine to Egypt. The evidence regarding this point is shown in interview twelve.

*"This war has also badly affected the **tourism** sector, with **Russian** and **Ukrainian** tourists normally accounting for at least a third of the 10 million-plus visitors to **Egypt**" R12*

3.3 Theme Two: Safety Measures and Less Interaction

Safety measures and less interaction represent the second theme extracted from the analysis, where it consists of two codes; social distancing and fear of traveling. Although some destinations have started slowly to open up, individuals are still afraid of traveling and interacting. These points are clearly discussed in the codes of safety measures and less interaction.

Social Distancing: this is the first code of safety measures and less interaction theme. Due to social distancing that is imposed to face Covid-19, people starts to use online and social media platforms as a way of communication that supports the social distance. According, people depend on online platforms to see the events virtually. This point is shown in interview six.

*"Putting social distancing due to **Covid-19 pandemic** in the priority and shifting to **participating** in **events** virtually through online platforms" R6*

Fear of Traveling: this is the second code of safety measures and less interaction theme. Due to travel ban that used to face the spread of Covid-19, people are still suffering from fear of travelling, which by that had negative influence on tourism. Interviews one, two and seven have referred to this point as follows:

*"The **Covid-19 pandemic** changed the way people think about their daily physical activities including traveling and consequently attending or **participating** in various types of **events** whether business or leisure **events**" R1*

*"**Destinations** have welcomed almost three times international arrivals in the first quarter of 2022 compared to 2021. However, international tourist arrivals were still 61 percent below pre-**pandemic** 2019 levels over the same period" R2*

*"The post crisis fear of traveling, especially to far or new **destinations**, which could go as extreme as being phobiotic (i.e., hodophobia)" R7*

Thus, the researcher concluded that safety measures are a significant element in branding destinations post pandemic. The discussions provided support that “people will need more time and safety feeling to decrease their online or digital behaviors”.

3.4 Theme Three: Promotion of Complementary Tourist Services and Attractions

Promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions represent the third theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of four codes; sports and entertainment tourism, Nile cruises, local market shopping and touristic destination. Egypt is keen to promote various types of tourism not only cultural tourism. For example, the various tourist activities in Luxor, such as balloon tours, Nile cruises, local market shopping, and sports and entertainment activities. These points are clearly discussed in the codes of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions theme.

Sports and Entertainment Tourism: this is the first code of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions theme. Interviews have assured that the importance of sport tourism in Egypt has increased recently, which increase the touristic rate. Although interviews had referred to different sports that are supported by Ministry of Youth and Sports. Finally it is also referred to "skydiving" and how it gain great attention in the recent years. Interviews three, five, six and seven have presented these points as follows:

*"The idea behind Skydive Pharaohs was to see the treasures of **Egypt** from another view" R3*

*"Organizing **skydiving** events over famous sites, such as the Pyramids of Giza, and planning to be extended to Alamein city on the north coast, Sharm El Sheikh and Marsa Alam this year" R3*

*"**Sports tourism** has become one of the most important types of tourism that contribute effectively to the revitalization of **tourism**, whether internal or external. Interest in **sports tourism** has increased recently, through the **activities** of the Ministry of Youth and **Sports** and the various sports federations, because the organization of tournaments represents a major attraction for tourism for team fans" R5*

*"We pay attention to developing different types of **sports**, such as; water **sports**, water diving, snorkeling, fishing, kayaking and **skydiving**" R6*

*"Giving more concern on increasing sports **tourism**" R7*

Nile cruises: this is the second code of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions theme. Evidence in interviews one and ten are shown as follows:

*"Although newly added **activities** had taken the great intention nowadays, we still pay attention on the **Nile cruises**" R1*

*"A collaborative work is always done between us and the public sector for improving the quality of services provided in **Nile cruises**" R10*

Local Market Shopping: this is the third code of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions theme. Interview two has assured of the importance of encouraging tourists to shop in local market, as follows;

"Another point we start to work on, is encouraging tourists to shop in our local market, in which represents a way to learn more about the Egyptian culture, customs and traditions" R2

Touristic Destination: this is the fourth code of promotion of complementary tourist services and attractions theme. Interviews two and eight assured that Egypt should be a worldwide touristic

destination. This point could be achieved by making more events that shows different touristic attractions.

*"Egypt deserves to be on the world **tourism** map in a much bigger way, it is important to organize many different types of events in the country" R2*

*"This legendary celebration, today we not only announce the launch of the Sphinx Venue, This is to emphasize how Luxor represents a vibrant tourist destination through **tourism activities**, sending a message of security and safety to the whole world" R8*

3.5 Theme Four: Best Means of Using Events to Rebuild a Destination's Brand after Crisis

Best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis represents the fourth theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of three codes; integrated strategy, targeting different markets and the movement of spreading compassion. There has been a notable growth both in the use of, and in demand for, major attractive events for tourism development especially post the COVID pandemic. These points are clearly discussed in the codes of best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis.

Integrated Strategy: this is the first code of best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis theme. The adoption of integrated strategy will help in developing a destination branding, which by that will improve the tourism industry. This evidence is shown in interviews two, four and ten.

*"In this period, we are trying to build an **integrated strategy** between the **public and private** sector, in which aims to develop the touristic **event** as well as the marketing activities related to **tourism promotion**" R2*

*"In order to rebuild a **destination's brand**. This needs to be developed through an **integrated strategy**" R4*

*"An **integrated strategy** between the **public and private** sector represents a successful step for the Egyptian **tourism rate**" R10*

Targeting Different Markets: this is the second code of best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis theme. Identifying the profile and destination brand of Egypt to different countries, represents an important factor that lead to build destination branding. This point is assured at interview eight.

*" Egypt has such a rich history, cultural and touristic assets. It is promoting its image, profile and **destination brand**, targeting different markets all over the globe looking for various experiences" R8*

The Movement of Spreading Compassion: this is the third code of best means of using events to rebuild a destination's brand after crisis theme. Interview ten has assured of the movement of spreading compassion as follows:

*"There is a strong attraction towards the movement of spreading compassion. As **event industry** should be concerning on the wellbeing of the local community, staff and consumers" R10*

3.6 Theme Five: The Need for Cooperative Planning between the Industry Key Players

The need for cooperative planning between the industry key players represents the fifth theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of two codes; stakeholders cooperation and building local identification. The successful use of events as a tool for destination branding requires cooperative planning and coordination among industry stakeholders, including event managers, destination marketers, and governmental events' organizations. Local people could be also an important part of this cooperation. These points are clearly discussed in the codes of the need for cooperative planning between the industry key players theme.

Stakeholders Cooperation: this is the first code of the need for cooperative planning between the industry key players theme. The cooperation between different stakeholders helps in developing the tourism industry, accordingly, this point is started to be actually adopted in the Egyptian touristic sector. Evidence is shown in interviews three, six, seven and twelve.

*"There should be a collaborative approach between **event** industry and ICT industry to improve needed applications in **event** management sector in Egypt"* R3

*"Our work is usually done through the **cooperation** with the private sector, which represents an added value that supports developing the tasks easily"* R6

*"**Cooperation** between **event** managers and **destination** marketers could be more effective through having similar planned agendas and avoiding conflicts and repetitive **events**' ideas"* R7

*"Cooperative planning is also seen to be necessary to ensure the facilities and access to a **destination** was adequate, and integrated marketing communications are obtained"* R12

Another point is related to the voluntary efforts of stakeholders, which is presented in interview five;

*"Volunteer efforts from **destination** stakeholders can benefit in boosting **destination** post crises"* R5

Building Local Identification: this is the second code of the need for cooperative planning between the industry key players theme. Encourage local people to build their identification represents a really successful way that help them to feel proud. On the other hand, this will help people to be a part of the development of their city and its regional brand. Evidence is shown in interviews one, four and eleven, as follows:

*"Similarly, small local **events** can help in building local identification and thereby enhances the quality of **events**' role on **destination** branding"* R1

*"Local interest in **events**' management creates opportunities for locals to participate, in which represents an opportunity for gaining the strength of the local **community** support and feeling part of the success of the remedy process after the pandemic"* R4

*"With the full back of the **community**, this might help locals in developing a greater appreciation towards their city, which plays an important role in developing their city's regional brand"* R11

3.7 Theme Six: The Synergizing of Event and Destination Marketers' Efforts

The synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts represents the sixth theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of two codes; marketing communication strategy and lack of synergy. The researcher requested to know more about what tourism promotion authorities and event marketers should plan for their future marketing campaigns that encourage people to attend events. These points are clearly presented in the codes of the synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts theme.

Marketing Communication Strategy: this is the first code of the synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts theme. Interviews one and five have indicated that;

*"In recent years, we start to put a **marketing communication strategy** that helps in enhancing our work. This **strategy** is used to be updated every now and then" R1*

*"Events' quality is important but insufficiently for building a **destination's** brand. It depends on how such events are built into the **destination's** overall **marketing communication strategy**" R5*

Lack of Synergy: this is the second code of the synergizing of event and destination marketers' efforts theme. Although many interviews has assured of the strong cooperation between different stakeholders in the public and private sector, interview nine has mentioned that there is lack of synergy between destination marketers and event marketers, as follows:

*"There is a lack of synergy between **destination** marketers and event marketers that highlights the segmentation of their respective tasks and activities management. As a result, events **marketing** and **destination** marketing are treated as separate and independent practices" R9*

3.8 Theme Seven: Role of Media to Support

Role of media to support represents the seventh theme extracted from the analysis, where it is consisted of two codes; media coverage and positive influence of media. During events, visitors have a unique chance to interact with the local community, gaining a deeper experience of the ambience, customs and local culture. Along with visitors, events attract journalists and other opinion leaders. These points are clearly presented in the codes of role of media to support theme.

Media Coverage: this is the first code of role of media to support theme. Interviews three and five have referred to the importance of media coverage to the touristic events, as follows;

*"For these audiences, events are a '**media –event**', which are expending the place's image and creating a window for **positive media coverage**. At the time of events, it is easier for destinations to demonstrate their **positive** facets, focusing the media's attention on favorable occurrences" R3*

*"**Media coverage** represents one of the most important ingredients of any touristic **event**" R5*

Positive Influence of Media: this is the second code of role of media to support theme. Interviews two, four and nine have referred to the positive influence of media on enhancing tourism.

*"The **media** is one of the important tributaries to push the **tourism** industry and introduce the elements of **tourism** to other countries as well as a catalyst for the tourists" R2*

*"No one can deny the **positive** influence of **media**" R4*

*"We always need the **media** to cover important events due to the large and positive role it plays in supporting **tourism**" R9*

3.9 Summary of the Analysis

From the analysis, it is noticed that seven main themes are developed, which are;

1. Travel Restrictions Theme
2. Safety Measures and Less Interaction Theme
3. Promotion of Complementary Tourist Services and Attractions Theme
4. Best Means of Using Events to Rebuild a Destination's Brand after Crisis Theme
5. The Need for Cooperative Planning between the Industry Key Players Theme

6. The Synergizing of Event and Destination Marketers' Efforts Theme
7. Role of Media to Support Theme

In each theme, a number of codes are developed. In Travel Restrictions Theme, two codes are developed which are; travel ban and Russian Ukrainian war. In this theme, there are number of words that are repeated among different quotations, which are: travel, ban, challenge, Russian, Ukrainian, challenge, tourism and Egypt.

The second theme is Safety Measures and Less Interaction, which consists of two codes; social distancing and fear of traveling. From the quotations related to this theme, it is noticed that there is number of repeated words, which are; Covid-19, pandemic, participating, events and Destinations.

Third theme is Promotion of Complementary Tourist Services and Attractions Theme, where it is consisted of four codes; sports and entertainment tourism, Nile cruises, local market shopping and touristic destination. In this theme, there are number of words that are repeated among different quotations, which are: Sports, tourism, activities, skydiving, Nile, cruises and Egypt.

Fourth theme is Best Means of Using Events to Rebuild a Destination's Brand after Crisis, where it is consisted of three codes; integrated strategy, targeting different markets and the movement of spreading compassion. In this theme, there are number of words that are repeated among different quotations, which are: event, destination, brand, integrated, strategy, tourism, public and private.

The fifth theme is The Need for Cooperative Planning between the Industry Key Players, which consists of two codes; stakeholders cooperation and building local identification. From the quotations related to this theme, it is noticed that there is number of repeated words, which are; cooperation, event, events, destination and community.

Sixth theme is The Synergizing of Event and Destination Marketers' Efforts Theme, where it is consisted of two codes; marketing communication strategy and lack of synergy. In this theme, there are number of words that are repeated among different quotations, which are: marketing, communication, strategy, destination's and destination.

Seventh theme is Role of Media to Support, where it is consisted of two codes; media coverage and positive influence of media. In this theme, there are number of words that are repeated among different quotations, which are: media, event, positive, coverage and tourism.

After introducing the main conclusions of the analysis, a comparison between the current results and previous literature could be applied. Regarding the first theme "travel restrictions", the participants had assured that the travel ban made a significant effect on people attitude to travel to other countries, which affects the tourism sector significantly. The same point is assured at the literature review. Another point is discussed through the interviews is related to Russian Ukrainian war. Interviews had assured that this war affects the rates of tourism, while literature did not mention this point.

Looking for the second theme "Safety Measures and Less Interaction", previous literature had assured of the importance of safety measurements and the great intention of hotels to adopt safety procedures related to Corona virus. Although interviews assured that people still have serious fears about communications with other people and about travelling to different places.

Third theme "Promotion of Complementary Tourist Services and Attractions Theme", interviews talked about this point in details. Referring that Egypt starts to pay great attention on creating other activities than the traditional antiquities tourism to support tourism sector after the pandemic. These activities represents in water sports, water diving, snorkeling, fishing, kayaking, skydiving, Nile cruises and local market shopping. In the same manner, prior literature mentioned the great efforts

done by the government to support tourism, which represents in making great events, such as; Pharaohs' Golden Parade of 22 royal mummies, managing a successful edition of its largest International Book Fair, accommodating more than 1,218 participating publishers, The UN Cop27 climate change conference in Sharm El Sheikh and the highly anticipated Grand Egyptian Museum, which is scheduled to open end of 2022.

Fourth theme is "Best Means of Using Events to Rebuild a Destination's Brand after Crisis". Interviews has assured of the importance of events in enhancing tourism after the pandemic. It also referred to the importance of integrating same strategies between different stakeholders to support tourism. Looking for previous literature, it strongly supports the importance of events in enhancing tourism, which is presented as in the above theme.

Fifth theme is "The Need for Cooperative Planning between the Industry Key Players". Interviews assured that the cooperation between different stakeholders represents an added value that supports the tourism industry. It also referred to the importance of making local people a part of development of tourism. In the same manner, literature support the role of cooperation between public and private sector as this helps in improving the tourism sector and make more successful projects related to the tourism and its required services.

Sixth theme is "The Synergizing of Event and Destination Marketers' Efforts". Interviews assured of the importance of exist of strategy related to marketing communication as a way of enhancing the marketing activities related to tourism. On the other hand, one of the interviews had referred to lack of synergy. According to literature, it was assured that marketing represents a significant factor in enhancing the tourism rates.

Finally, seventh theme "Role of Media to Support", interviews assured that media coverage to touristic events has a positive influence on tourism as well as it helps in building brand destination. Similarly, previous literature has assured of the importance of media coverage. This point is represented as follows; "about 200 international media correspondents accredited in Egypt attended this huge legendary celebration. The celebration witnessed the screening of a documentary film about Luxor Governorate, entitled "Luxor Secret," displaying the city of Luxor, its most prominent monuments, and tourist attractions. It was presented by a group of artists, members of the Luxor local community, and archaeologists who discussed the religious diversity in Luxor. The film concluded with a message from the Minister of Tourism about Luxor, in which he reassured everyone, saying, "Our country is safe."

4. Implications and Recommendations

Participants pointed out that such mega events no doubt have noticeable effect on a destination's brand. They assured that studying the entire portfolio of these events needs to be reconsidered especially post crises in order to rebuild a destination's brand. This needs to be developed through an integrated strategy. Thus, each of the factors noted in the previously mentioned themes needs to be assessed.

Finally, according to the concluded results, some recommendations are developed, which are; first: developing and promoting a high quality, inclusive agenda for various events to raise the profile of Egypt as a tourist destination is of great importance. Second is creating attractive events' ideas, to broaden the cultural horizon of the country and positioning it amongst the most creative worldwide destinations supporting the concept of education, culture, outdoor art... etc. third is providing adequate infrastructure facilities to ease events settings and implementation in a professional way and that make venues come alive with stimulation and appealing atmosphere, in addition to facilitating approval procedures. Fourth one refers to the success of many events heavily depend upon local

communities support as well as local suppliers in terms of provisions of services and attractions, the greater the potential to promote and to create a brand to their country. In this sense, the organizers must plan ways to build partnerships and involve the greatest possible local operators. Fifth is that the great emphasis should be attached to the principle of sustainable 'destination branding', given the growing importance of mega events. These should examine the effects that events have on destinations' local community or host city not only in the short term – but there must also be recognizable long-term benefits, therefore guidelines toward the sustainable management and operation of such events should be announced and monitored intensively.

Sixth is the partnerships between public and private institutions could help greatly branding Egypt as a 'tourist hub', attracting the international market all over the year. Rebuilding Egypt's tourism brand post COVID-19. This may also help in encouraging back charter trips from all over Europe to many cities in Egypt, such as Luxor, Hurghada, Sharm El Sheikh...etc. Seventh is the need to identify clear studied means to better integrate the roles, strategies and activities of destination marketing and event marketers. Eighth is examining the direct effect rendered through media and word of mouth helping in future event production. Yet little is known about the exact image that events generate in source markets to brand destinations post crises.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, despite of the study's limitations, its findings provide important insights into the effective role of event management as a recovery tool for destinations branding after crises. The argument lies in the importance and impacts of events for tourism destinations. The use of events, when well-articulated with a destination branding strategy, could be a driving force to improve their strategic positioning and competitiveness, and to optimize the benefits they derive from tourism. Making strategies in destination branding requires the right people, the right mindset, the right internal structures, and the right stakeholder and industry relationships where, across all of those things, innovation, decentralization, and collaboration/networks are all important (Morrison, 2013). Finally, the study may have significant implications for tourism researchers, public tourism authorities, and events practitioners as well especially as a recovery tool post crises.

6. Limitations and Further Research Proposals

The study's survey was focusing particularly on events held post COVID-19 pandemic. This study was a qualitative research, and like any research, various limitations emerged that future studies can improve on. The data in this study involves the collection, analysis, and interpretation of only qualitative data that are not easily reduced to numbers. Thus, the rigor of this study is more difficult to maintain, assess, and demonstrate. The researcher's presence during data gathering might have affected the subjects' responses. Now, post the difficult era of COVID-19 pandemic, future studies can seek to select variables from this study and test it through quantitative research approaches. In this study, data was collected from a small sample of industry stakeholders, so findings cannot be generalized to a larger population. Therefore, future studies can increase the sample size to assure reliable outcomes. Further research may include; the study of the conflict generated by the different interests and the diverging objectives of tourism stakeholders concerning tourism events promotion. In addition, evaluating the impact of the media coverage and publicity of events carries a great part of destination brand equity. How Egypt tourism authorities can develop events portfolios as a strategic initiative to host 'mega event' representing a window for a society and its businesses. Hence, opportunities for future research remain open.

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