



A Study of the Impact of the Corona Crisis on the Tourism and Hospitality Industry and the Egyptian Tourist Destination Experience in Confronting It

دراسة أثر أزمة كورونا على صناعة السياحة والضيافة وتجربة المقصد السياحي المصري في مواجهتها

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Abstract

الملخص

Tourism and hospitality are the world's biggest industries and a focal point of interest for developed and developing countries. It's an essential source of destination countries' income. It is getting increasingly important and necessary for every country to determine the extent of this industry's priority over the rest of other economic sectors. It is expected to remain a lucrative revenue source. Due to the importance of these issues and these significant matters in the tourism and hospitality industries, they are supportive factors for economic growth and the backbone of many economies worldwide. The tourism sector depends more than any other economic activity with an asocial impact on interaction between people. So, the spread of global epidemics significantly affected the tourism industry. For now, tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the coronavirus outbreak emerging from COVID-19. Therefore, this qualitative research aimed to explore the impact of the Corona crisis on the tourism and hospitality industry and the experiment of the Egyptian tourist destination in confronting it. Fourteen in-depth interviews were conducted with responsible employees to analyze their perspectives on the coronavirus crisis. The results of this research indicated that employees overall have a point of view towards confronting this crisis. The results of this study offer employees practical experiments with the Egyptian tourist destination techniques that can help to overcome crises, the impact of the coronavirus crisis on the tourism and hospitality sector, and other issues of crises discussed where coronavirus is a considerable crisis faced by the tourism and hospitality industry.

تعد صناعة السياحة والضيافة من أكبر الصناعات في العالم ونقطة إهتمام محورية للبلدان المتقدمة والنامية. حيث أنها مصدر أساسي للدخل. لقد أصبح من الضروري أن تحدد كل دولة مدى أولوية هذه الصناعة على بقية القطاعات الاقتصادية الأخرى. وستظل هذه الصناعة مصدرا للدخل. ودائماً ما تشكل عوامل داعمة للنمو الاقتصادي والعمود الفقري للعديد من الاقتصادات في جميع أنحاء العالم. ويعتمد قطاع السياحة أكثر من أي نشاط اقتصادي آخر على التأثير الاجتماعي والتفاعل بين الناس. لذا فإن إنتشار الأوبئة العالمية سيؤثر بشكل كبير عليها. ومع ظهور فيروس كورونا أصبحت تعد أحد القطاعات الأكثر تضرراً من تفشي فيروس كورونا المستجد كوفيد-19. ولذلك هدف هذا البحث إلى إستكشاف تأثير أزمة كورونا على صناعة السياحة والضيافة وتجربة الوجهة السياحية المصرية في مواجهتها. وقد تم إجراء أربعة عشر مقابلة شخصية متعمقة مع الموظفين المسؤولين لتحليل وجهات نظرهم حول أزمة فيروس كورونا. وتشير نتائج هذا البحث إلى أن الموظفين بشكل عام لديهم وجهة نظر تجاه مواجهة هذه الأزمة. وتقدم نتائج هذه الدراسة للموظفين تجارب عملية للوجهة السياحية المصرية التي يمكن أن تساعد في التغلب على مثل هذه الأزمة، وتأثير أزمة فيروس كورونا على قطاع السياحة والضيافة، وغيرها من قضايا الأزمات التي تمت مناقشتها.

Keywords: Tourist Destination; Coronavirus; Crisis; Tourism; Hospitality Industry.

الكلمات الدالة: المقصد السياحي؛ فيروس كورونا؛ الأزمة؛ صناعة السياحة.

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Introduction

The world lived the consequences of the spread of the Corona virus epidemic, as it caused a great shock to the economy, which led to the shift of global growth rates towards sharply negative rates for the year 2020, as this crisis was not the first shock the world has witnessed, there were many shocks, they were of a specific geographical scope, but the Corona virus proved to be uncontrollable, as the disease was spreading in all parts of the world to leave effects on the entire world .(Ibrahim and Shafiq, 2021)

Travel and tourism is among the most affected sectors with airplanes on the ground, hotels closed and travel restrictions put in place in virtually all countries around the world. (Arab Tourism Organization and Arab Air Carriers Union, 2020)

In an unmatched blow to the tourism sector, the COVID-19 pandemic has cut international tourist arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 to a fraction of what they were. Available data points to a double-digit decrease of 22% in Q1 2020, with arrivals in March down by 57%. This translates into a loss of 67 million international arrivals and about USD 80 billion in receipts. Prospects for the year have been downgraded several times since the outbreak in view of the high level of uncertainty. Current scenarios point to declines of 58% to 78% in international tourist arrivals for the year, depending on the speed of the containment and the duration of travel restrictions and shutdown of borders, although the outlook remains highly uncertain. (UNWTO,2020D)

This is by far the worst result in the historical series of international tourism since 1950 and would put an abrupt end to a 10-year period of sustained growth since the 2009 financial crisis. According to experts from around the world, domestic demand would recover faster than international demand. Considerable challenges remain ahead, starting with the unknown duration of the pandemic and travel restrictions, in a context of global economic recession. Countries around the world are implementing a wide range of measures to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak and to stimulate the recovery of the tourism sector.(World Health Organization ,2020)

Objectives:

- Highlighting the risks and problems facing tourist destinations amid the Covid-19 crisis.
- Learning more about measurements and procedures implemented by some countries to reopen tourism, and its application on Egypt.
- Identify the policies set by Egypt in order to get out of the crisis and recover from it.
- Identify lessons learned by broached the positives and negatives of the crisis.
- Illustrate the role of Crisis Management to solve the crisis.
- Introducing some solutions and proposals to deal with this crisis.

Research Questions

- How did Egypt deal with the Corona crisis?
- What were the lessons learned from this crisis?
- How will the new variants be dealt with?

Research Problem:

The world had never witnessed anything like the repercussions of the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, negatively affecting all fields -especially the economic ones- as governments implemented strict measures to reduce the spread of the virus in sectors that depend on social interaction, such as travel and tourism. The study seeks to address the most pressing risks and challenges facing tourist destinations amid this crisis, in a trial to introduce some solutions and guidelines that could be implemented to bring back tourism.

Review of Literature

Tourism before Corona Virus:

Tourism was growing rapidly, 2019 was record breaking year. Tourism spending amounted to more than 4700 billion USD, UNWTO was expected tourism to continue its upward trend of yet another 4% in 2020 and many tourists already had made booking for their vacations.(UNWTO,2020C)

Causes of the Crisis: (Lupton,D., 2022)

- 1- The speed of the virus's outbreak and mutation.
- 2- The lack of adherence by citizens, especially the youth, to precautionary and preventive measures and curfew rules, contributing to a higher infection rate.
- 3- Direct contact with animals and even consuming them; like what happened in China.
- 4- Infected cases traveling without following the quarantine condition leading to a global outbreak.
- 5- Doctors' limited proper knowledge of the virus and mistaking it with Pneumonia.
- 6- China's failure to report to the World Health Organization the confirmed Coronavirus cases till the end of September; despite registering hundreds of thousands before that.
- 7- Thousands of citizens and tourists traveling from Wuhan city to different capitals across the world.
- 8- The outbreaks in densely populated areas.
- 9- The virus's ability to survive on metal and plastic surfaces for up to 3 days, and 3 hours when in air.
- 10- Restoring traffic in airports to pre-covid levels, welcoming tourists again, and allowing Egyptian citizens entry before being subject to examination or placed in quarantine for 14 days.
- 11- Absence of clear vision, and health information on the nature of the virus and how to tackle it.

Impacts of the Covid-19 Crisis on Tourist Destinations:(world travel and tourism council,2020)

- 1- According to the World Travel & Tourism Council, the world lost up to 100 million jobs in the travel and tourism sector due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, with a 30% increase compared to the initial estimates published in March 2020.
- 2- Travel and tourism share in global GDP is expected to decrease by \$2.7 trillion in 2020, compared to 2019.
- 3- The number of international tourists in 2020 declined
- 4- by 290-440 million tourists, compared to 2019.
- 5- International tourism income declined by 300-450 billion dollars in 2020, compared to 2019.

Additionally, tourist destinations took four guidelines to deal with Corona Virus : (UNWTO,2020B)

- 1- Closing borders to tourists, completely or partially.
- 2- Imposing travel restrictions by destination (hence, not allowing travelers who crossed or were in a specific destination to enter).
- 3- Total or partial suspension of flights.
- 4- Implementing various measures such as: quarantine requirements, self-isolation, medical certificates and annulment/suspension of visas.

However, some countries -including Egypt- have recently amended their measures.

SOWT analyses for Coronavirus Crisis(Economist Intelligence,2020)

Strengths

- Proven resilience of tourism in past crises
- Domestic tourism can be a buffer
- Adaptation capacity: safety and hygiene protocols, trips closer to home, value for money, responsible consumer behavior
- Government support to the sector

Opportunities

- Re-think business model
- Innovation and digitalization
- Sustainability and sustainable-oriented segments (rural, nature, health)
- De-escalation phases initiated by several countries toward the ‘new normal’
- Progress in adaptation plans in destinations & companies

Weaknesses

- Segments potentially affected are also high spenders: international, long haul, business travel and events
- Major disruption in airline industry with airline failures and concentration
- Lack of references in previous downturns
- Perception of travel as a risk
- Low levels of demand when restarting tourism due to social distancing

Threats

- Economic environment: world recession, rising unemployment and jobs at risk, closure of business mainly SMEs, disposable income, uncertainty weighing on consumer and business confidence.
- Uncertain length of pandemic (including resurgence) and vaccine unavailability.
- Extent of lockdowns and travel restrictions
- Unknown form of the ‘new normal’.
- The tourism and antiquities sector, which is one of the most important sources of national income, was stranded; as many trips and tourist services were canceled
- High unemployment rates; especially among the youth

Destination Planning and Management:

- Support companies in implementation and training of their staff on the new protocols.
- Enhance of the technology for safe, seamless and touch less travel in your destination.
- Create programs and to incentive the domestic market in co-operation with the private sector (incentive schemes, possible revision of holiday dates, transport facilities, voucher, etc) and integrate destination. (UNWTO,2020 E)
- Promote new products and experience targeted at individual and small groups travellers , like : (special interest ,nature , rural tourism , food tourism and sports.
- Enhance and communicate medical capacity and protocols at the destination.
- Ensure coordination among tourism, health and transport policies.
- Define roles and responsibilities for governments, private sector and travellers. (UNWTO,2020 D)

The Vision for Re-launching the Travel and Tourism Sector

The vision included several steps: (UNWTO,2020 A)

First: Forming a sector-level team including the World Tourism Organization, the World Health Organization, the Arab Tourism Organization and all the relevant regional and international

organizations to articulate the guidelines and preventive procedures appropriate for re-launching the tourism sector.

Second: Setting goals for the implemented procedures that:

- 1- Boost tourists' confidence in the safety of touristic facilities.
- 2- Maintain the safety of tourists and workers in the tourism sector.
- 3- Guarantee the re-launching of the tourism sector, enabling it to play its role in supporting the recovery of the economy.

After halting international flights and activity across the world since mid-March 2020 due to the covid-19 crisis, the Egyptian government put in place a set of hygiene and safety controls in accordance with standard recommendations. As a result, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities authorized a hygiene safety certificate -in coordination with tourism chambers and the Ministry of Health and Population- as a prerequisite to allowing hotels and touristic facilities to reopen and receive tourists, after the decision of gradually resuming tourism activity based on these controls. And on the 15th of May 2020, domestic tourism resumed as a first stage in hotels that received the hygiene safety certificate with only 25% of its full capacity, before allowing them to increase the capacity to 50% on June 1st.

Beginning the 1st of July 2020, foreign tourism movement resumed to the following governorates: Red Sea, South Sinai and Marsa- Matruh, with only 50% of the capacity for hotels and resorts. The three governorates were chosen for scoring the lowest rates of infections with the novel coronavirus in the country. Additionally, they all have public and private hospitals ready to deal with any infections or diseases.(Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities 2020A)

Reopening-Tourism to Egypt Controls Includes: (Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities 2020B)

- Procedures for passengers before entering Egypt:
- Procedures aboard the planes of Egyptian carriers.
- Procedures upon the passenger's arrival at Egyptian airports.
- Controls for operating hotels, tourist facilities and activities.
- Controls for operating tourist restaurants.
- Controls for visiting archaeological sites and museums.
- Controls for operating tourist transportation.
- Find below some of the rules put in place by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities:
- Institutions must abide by the instructions of the Ministry of Health and Population in regards to operating central air conditioner systems.
- Facilities must operate at half capacity until further notice.
- Elevators to operate at half capacity.
- Disposable plates and cutlery are highly recommended as much as possible. In addition to providing sanitizers and napkins on each table.
- Floor markers for social distancing are a must to organize toilet and elevator queues.
- Frequent sanitization of door knobs and water taps is essential.
- Open buffets are forbidden.
- Institutions must install signs stating that those who show symptoms will not be allowed to enter.
- Sanitizers must be provided on the gates, with signs showing the safety guidelines followed inside.
- Workers must wear face masks, and those who show symptoms should not be allowed to work.
- Non-guest customers are allowed in restaurants and gyms inside hotels and resorts, while adhering to the maximum capacity instructions.

- Tourist groups should not exceed 25 persons each.
- Visitors to large and small museums should not exceed 200 and 100 persons respectively.

The role of Crisis Management to solve the crisis :(Egyptian Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center,2022) .

1. Slowing down the speed of the pandemic
2. Revival of tourism; which is a national income source
3. Disease containment and casualty management.
4. Accomplishing gradual fast recovery: less new infections and deaths compared to an increase in the number of recoveries.
5. Steady supportive community interaction through pursuing civil society initiatives and providing reasonable support for the disadvantaged and maintaining general control over the situation.
6. Maintaining a general sense of reassurance and preventing panic; meaning improving people's confidence in the state's performance and its preparedness to handle the worst scenarios.
7. A gradual revival of economic conditions, and re-opening some governmental and private departments to the public, based on the level of control over the situation.
8. Curbing the circulation of rumors that create terror and panic on the home front.
9. The website (care.gov.eg) was created specifically for providing the youth with reliable and official information sources.
10. Educating and informing the youth on how to respond to this critical stage
11. Containing the damages resulted from the crisis; like those inflicted upon temporary labor.

Urgent measures adopted by Egypt; mainly The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, to overcome the crisis:(Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, 2020 C)

The state drew up scenarios through the Crises and Disasters Team at the Egyptian cabinet, and the Crisis Management operating room worked for real-time monitoring and swift intervention.

The following actions were taken:

- Imposing strict measures to reduce overcrowding, which were applied gradually to avoid disruptions to peoples' lives that are usually associated with sudden changes.
- Placing all medical institutions on a state of maximum alert; to be fully prepared for receiving and treating patients
- All state institutions joined forces to shore up the country in face of the pandemic.
- Using the services of highly-equipped university hospitals in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education
- The Ministry of Social Solidarity supplied monthly benefits for those affected by production stagnation.
- The role of The Egyptian armed forces should not be overlooked; given that they established field hospitals; such as the Cairo Fair Zone field hospital, and provided food supplies, masks and disinfectants in their outlets.
- All coffee shops, cafeterias, nurseries and places of worship were shut down to prevent outbreaks resulting from crowds.
- Setting up a hotline for quickly outreaching to and hospitalizing patients.
- Minimizing work attendance in both public and private sectors while ensuring the employees' financial dues are paid
- Initializing distance learning in all institutions under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Technical Education

- Activating e-government services to offer citizens at-home public services and prevent overcrowding
- Providing awareness programs via social networks and televisions, and sending free awareness messages on cell phones, including how to apply preventive measures.

After allowing the tourism sector to restore 25% of its pre-pandemic force, the ministry imposed the following procedures:(Mahmoud, 2021)

- 1- As a condition for receiving guests, hotels were required to impose the ministry approved regulations complying with the guidelines of the World Health Organization, and provide high-quality personal protection tools for staff and guests; e.g., disinfectants, sterilizers, masks and gloves.
- 2- They were also required to commit to an hourly cleaning and sanitizing of all surfaces in common areas, a 50-percent maximum load of elevators and providing hand sanitizers around the clock at all facilities; specifically at the reception desks.
- 3- Guests were disinfected before entering and after exiting the hotel. In addition, their body temperatures were measured every time they entered the hotel.
- 4- Restaurants were required to check guests' body temperatures, leave a distance of no less than two meters between dining tables and one meter between persons at the same table "with a maximum of 6 chairs at each", relying on single-use food ware as much as possible, and provide sterilizers and disinfectant wipes on every dining table.
- 5- The areas surrounding beaches and swimming pools were sanitized after every single use and working hours. A minimum of two-meter distance was required between sunbeds, and beach towels were handed at the guests' rooms.
- 6- A clinic and a resident doctor were available at all hotels, in continuous coordination with the Ministry of Health. A small hotel, or a whole floor in the hotel, was allocated for quarantining mild and non-critical cases and suspected infections.
- 7- Before resuming work after vacations, the staff were required to quarantine and get medical examinations and their temperatures measured continuously. They were also provided with independent housing, and informed of the basic preventive measures against the virus.
- 8- The Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities collaborated with some sub-unions of tour guides and its directorates in various governorates to accumulate all the data concerning the registered and authorized tour guides. These data were then sent to the Ministry of Social Solidarity, in order to expedite the disbursement of urgent benefits allocated for such guides covering a period of four months.

The advantages of the crisis towards the tourist movement in the world in general and in the Egyptian tourist destination in particular: (Ibrahim and Shafiq, (2021)

- 1- The return of individuals to themselves during their isolation and closeness between family members at home and the psychological balance that individuals are done with the lack of pressures of daily life and working conditions and the lack of meeting friends and social relations, which increases the pattern of family tourism.
- 2- The concepts of the relationship with the family, especially the elderly, have changed, as family members have given importance to the elderly in families who have been transformed by the virus into the most vulnerable and most affected group, which has worked to pay more attention to the pattern of elderly tourism and enjoy life, as well as increasing the pattern of family visit tourism in the home country
- 3- The many environmental benefits of the crisis, such as the low rate of use of public transport, riding cars and the ban on flights, the decline in pollution across the world, and the decline in the volume of heating gas in the atmosphere until the environment became the biggest beneficiary of the crisis, which works to increase ecotourism and also preserve it for future generations, which is known as sustainable tourism development.
- 4- Increasing the spread of virtual tourism and visiting virtual tourist sites and online tourism.

- 5- The Corona crisis contributed to the exposure of detailed life issues that were neglected by everyone, as the quarantine returned to the external nature with its soil and trees its value and gave life a stronger meaning for individuals, and therefore each individual will work to exploit every moment in his life on earth because he lived the experience of losing it permanently, which works to increase the tourist demand and the number of those coming to travel and tourism to enjoy life, especially the pattern of recreational tourism.

The disadvantages of the crisis that led to the lack of tourist traffic in the world in general and the Egyptian tourist destination in particular:

- 1- The epidemic revealed the lack of cooperation between countries, instead of establishing international cooperation in order to confront the crisis, each country is working to confront it individually, even if this harms the capabilities of other countries far from this confrontation, and accordingly, travel was canceled and air traffic was suspended for fear of the epidemic and its spread significantly, which affected the movement of tourism and tourist demand in all countries.
- 2- The lack of preparedness of countries, even developed ones, has a significant and sudden impact on all sectors, especially the tourism sector, as it is a sensitive sector and is affected by various crises of all kinds.

Methodology

In-Depth Interviews

According to Fontana and Frey (2005), interviews are widely recognized as a standard and influential method used by qualitative and quantitative researchers for gathering data. Langos (2014) highlighted that personal interviews offer numerous advantages, such as flexibility and generating meaningful conclusions. Additionally, as noted by Zolnoki and Hoffmann (2013), the face-to-face data collection method provides enhanced accuracy in screening participants and offers various other benefits. According to Langos (2014), interviews play a significant role as a qualitative research method, allowing researchers to gather data from participants directly. Interviews are purposeful and goal-oriented interactions. May (2001) defined interviews as engaging in discussions with individuals on specific or diverse topics. The insights and interpretations derived from the collected data by social researchers form the essence of interviews and the interviewing process.

According to Parveen (2017), in-depth interviews are highly effective methods for collecting primary data. Furthermore, in-depth interviews are conducted to obtain comprehensive insights into the interviewee's experiences, knowledge, and perspectives on a particular subject. Moreover, in-depth interviews are sources of evidence that represent a significant aspect of this research as they were used to achieve the research aim by gaining rich insights into the participants, experiences, opinions, and attitudes. In this study, the researchers wanted data collection more flexibility, so the researchers decided to conduct face-to-face data collection through face-to-face interviews and questionnaires. The researchers interviewed fourteen employees and responsible in Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, The Tourism Development Authority, The Egyptian Tourism Authority and the Egyptian Tourism Federation.

The Analysis of Personal Interviews

Interviews are considered one of the primary sources of evidence representing a key aspect of this research as they were used to achieve the research's aim. In this research, personal interviews were used as a qualitative method with employees and responsible. The interviews were conducted with fourteen employees and responsible in a different position in Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, The Tourism Development Authority, The Egyptian Tourism Authority and the Egyptian Tourism Federation. The interviews aim to identify the perspectives of them concerning coronavirus crisis, the procedures, and practices used to manage this crisis and their recommendations in this regard.

Results and Discussion

Explain the role of both the public sector and the private sector in solving the Corona crisis?

Employee- 2 said that the Ministry of Tourism had taken measures such as sterilizing all tourist places and hotels and imposing precautionary measures, spreading awareness of how to deal with tourists. Moreover, Employee- 3 added that the crisis of the spread of the Corona epidemic is the responsibility of all state agencies, especially the government sector, through enacting emergency laws to limit the spread of such diseases, expanding the delivery of services electronically, and creating effective alternatives to reduce mixing for compulsory gatherings such as schools, universities, courts, etc., in addition to continuous medical support and activity. As for the private sector, it can play its role in adhering to the preventive controls and laws enacted in this regard and trying to practice the activity with the lowest rates of infection spread. Employee-4 indicated the need to intensify awareness campaigns to confront this epidemic by the public and private sectors together and activate medical tourism's role in facing the pandemic. Furthermore, Employee-11 declared that The part of the public sector is to provide medicines and vaccines to citizens, create a timetable, and provide fixed and mobile central places to receive the vaccine, while the role of the private sector is to develop initiatives to raise awareness of the dangers of the corona outbreak, as well as contribute with the government to avoid the most significant amount of Corona's financial and moral damage. It is, moreover, giving some facilities to owners of small projects to work to reduce unemployment in light of the corona pandemic through the initiatives of the central bank. Government measures have already rescheduled bank debts and postponed insurance, tax, electricity, water and gas dues for tourist and hotel facilities.

Was there cooperation with the public sector and the private sector during the crisis?

All interviewed employees agreed that there was cooperation between the public and private sectors during the crisis. Additionally, Employee- 7 explained that there was cooperation between the public and private sectors during the crisis by participating in the conference organized by the parliamentary assembly under the title of economic recovery after the Corona pandemic and support for small and medium enterprises. Moreover, Employee- 9 added that, indeed, the public sector has responded to the demands of the private sector regarding the postponement of various debts.

What is the strategic plan followed by the Crisis Department of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to solve this crisis?

Employee- 12 mentioned that For the Ministry of Tourism, measures have been taken, such as sterilizing all tourist places and hotels, imposing precautionary measures, spreading awareness of how to deal with tourists, and launching tourism initiatives such as Shatii in Egypt. Moreover, Employee- 14 added that he was not aware of the strategic mix. Still, there was a commitment to preventive measures in hotels, work to stimulate domestic tourism, and an attempt to reduce the obligations of hotel establishment owners in terms of taxes and fees for water and electricity consumption and to preserve the fundamental strength of the trained workforce and increasing the number of tourists before the Corona pandemic, and tourism revenue reaching \$30 billion. Furthermore, Employee- 5 added that they Cooperate with the Ministry of Health to provide a treatment unit to come to the ministry's headquarters in Abbasiya and Adly on regular appointments so that employees can receive anti-virus vaccines. They were applying spacing between workers by rotating at work to reduce the spread of the virus while using precautionary measures by wearing masks, distributing alcohol to workers, working remotely through computers, and holding meetings via Zoom. Promotional campaigns were carried out at the beginning of the crisis that Egypt was safe. A promotional campaign was prepared through augmented reality techniques, allowing those interested in the Egyptian tourist destination to enter via the Internet and take virtual tours. An organized plan was designed to inspect hotel establishments to grant them a health safety certificate. Contact was made with all relevant authorities to consider tourism and hotel establishments in their debts and support them in their activities.

Was there cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Health to overcome this crisis?

All interviewed Employees agreed that there was cooperation between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Ministry of Health to overcome this crisis. Additionally, Employee- 8 explained that there were joint committees from the Ministry and the Ministry of Health regarding hotel preventive measures. Moreover, Employee- 10 added that they cooperated by sending workers vaccination campaigns against the new Coronavirus.

Do you think that the efforts of both the private and public sectors during the years 2020-2021 are sufficient to solve the crisis?

Opinions of eleven out of fourteen interviewed Employees varied around the efforts of both the private and public sectors during the years 2020-2021 are sufficient to solve the crisis.

“It is not enough, but it is a global crisis. The world has not been accustomed to confronting such diseases for many years, and countries have become experienced in facing such conditions.” [Employee 4].

“Of course, it is sufficient if it is not enough. We could not overcome the crisis and limit it.” [Employee 8].

What are the state's efforts to support the tourism sector?

Some Employees, Employee- 5, Employee- 8, Employee- 10, Employee- 11, and Employee- 13, agreed that awareness of the importance of following precautionary measures provides security and safety. Providing paved roads. Tightening control over the quality of tourism services provided and ensuring the participation of the local community in the tourism movement, integrating it with it, benefiting from it and providing the necessary infrastructure to receive tourists and supporting facilities or paying dues in installments if tourism stops. One of the reasons is to play a role in promoting and activating the Egyptian tourism grants through clear plans based on the real motives of the tourist to visit one of the tourist destinations. Working on supporting charter flights and allocating a budget to improve facilities, Employee- 4 mentioned Increasing promotional campaigns, improving the tourism product, and paying attention to product quality control; he thinks money has been spent on irregular employment, including tour guides and workers in the tourism sector, also Employee- 5 added that the state had taken some initiatives to support the tourism sector by postponing the collection of any financial dues. The state has also incurred many losses to support the tourism sector through the banks' initiative to defer the payment of loans due for several months.

Has the tourism sector gone through such a crisis before?

All interviewed Employees said that yes, during the January revolution. The Egyptian tourism sector went through more than one crisis, but it was different from the Corona crisis, the most important of which was the terrorist incident in Luxor in 1997. Moreover, Employee- 2 added that He passed more than once and recovered thanks to his efforts. As a health phenomenon, no, but it went through some crises, such as the Luxor terror period in 1992, as well as the crash of the Russian plane. Yes, the sector has gone through many problems before, such as the SARS virus in 2003, the January 25 crisis, and the economic crisis in 2007.

“Yes, the Egyptian tourism sector went through several crises, some of them (global and some local) international, such as the economic crisis of 2008 and the crises of the revolution of 2011”. [Employee 3].

From your point of view, what is the impact of this crisis on the tourism sector during the years 2020-2021?

Employee- 7, Employee- 8, Employee- 11, Employee- 12, and Employee- 14 agreed that their Clear decline in tourist traffic and a negative impact represented the most important and skilled workforce-lack of maintenance and development in all hotel establishments. The spread of unemployment and low morale also reduced the number of tourist trips and hotel nights, and tourism revenue.

“It greatly affected the tourism sector, as most countries prevented their citizens from leaving or coming in to prevent the spread of the disease, which led to a significant and sharp decline in the number of tourists coming to Egypt.” [Employee 3]

Other side Employee- 5 indicated that one of the effects of this crisis was the closure of many tourist attractions, the imposition of restrictions on restaurants and tourist facilities, and the suspension of flights between the country and some of them, which affected the tourism economy greatly.

Was a special task force formed by the Ministry of Tourism to solve this crisis?

“I don't know, but a committee was not formed.” [Employee 3]

Moreover, Employee-5 added that a work team was formed, and its role was to coordinate with one of the campaigns from the Ministry of Health to give the Ministry's workers vaccinations for the emerging coronavirus.

“Yes, there is a committee formed at the Ministry of Tourism headed by the Minister and the crisis management committee headed by the Prime Minister.” [Employee 11].

What is the size of the economic losses suffered by the sector during the travel interruption period?

“I don't have numbers but huge losses on the economic level.” [Employee 14].

Employee- 4, Employee- 6, Employee- 9, Employee- 12, and Employee- 13 agreed that Increasing inflation volume with the increase in prices, whether products or tourist trips. Significant losses led to the cessation of all hotels and the dismissal of many of their employees. The sector was exposed to many economic losses, as the gross domestic product declined by about 0.7% to 0.8%, according to what was approved by the Egyptian Center for Economic Studies, also declining numbers of tourists and tourism income.

From your point of view, what are the obstacles that stand in resolving this crisis?

“From my point of view, Necessity of vaccination” [Employee 6]

“The solution to the crisis depends on success in continuing life with the existence of the situation because there is no radical solution to eliminate it except not to mix, which cannot be achieved on trips.” [Employee 7].

“Lack of community awareness of the seriousness of the crisis and a lack of cooperation to solve it.” [Employee 8]

“Holding concerts may contribute significantly to the worsening of the crisis and the spread of the virus.” [Employee 13]

“Improper storage of vaccines causes them to spoil, and Lack of awareness among citizens of the importance of vaccinations for the emerging coronavirus.” [Employee 14]

Recommendations

- Based on theoretical and practical parts in addition to the study results, this research proposes the following recommendations that may destinations should do:
- Working to support developing economies that depend on the travel and tourism sector, encouraging a comprehensive recovery in the sector and unearthing new opportunities.
- Committing to ensure a safe environment for travel and tourism, which helps in rebuilding tourist consumer confidence through enhancing regional and international cooperation, adherence to helping tourism sector companies -especially MSMEs- and working to adapt and thrive in the post-crisis phase by promoting innovation and digital technology.
- Guaranteeing the health and safety of workers in the travel and tourism sector and commitment to joint action in order to help the sector achieve a sustainable and comprehensive recovery.
- Committing to work with international organizations and sector partners to include the travel and tourism sector in response programs and benefit from the crisis.
- Adopting an immediate marketing strategy to address the crisis through every relevant agency.

What should destinations do?

1- Avoid competing over price

Avoid price competition. According to the Bloom Consulting study, only 15% of respondents chose money when asked what the main factor was for not travelling for leisure purposes. Less crowded destinations and improved healthcare systems are tourist's main concerns. Destinations should avoid price competition as the key distinguishing factor to attract tourists in the next year.

2- Redesign and redefine your Tourism offer Redesign and re define tourism. Tourist behavior and preferences have changed. Make sure the brand strategy emphasizes that the destination is appealing and safe. The product offer must be adjusted to tourist's new expectations and needs. Tourists will be searching for new destinations where they can find less crowded places and good hygiene programs. This is an opportunity for smaller destinations to attract tourists too, creating a balance and preventing crowds gravitating towards larger ones. Previous tourism strategies must also be revisited as they may have become obsolete. The goal is to ensure a sustainable approach that is long term to show people the destination is prepared for any unforeseen events.

3- Broaden your scope influence and data

Broaden the scope of data and influence. Government action is at the core of how destinations are perceived and will play a leading role in its promotion. DMO's must monitor and measure perceptions, government actions, activities and policies. These perceptions impact tourist's preferences when choosing a destination. It is crucial that they work together to include solid healthcare for worried tourists in their offers as it is now increasingly valued. Governments and DMO's can begin assessing their Brand Noughtand measuring digital identity to prevent damage in the future, if other crises occur. The brand strategy must consider comprehensive information and data as the foundation of its ability to respond immediately.

4- Adapt you current structure

Plan the crisis management structure. It is essential for DMO's to have a team or a plan in place that is ready to adapt, analyze and respond to a new normal or any arising crises. Moving forward, fear and uncertainty will be the central factors in a tourists' decision and whether they will visit a Country or not

The impact of COVID-19 on international tourism January-March 2020

Travel Restrictions 100% of worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic • According to UNWTO's Report on COVID – 19 Related Travel Restrictions, as of 20 April, 100% of all worldwide destinations have introduced travel restrictions in response to the pandemic. • 97 destinations (45%) have totally or partially closed their borders for tourists. • 65 destinations (30%) have suspended totally or partially international flights. • 39 destinations (18%) are implementing the closing of borders in a more differentiated manner by banning the entry for passengers from specific countries of origin”.

International Tourist Arrivals January - March 2020

- Available data points to a double-digit decrease of 22% in international tourist arrivals in Q1 2020, with arrivals in the month of March down by 57% following the start of the lockdown in many countries, widespread travel restrictions and the shutdown of airports and national borders. • This represents a loss of 67 million international arrivals in the first quarter of 2020 compared to the same period of last year. • By regions, Asia and the Pacific, the first region to suffer the impact of COVID-19, saw a 35% decrease in arrivals in Q1 2020. The second-hardest hit was Europe with a 19% decline, followed by the Americas (-15%), Africa (-12%) and the Middle East return tourism to Egypt: Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh international airports have received various flights since the beginning of July 2020, the number of tourists reached about 3000 of different nationalities (Russian, Belarus, German, Belgian, Ukrainian) and tourists praised the prescribed precautions and health safety controls applied and were to leave their country without any injuries

Study Limitation and Future Research

The research possesses some limitations; it explores Employees' perspectives for coronavirus and the tourist destination. In that sense, it is worthwhile for further studies to focus on other crisis or it can concentrate on different sectors within the tourist destination and hospitality industry. Thus, in further studies, it is worthwhile to focus on particular region. Besides the limitations of the instrument of this study is to use a quantitative approach. Future studies can use questionnaires, despite these limitations; this study has useful implications both for tourism scholars and industry practitioners.

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