

The Effect of COVID-19 on the Domestic Tourists' Attitudes: A Comparative Study between Egypt and Jordan

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ABSTRACT

The COVID 19 pandemic heavily deteriorated the tourism and hospitality industries worldwide. New Norms were set. In reality, extra travel barriers were made, which made a critical situation. In these critical circumstances, fingers pointed to domestic tourism as an urgent solution to help in surviving the tourism and hospitality industries. This highlighted the importance of this research, as it investigated local tourists' attitudes regarding the tourism and hospitality industries' activities in Egypt and Jordan. This study aimed to develop a comparative case study between Egyptian and Jordanian travellers to help in identifying the domestic tourists' preferences to figure hospitality and tourism post COVID-19 world. An online survey was developed and distributed via social media and travel agent websites to achieve the study purpose. The Means, standard deviation, and sample t-test were used in the analysis. The findings asserted that the COVID 19 pandemic has significant impacts on the tourists' attitudes in the tourism and hospitality industries' activities and highlighted the differences and similarities between the domestic Egyptian and Jordanian tourists. Moreover, the research outcomes and managerial implications presented new ideas and priorities for travel agencies and tour operators in the era of post COVID-19 world.

Background

The new Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has devastated the international economy. Tourism and hospitality industry was the most negatively affected sectors, due to their nature as labour-intensive industries. Millions of hospitality and tourism

practitioners were exposed to retirement, dismissal or unpaid vacations. World Tourism Organization report (2020) showed a sharp 22% decline in international tourism at 2020 1st quarter and predicted a 60-80% decrease during 2021. The reason for this was highlighted as the extremely rapid spread nature of COVID- 19 and hospitality and tourism industries' human interactional nature. These forced countries to take unprecedented measures, such as nationwide curfews and closing the majority of tourist destinations and airports. All these precautions and others were globally questioned, if they will be temporary adopted or a long-term trend. The answer was "this is an unanswered question" (UNWTO, 2020).

Generally, health risk management was linked to the hospitality and tourism enterprises' images (Becken *et al.*, 2017). The Health Belief Model (HBM) was the most prominent social behavioural model used to explain healthy behaviour and to predict healthy behaviours for consumers in the hospitality and tourism industry to avoid a set of health risks that may be exposed in these industries (Huang, et al. 2020). In the tourism and hospitality context, examining the health beliefs and trends of the hospitality and tourism industry consumers can provide a more comprehensive model for understanding: the perception of risks (perceived susceptibility, perceived severity); costs and perceived benefits of such behaviour and trends, which can also help tourism industry officials (Wang et al., 2019; Khreis et al., 2020). However, most of the previous studies mainly used TPB (Theory of Planned Behaviour) to study the effect of risk perception on behaviour, so it was used mainly in predicting future trends, attitudes and behaviours of the hospitality and tourism industry consumers (Boguszewicz-Kreft, et al, 2020).

The perceptions and expectations of tourism and hospitality consumers towards risks and their protective behaviours affected their satisfaction in the tourism and hospitality experience (Li, et al., 2015). This can provide a new perspective of the destination to improve the satisfaction and experience of the tourist via enhancing the safety feelings. This can be important for destinations and pandemics where risks cannot be eliminated, but tourism and hospitality consumers can take measures to protect themselves. In the Arab world, there were a few studies that investigated perceptions and expectations of tourism and hospitality consumers on perceptions of risks and preventive behaviour during COVID-19 pandemic (Algassim & Abuelhassan, 2021). Hence, this study attempted to fill the existing gaps by developing a comparative case study in Jordan and Egypt, by investigating the relationships between a traveler's general health beliefs and risk prevention behaviours.

The Health Belief Model (HBM) and the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) figured the theoretical frameworks that frequently used in the analysis of health-related attitudes and behaviours and were adapted successfully to suit various contexts. TPB focused on the effects of individual attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control on people's behaviours (Gerend & Shepherd 2012), while the HBM highlighted the importance of the effects of health beliefs on protective behaviour (Anderson, et al., 2020; Huang et al., 2020). Nevertheless, both theories had overlapping constructs and emphasized the importance of different types of

beliefs in anticipating the attitudes and behaviours of consumers of the tourism and hospitality industry. Therefore, it was necessary to combine the two theories to identify the specific combinations that influence their attitudes and behaviours, which will help improving our understanding of risk prevention behaviours (Gerend & Shepherd 2012; Benghadbane & Khreis, 2019). In the current study, the attitudes and behaviours of Arab tourists in the context of tourism and hospitality were anticipated using HBM and TPB theory, which will help in determining the level of risk prevention behaviours.

Risks and uncertainties were identified as two of the basic pillars in the nature of travel. This led to increase the degree of exposure to risks if the tourism work was not systematic (Williams & Baláž 2015) and this certainly had impacts on the hospitality industry that depended on tourism movement. It also impacted the attitudes of tourism & hospitality products' consumers, as this pushed them to be engaged in protective behaviours (Quintal, et al., 2010).

The health risks raised from the spread of COVID-19 disease became a source of concern for all, and the likelihood of its occurrence in the tourism and hospitality industry were highlighted due to their nature of human based industries, which could endanger the safety of tourism and hospitality consumers (McKinsey and Company, 2020). Moreover, with the increasing flow of information on injuries and deaths, and the improvement of people's awareness of how the virus was transmitted among people, health risks became a major concern for tourism and hospitality consumers, and risk perceptions will certainly influence their decisions (Abuelhassan & Elsayed ,2020; Wang et al., 2019). Therefore, proper management of health risks should help in reducing tourists/guests' concerns and will lead to have better tourism and hospitality experience (Abuelhassan et al. 2017; Widjaja et al, 2019; Abdulla et al., 2020).

Past studies in the hospitality and tourism revealed varied types of potential hazards and risks such as social psychological, physical, political, financial, and health risks (Schmude, et al., 2018; Alsaadi et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2020). Safety and health risks became an important challenge related to tourism and hospitality consumers' decisions in selecting a particular destination and hotel (Peattie et al. 2005; Hossain et al. 2020). Nowadays, COVID-19 disease was highlighted as the most predominant crisis threatening our life and affected the global economy (Gössling et al., 2020).

Health risks at hospitality facilities and tourist destinations were highly related to traditions, precautions, knowledge and health practices of their customers and employees (Jonas et al. 2011; Algassim & Abuelhassan, 2021). The tourism and hospitality customer's perception of health risks towards a destination or hotel played an important role in the decision-making process, which will also affect their expectations and preventive health behaviour. Consequently, the importance of studies on health risks for consumers of tourism and hotel products were dramatically increased (Chien, et al., 2017).

HBM was identified as a theoretical model that can be used to demonstrate and predict people's changes in health behaviours. It was highlighted as a perfect model

used to understand health behaviours because it was emphasized on people's beliefs regarding health conditions, which predicted their health-related behaviours. The main dimensions of HBM were (1) perceived susceptibility (people's perceived threat to disease or sickness), (2) perceived severity (people's belief of bad consequence of a particular disease or sickness), (3) perceived benefits (potential favourable benefits of health measurements and practices), (4) cues to action (perceived barriers to health measurements and practices, and the factors that boost these measurements and practices), and (5) self-efficacy (the people beliefs of their ability to succeed) (Wang et al., 2019) .

TPB was also highlighted as HBM. TPB as a theory was identified as an extension of the theory of reasoned action (Hackman & Knowlden, 2014). It was utilized to understand, explain, and foretell people's behaviors under certain circumstances, and perceived behavioral control. The TPB had a set of three factors: attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control (Hackman & Knowlden, 2014; Boguszewicz-Kreft, et al, 2020).

During reviewing the tourism and hospitality previous studies that were conducted in the period of COVID-19 (Gossling et al., 2020; Higgins-Desbiolles, 2020; Sigala, 2020), as well as the news about tourism and hospitality (Ahram, 2020; Brito, 2020; Froyd, 2020), several questions were highlighted without empirical studies' answers. This paper tries to answer these questions empirically in the Egyptian and Jordanian tourism-hospitality context.

The Research Questions

- 1- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian tourists' inclination towards international and domestic tourism?
- 2- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian tourists' preferences for the means of travel for tourism purposes (planes, tourist buses, trains, tourist care, private cars, and cruises)?
- 3- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian hospitality customers' preferences for health practices and quality of service in hotels?
- 4- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian tourists' desire to travel with family, relatives, friends, tour groups, or travel alone?
- 5- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian tourists' desire to receive tourism activities in open and closed places?
- 6- Does the COVID-19 outbreak have a significant impact on the Egyptian and Jordanian hospitality customers' desire to receive hotel services in open and closed places?

Methodology

Given the COVID-19 outbreak reasons, the study used the online survey technique to collect its data from people who went through an international or domestic tourism experience or both experiences. The online survey was developed using Google Form. Google Form tools were used, e.g. filters and an obligation to fully answer the

survey questions, as the form was designed to only allow the fully completed forms to be submitted. The researchers utilized social media (Facebook and WhatsApp) and some travel agents professional networks via Facebook and WhatsApp to find the study's participants (from Egypt and Jordan). The distribution process was undertaken between 10th of October to 25th of December 2020.

The scope of the current study focused on tourism and hospitality industries in Egypt and Jordan. These two industries had influences on the Egyptian and Jordanian economies (Statista, 2021a; Salem et al., 2021). Millions of these countries' people were employed in the tourism and hospitality industries directly and indirectly (Abohashesha et al., 2019; Statista, 2021b). Currently, these two industries had many severe negative impacts due to the COVID-19 outbreak.

The survey was developed based on the research questions, which were derived from the literature. It used a 5-point Likert scale, which was a useful tool to examine the situation in the two countries and to compare between the Egyptian and Jordanian markets. A stratified convenience sampling technique was adopted and filters were made in the online survey form to assure the sample met with the following specified strata of: 1) nationality, i.e. Egyptian or Jordanian; 2) travel experience: the participants were only permitted to fill the survey, if they had a previous experience of travel nationally or internationally; 3) intention to travel.

The online survey was designed to include 12 questions, distributed on 6 sections to investigate the following main areas: demographical information, the effect of COVID-19 on tourists' Inclination Towards the Willing to Undertake International and Domestic Tourism Activities in Egypt and Jordan; The Impact of COVID-19 on the Preferences of Using the Means of Travel for the Tourism Purposes; The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Practices and Quality of Service in Hotels; The Impact of COVID-19 on the Desire to Travel with Family, Relatives, Friends, Tour Groups, or Travel Alone; ; The Impact of COVID-19 on the Desire to Undertake Tourist Activities and Hotel Services in Open and Closed Places (Wang et al., 2019; Abuhashesh et al., 2019; Gössling et al., 2020; Sigala, 2020; Algassim and Abuelhassan, 2021)

The collected data were analyzed using quantitative methods. A SPSS Version 23 software was used, and list of statistical tools were adopted, i.e. mean, standard deviation, t-Test to achieve the study aim and present the study findings.

Results and Discussion

The study aimed to develop a comparative case study between Egyptian and Jordanian travellers to help in identifying the domestic tourists' preferences to figure hospitality and tourism post COVID-19 world. The online survey was distributed in Jordan and Egypt. The valid online forms were 430 forms, included: 277 Egyptians and 155 Jordanians out of 700 online forms.

The full demographic details were presented in Table 1. The results highlighted several important findings, as in certain points there were no significant differences between the two major groups, and in other points there were significant differences. The discussions and major findings were presented in the following paragraphs.

Table 1
The Demographic Analyses

N= 430	Frequency	Percent
Nationality		
Egyptian	275	64.0
Jordanian	155	36.0
Gender		
Male	253	58.8
Female	177	41.2
Age		
Less than 18 years	7	1.6
From 18 to 30 years	203	47.2
From 31 to 40 years	124	28.8
From 41 to 50 years	70	16.3
Above 50 years	26	6.0

Table 1 highlighted the demographic details of the two major groups, i.e. Egyptians = 275 [64%] and Jordanians = 155 [36%]. The gender percentage was 58.8 % male and 41.2 % female, while for age percentage, the majority was (76%) ranging from 18 to 40 years old (Table 1).

Table 2
The Effect of COVID-19 on Tourists’ Inclination Towards the Willing to Undertake International and Domestic Tourism Activities in Egypt and Jordan.

N= 430	The Two Countries			Comparison between Egypt and Jordan				
	Mean	SD	p	Egypt		Jordan		P
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Domestic Tourism	3.36	1.26	0.000	3.44	1.23	3.16	1.28	0.678
International Tourism	2.66	1.36	0.000	2.58	1.32	2.80	1.44	0.04

The findings in Table 2 revealed that COVID-19 had a significant impact on tourists’ inclination towards international and domestic tourism in the two countries, as the demand for domestic tourism increased (mean = 3.36, $p < 0.001$), meanwhile, the tourist demand on international tourism had declined (mean = 2.66, $p < 0.001$). This contradicted with Gursoy et al. (2021) study findings, as around 62% of their sample did not show preference towards travelling or staying in hotels. This point could lead to further research investigating other nationalities, as Their study was more focused on the American travellers. The recent studies around the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) can justify this, as the study of Boguszewicz-Kreft et al. (2020) asserted the existing differences between tourists from different nationalities.

Also, the findings in Table 2 highlighted – based on the t-test- that there were no significant differences between Egyptians and Jordanians regarding the willing to undertake domestic travels. However, the two nationalities didn’t support international tourism during COVID-19 outbreak but they were significant differences towards their perceptions regarding international tourism ($p (0.04) <$

0.05); the Egyptians were (mean = 2.58) significantly more refusing this type of tourism than the Jordanians (mean = 2.80).

Table 3

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Preferences of Using the Means of Travel for the Tourism Purposes

The Means of Travel N= 430	The Two countries			Comparison between Egypt and Jordan				
	Mean	SD	p	Egypt		Jordan		P
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Planes	3.46	1.28	0.000	3.51	1.21	3.38	1.41	0.320
Tourist Buses	2.36	1.19	0.000	2.47	1.19	2.17	1.16	0.010
Trains	2.62	1.24	0.000	2.64	1.23	2.60	1.29	0.771
Tourist Vans	3.17	1.33	0.008	3.29	1.31	2.96	1.35	0.012
Private Cars	4.23	1.17	0.000	4.27	1.18	4.14	1.13	0.289
Cruises	2.93	1.23	0.242	3.02	1.18	2.77	1.31	0.050

The findings in Table 3 highlighted that the COVID-19 crisis had influenced the demand on the whole means of tourist travel, except cruise ships. The COVID-19 pandemic directed the potential tourists' demand to use private cars (mean = 4.23, $p < 0.01$), planes (mean = 3.46, $p < 0.001$), and tourist vans (mean = 3.17, $p < 0.01$), while the demand were declined on tourist buses (mean = 2.36, $p < 0.01$) and trains (mean = 2.62, $p < 0.01$).

According to Table 3, the differences between the two nationalities were found in tourist buses ($p 0.010 < 0.05$) tourist vans ($p 0.012 < 0.05$) and cruises ($p 0.05 = 0.05$). The Jordanians had less desire to use these types of transportations (mean = 2.17 and 2.96 respectively) than the Egyptians (mean = 2.47 and 3.29 respectively).

Table 4

The Impact of COVID-19 on Health Practices and Quality of Service in Hotels

Health Practices and Quality of Service Items N= 430	The Two Countries			Comparison between Egypt and Jordan				
	Mean	SD	p	Egypt		Jordan		P
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
A. Hotels' employees adhere to precautionary measures such as wearing gloves and masks.	4.74	0.76	0.000	4.74	0.67	4.72	0.82	0.690
B. Social distancing should be at least one meter in places of service interactions.	4.72	0.63	0.000	4.78	0.45	4.61	0.84	0.007
C. Putting sterilizers in all hotel places.	4.81	0.56	0.000	4.84	0.42	4.76	0.76	0.185
D. Continuous sterilization process in all hotel places.	4.84	0.55	0.000	4.87	0.38	4.77	0.76	0.075
H. Quality of service provided.	4.74	0.56	0.000	4.78	0.41	4.67	0.75	0.050

The findings of Table 4 showed that the COVID-19 crisis had its highest impact on the hospitality industry, in other words, the potential hotels' customers gave great attention to sanitizing hotels' activities and services. With the lowest standard deviations among the study questions, the potential hotels' customers placed the highest preferences' means (exceeded 4.72 out of 5, the all p values < 0.01) on hotels' health practices and service quality especially the sterilization process (mean = 4.84). Wang et al. (2019) and Gursoy et al. (2020) findings met with these findings, as hospitality and hotels were highlighted as most critical points to handle tourist health fears.

The differences between the Egyptians and Jordanians were found only in one item; the Egyptians were significantly ($p = 0.007 < 0.05$) more willing to implement the social distancing (mean = 4.78) than the Jordanians (means = 4.61).

Table 5

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Desire to Travel with Family, Relatives, Friends, Tour Groups, or Travel Alone

N= 430 The desire to travel with:	The Two Countries			Comparison between Egypt and Jordan				
	Mean	SD	p	Egypt		Jordan		P
				Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Relatives	3.80	1.20	0.000	3.87	1.18	3.68	1.29	0.118
Friends	3.74	0.99	0.000	3.74	0.92	3.73	1.11	0.870
Tourist Groups	2.50	1.25	0.000	2.65	1.22	2.24	1.26	0.001
Alone	3.03	1.41	0.856	3.06	1.39	2.99	1.45	0.877

The findings of Table 5 highlighted the rejection of traveling with tourist groups in both nationalities (mean = 2.50, $p < 0.01$). Moreover, this type of tourist tour was significantly ($p < 0.01$) more rejected from the Jordanians (mean = 2.24) than the Egyptians (mean = 2.65). On the other hand, the desire increased to travel with relatives (mean = 3.80) followed by friends (mean = 3.74). Also, the findings presented no differences between the two nationalities among the other items.

Table 6

The Impact of COVID-19 on the Desire to Undertake Tourist Activities and Hotel Services in Open and Closed Places

N= 430 Activities		The Two Countries			Comparison between Egypt and Jordan				
		Mean	SD	p	Egypt		Jordan		P
					Mean	SD	Mean	SD	
Tourist Activities	Open Areas	4.23	0.93	0.000	4.35	0.84	4.01	1.05	0.448
	Closed Areas	2.11	1.16	0.000	2.02	1.12	2.28	1.20	0.068
Hotel Services	Open Areas	4.26	0.91	0.000	4.42	0.71	3.97	1.14	0.000
	Closed Areas	2.33	1.13	0.000	2.22	1.06	2.53	1.23	0.001

Table 6 presented that the COVID-19 crisis influenced the potential consumers' attitudes and preferences towards the place of undertaking tourists' activities and hotel services. The majority preferred open air (all p values were < 0.01) as a place to undertake tourist activities (mean = 4.23) and hotel services (mean = 4.26) rather than closed areas (mean = 2.11 and 2.33 respectively). The differences between the two nationalities were found only in the perceptions of hotel services, as the Egyptians were significantly ($p < 0.01$) more willing to receive hotels' service at outdoors (mean = 4.42). Consequently, Egyptians (mean = 2.22) had less desire than the Jordanians (mean = 3.97 and 2.53 respectively) to receive hotel services at the indoors areas.

Conclusion

The study came out with several critical findings which will contribute in changing the shape of affording tourist services that we knew. The research tried to contribute to the existing literature and to bridge the gap of knowledge in relation to the perception of Arab world travellers towards tourism and hotel services during COVID-19 pandemic and to answer a list of question derived from the literature. The research aimed to develop a comparative case study between Egyptian and Jordanian travellers to help in identifying the domestic tourists' preferences to figure hospitality and tourism post COVID-19 world. A stratified sampling technique was developed via using various filters in the online survey. The valid forms were 430 from both Egyptians and Jordanians potential tourists. T-Test, standard deviation and means were used as quantitative analytical tools to achieve the research aim.

The study pointed to the significant differences between the two nationalities at certain points, i.e. Egyptians were more willing to adopt social distancing in hotels; Jordanians had a stronger rejection towards using public means of tourist transportation; Egyptians expressed heavier refusal towards international travel. Other than that, there were a consensus between the two nationalities regarding the following critical points.

The research major findings pointed to the emerging need to handle the tourists worries regarding COVID-19 crisis, especially at hotel services. The pandemic affected tourists' preferences, as they preferred traveling with relatives and private cars more than other means of travels and travel company. Both nationalities rejected the idea of traveling in tourist groups. They asserted the necessity of affording tourist and hotel services in open air as much as possible.

Managerial Implications

The HBM can be used to develop short- and long-term practical implications. The study findings were very useful and practical to give new ideas to travel agencies and tour operators at Jordan and Egypt. The research outcomes can be used to let travel agencies focus more on affordable family packages, where the one family can travel and enjoy with the destination using its sanitized rented car and to undertake tourist activities and hotel services at open air. Handling health fears were highlighted as a must via practicing sanitizing tourist and hotels facilities - in public - and to let tourists enjoy open air facilities. Focusing on domestic tourism was highlighted by

both Jordanian and Egyptian tourists, and this finding should lead to launch new domestic packages in the market at the upcoming days.

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تأثير جائحة كورونا على سلوكيات السائحين الداخليين: دراسة مقارنة بين مصر والأردن

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المخلص

جائحة كورونا أضرت بشكل كبير بصناعتي السياحة والضيافة حول العالم وأدت لإغلاق العديد من الشركات والفنادق في القطاعين. وأعلنت الدول وضع قواعد جديدة للتشغيل. حيث تم الإعلان عن متطلبات إضافية ومحددات صارمة لممارسة النشاط السياحي والفندقي. في هذه الظروف الحرجة، أصبحت السياحة الداخلية هي الحل العاجل والضروري للحفاظ على صناعتي السياحة والفنادق من الانهيار. مما يشير لأهمية هذا البحث لتقصي سلوكيات واحتياجات السائحين المحليين في مصر والأردن بعد جائحة كورونا. حيث تهدف الدراسة إلى عقد دراسة مقارنة بين تغيرات سلوكيات السائحين المحليين في الأردن ومصر مما يساهم في تشكيل صناعتي السياحة والفنادق في عالم ما بعد كورونا. تم تصميم استمارة استقصاء إلكترونية وتم توزيعها عبر وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي وشركات السياحة العاملة مع استخدام أدوات إحصائية مثل الوسط والانحراف المعياري و اختبار "تي" لتحليل النتائج وتحقيق الهدف موضع البحث. وقد أنتجت الدراسة مجموعة من النتائج المهمة منها وجود نقاط اتفاق بين تفضيلات السائحين من الأردن ومصر مع وجود نقاط اختلاف. وقد أظهرت النتائج تفضيلات جديدة للسائحين من المتوقع أن تساهم كأفكار واعدة تنثري برامج الشركات السياحية للتعامل مع حقبة ما بعد كورونا ومستجداتها المتسارعة.

معلومات المقالة

الكلمات المفتاحية

جائحة كورونا؛

السائحين الداخليين؛

الفنادق؛ شركات

السياحة.

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