

Investigating the Tourists' Harassment Effect on the Destination Choice (A Case Study :Egypt)

Ghada Mohamed Khairat

Faculty of Tourism and Hotels - University of Sadat City

Abstract

Harassment is a complex phenomenon that occurs throughout the world and on a daily basis. The feelings of vulnerability to harassment can create worries toward the destination. This may affect tourists' decision regarding the choice of such destination, and tourists may not return to or advise this destination to others if they have felt unsafe. The purposes of this study is to identify the types of tourists' harassment, determine the factors leading to this problem in Egypt, and investigate the effects of harassment on tourists' future decisions to travel to Egypt. Therefore, a survey has been conducted on 218 tourists in order to reflect their experience with harassment. The findings reveal that verbal harassment is the main type of harassment, followed by begging, vendor persistence, and physical harassment. Finally, the results illustrate that tourists' opinion about choosing Egypt as a tourist destination is negative. They have had a bad impression about Egypt. As being an unsafe tourist destination and they do not have the intention to revisit it.

Key words: Tourist, Harassment, Safety, Destination Choice, Intention to revisit.

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Introduction

Tourism is a service industry in which the nature of its products is intangible, and it is susceptible to risks and threats.¹ Safety and security are vital to providing quality in the tourism industry more than any other economic activity. The success or failure of a tourist destination depends on being able to provide a safe and secure environment for the visitors.^{2,3,4}

Furthermore, tourism relies mainly on providing services which may be affected by the behavior of a certain category of people who are especially less educated. Such activities can damage vacation quality, reduce the propensity to return, and even threaten the destination's image and economic future.⁵ The feeling of tourist safety is the most important factor that influences the choice of a destination. The tourist tends to choose a destination where his personal safety is guaranteed. So, the survival of the tourism industry depends on maintaining the image of the destination as a safe haven.^{8,9}

Unfortunately, Egypt has gained a reputation for being an unsafe place to go on holidays due to unpleasant holiday experiences resulting from harassment by local vendors who try to nudge and implore tourists to buy using over aggressive sales tactics.¹⁰ The phenomenon of tourist harassment has been growing recently in Egypt, ranging from verbal harassment, to incidents of stone throwing, physical assaults, robbery, rape, sexual harassment and even murder; this issue affects the behavior of tourists negatively, and acts as a challenge to the continued growth of the tourism industry.^{11,12} The intense media and negative publicity coverage of these events impact the number of tourists visiting Egypt.⁶ Also, governments of foreign countries issue warnings to their citizens not to travel to Egypt, and encourage them to turn to other tourist destinations.¹³

Theoretical Framework

Definition of harassment

Harassment is defined ¹⁴as "a negative behavior that annoys visitors". In addition, it is clarified from the viewpoint of the tourist as "any annoying behavior taken to the extreme". However, from the viewpoint of the host perpetrator, "harassment is simply refusing to get "no" for an answer".⁵ Furthermore,¹⁵ harassment is "words, or actions (usually repeated or persistent) that, annoy, alarm, or causes substantial emotional distress in that person and serves no legitimate purpose".

Harassment is "a form of discrimination and a gross violation of a person's human rights and human dignity that is unwelcome".¹⁶

Also, harassment is defined as "any unwanted conduct of a sexual nature having the effect of verbal, non-verbal, visual, psychological, or physical harassment".¹⁷ Moreover, harassment is referred¹⁸ to as the "highly symbolic form of violence which is experienced by women in the form of heckling, whistling, rating, propositioning, leering, fondling, and in other ways assaulting and humiliating by men as they go about their daily lives in public spaces".

On one hand, harassment cases are increasing among tourists because tourists have certain personal and behavioral attributes which tend to make them desirable victims. For instance, tourists often carry large sums of money, or valuable items such as cameras and jewelry. Furthermore, they sometimes engage in activities which may increase their risk of victimization, such as frequenting night clubs and bars at late hours, or accidentally venturing into an unknown area which is considered unsafe. Some tourists also engage in activities they would not consider engaging in at home, such as buying drugs.^{3,6}

Similarly, it is¹⁹ adduced that there are good grounds to assume that the tourist will be victimized because she/he is a highly visible temporary stranger, ignorant of the customs and laws of the host country, and is socially isolated. Also identified are^{20,21} three characteristics that render tourists particularly vulnerable: having the status of a tourist, being non-permanent, and being transient at the destination. Furthermore, it is²² proposed that the broad factors which cause tourists to be more prone to crime are their appearance, their behavior, and the type of environment they find themselves in.

On the other hand, language difficulties, unfamiliarity with local criminal systems, and short length of tourists' stay may inhibit tourists from reporting crime.⁶ Therefore, handling complaints about harassment at tourist destinations is left unresolved due to the difficulty of identifying and collecting the evidence.^{7, 23,24}

Reasons behind Harassments

Harassment will remain a continuing problem in tourism-dependent countries,^{11,12} wherever rich guests interact with less rich hosts. The greater the degree of poverty in the host country is, the greater the number of vendors and beggars are. Therefore, they assail the tourists for a few dollars.^{15,25} Furthermore, high unemployment rates,^{18, 26} cultural differences,²⁷ widespread drug use and trafficking,¹³ and the education level²⁸ are all reasons that contribute to such a problem.

Forms of Harassment

Harassment can be classified into a number of main categories: verbal harassment, non-verbal/gestural harassment, physical harassment, pestering, begging, drug peddling, and sexual harassment.²⁹ argue these incidents range from petty harassment by vendors to robberies and on to more serious and violent crime and even murder **as shown in Table 1.**

However, tourists are being victimized (harassed) by street vendors, beggars, taxi drivers,^{27,34} tourist guides, customs/immigration officials, travel agents, airline and hotel employees, other service providers,⁵ drug peddlers, and other locals who come into frequent contact with tourists,¹³ at different places such as restaurants, bars, night clubs, hotels, beaches, streets, shopping centers, tourist areas, and airports.²⁷

Table 1 Tourist's harassment patterns and rates in Egypt

Statement	2012	2013	2014
First: felonies			
Rape	6	8	5
Indecent assault	95	87	169
Robbery inside tourist establishments	0	1	0
Robbery outside tourist establishments	4	4	2
Drug trafficking	4	3	13
Drug use	19	29	120
Total	128	132	309
Second: misdemeanors			
Physical assaults	88	51	59
Thefts	484	389	389
Fraud	82	50	64
Total	654	490	512
Third: antiquities offences			
Reports in archeological sites (arguments, vendors harming tourists)	97	98	109
Reports at Egyptian museums (arguments, exploitation of tourists)	15	37	41
Total	112	135	150
Fourth: other offences			
Arresting people embarrassing tourists	841	616	1169
Seizing offences of sexual harassment and that against public morals	1459	1905	3385
Reports related to tourists (things lost, complaints)	608	493	715
Total	2908	3014	5269

Source: ³⁵ Police General Directorate of Tourism and Antiquities: Criminal Censorship (2014)

Consequences of Harassment

Traveling is an opportunity to obtain an experience of leisure. Therefore, tourists expect to be accorded with warm welcome any time they interact with the host community during their holiday. However, they suffer

from violence, crime, and harassment,⁷ which causes dissatisfaction with the overall quality of the tourism experience.³⁴ Furthermore, harassment has serious consequences on tourists' perceptions, attitudes, and experiences,³⁴ and also on tourist destinations.³⁶ Moreover, the frequency of harassment has an effect on tourist arrivals³⁷ because tourists' negative perception of a destination is often reported in the media. Also, tourists warn their friends and families and this causes a negative word of mouth being spread.³ consequently, the longer-term impact may include fewer repeated visits,³⁸ economic loss, and permanent damage to the image of the destination.^{39,40,41} Tourists tend to avoid destinations of high levels of safety risk.⁴² It takes both a sufficient time lapse and a significant promotional effort to convince tourists to return to destinations that are widely seen as unsafe.¹³ In addition, crime against tourists can cause foreign governments to announce travel safety advisories and warnings,^{3, 43} directing their citizens to alter their vacation plans, which might include choosing alternative vacation destinations.⁴⁰

Harassment and Destination Choice

When deciding to travel or return to a destination a tourist faces a "choice." "Choice," according to psychological theory, is characterized by conflict, uncertainty, and cognitive activity. Choice involves the decision making process. Deciding to travel to a destination that is known to be affected by harassment and crime, a risky decision is involved. Safety can play a role in the tourist destination decision. In addition, vacation choices depend on information obtained through different ways: media, social media, travel agents, and especially word-of-mouth from friends and family. These all can be a very influential source affecting one's choice of a destination, whether positive or negative. If an experience with harassment is learned, it may cause one to decide not to travel to that particular destination and influence others' opinions.⁴⁴ Moreover, past travel experiences, types of risk, and the feelings of safety are the most important factors which influence the likelihood that tourists will travel to or avoid such destinations on their next vacation.⁴⁵

Research Methodology

Data has been collected using a structured questionnaire, focusing on the forms of harassment, the frequencies of harassment experience, location of harassment, the harasser, and future intention to return to Egypt. A total of 270 questionnaires have been distributed, and 238 were collected (with a response rate of 88.1%). Only 218 questionnaires were valid. The survey has been conducted in three tourist regions: Giza Pyramids area , Sharm-El Sheikh , and Hurghada.

The questionnaire consisted of three sections and the participants have been asked firstly , if they have experienced any form of harassment or annoying behavior during their vacation, those who said "yes" i.e. have been harassed were 128 (58.7 % of the respondents) ; they continued filling out the survey. The participants who answered "no", but knew about someone who had such experience were 90 respondents (41.3%), (they were asked to go directly to section3).(Table2)

The first section was designed to provide demographic information about the respondents, **the second section** described the forms and rates of harassment, frequencies of harassment experience, and kind of harassers. **The third section** measured the relationship between harassment and tourists' intention to revisit Egypt.

Firstly, the main objective is to determine whether the respondents have experienced any harassment.

Table 2 Have you experienced harassment?

Harassment Experience	Frequencies	Percentage
Yes (they personally experienced harassment)	128	58.7 %
No (but knew about someone who had such experience)	90	41.3 %
total	218	100%

Section (1): only 128 have been answered this section

Demographic Information

This part of the survey asks the respondents to share some personal demographic information. They have been asked to share their age and gender.

Table 3 Age of tourists

Age	Frequencies	Percentage
Less than 25 years	21	16.4
25 years to less than 40	77	60.2
40 years to less than 60	30	23.4
Over 60	-	-
Total	128	100%

Table 3 shows the relationship between age and harassment rate. The percentage of tourists aged (25 years to less than 40 years) (60.2%, n=77) have been more likely to be harassed. The explanation for why youthful tourists are most at risk of harassment is their lifestyle, such as going out more than other ages, and going to high risk locations such as bars and nightclubs. Middle aged tourists (40 years to less than 60) experienced slightly less harassment (23.4%, n=30) because they have more travel experience than the other group of tourists. Younger tourists (less than 25 years) experienced the least harassment (16.4%, n=21). The study concludes that elderly tourists have not experienced relatively any harassment since they prefer to stay mostly in hotels, and prefer a quiet environment. These results match the results of previous studies of Allen⁶, Chepkwony and Kangogo²⁷, De Albuquerque and Mc Elroy³², khairat and Mahrous⁴⁶ who demonstrated that youthful tourists experience more harassment because they engage more with the locals and participate in more tourism activities such as shopping and sightseeing.

Table 4 Gender of tourists

	Frequencies	Percentage
Female	58	45.3
Male	70	54.7
Total	128	100 %

Table 4 shows that male tourists have been somewhat more harassed (n =70, 54.7%)) than female tourists (n =58,45.3%) as male are more likely to be harassed by vendors , drug peddling and beach girls; these results confirm the study of Chepkwony and Kangogo²⁷, De Albuquerque and Mc Elroy³².

Section(2): Harassment Experience

This section is to determine the frequencies of harassment experience, forms and rates of harassment, and kind of harassers , it also shows where the respondents have been harassed.

Table 5 Repeated harassment

Repeated times	Total	
	Frequencies	Percentage%
Once	54	42.2 %
Twice	38	29.7 %
Thrice	36	28.1 %
Total	128	100%

Table 5 shows that tourists on the first visit to Egypt have been more harassed than those on repeated visits, which means familiarity with the local behavior have taught them to avoid certain areas or activities where harassment is prevalent, and to minimize exposure to harassment. Moreover, these results confirm the study of Kozak ²⁵, Chepkwony and Kangogo²⁷, De Albuquerque and Mc Elroy³² who found that the first-time tourists may encounter more problems than repeaters who have already become familiar with the location and the local traditions.

Table 6 Ways of harassment

	Frequencies	Percentage
Robbery	24	18.8%
Assault	14	10.9%
Rape	26	20.3%
Abuse	34	26.6 %
Fraud	30	23.4
Total	128	100 %

Table 6 presents the percentage of each way of incidents. It shows that abuse and fraud are the most occurred ways of harassment with percentages of 26.6% and 23.4%, respectively, as against 20.3% and 18.8 %, for rape and robbery, and 10.9%, for assault records

Table 7 Location of harassment

Location	Total	
	Frequencies	Percentage
Beaches	21	16.4%
Hotels	23	18%
Streets	32	25%
Taxis	17	13.3%
Tourist sites	15	11.7%
Bazaars	20	15.6%

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Table 7 shows the places where harassment occurs. It is obvious that *streets* seem to be the area where *most harassment cases occurs* (25%, n=32), followed by hotels (18%, n=23). Also, the other places where harassment occurred were beaches (16.4 %, n=21), bazaars (15.6 %, n=20), and taxis (13.3%, n=17). However, a few respondents (11.7%, n=15) have been harassed at tourist sites. The results also match those of Skipper³⁴ who stated that harassment most often takes place on the street.

Table 8 Types of harassment

	Female		Male		Total		rank
	Frequencies	Percentage	Frequencies	Percentage	Frequencies	Percentage	
Verbal harassment	10	7.8%	26	20.3%	36	28.1%	1
Non-verbal harassment	7	5.4%	1	0.7 %	8	6.1 %	6
Physical harassment	8	6.3%	8	6.3%	16	12.6 %	4
Begging	17	13.3%	13	10.2%	30	23.5 %	2
Drug peddling	5	3.9%	5	3.9%	10	7.8%	5
Pestering	11	8.6%	17	13.3%	28	21.9%	3

Table 8 shows that (28.1%, n=36) of the respondents have indicated that verbal harassment is the most common type, followed by begging (23.5 %, n=30), pestering (21.9 %, n=28), physical harassment (12.6 %, n=16), drug peddling (7.8%, n=10). On the other hand, the least common type of harassment experienced by respondents is non-verbal harassment (6.1 %, n=8).

In addition, males are more likely to be verbally harassed and pestered by vendors because they are ordinarily householders; and females are more likely to encounter problems with beggars because women are more sympathetic to them.

Table 9 the nature of harassers

	Female		Male		Total	
	Frequencies	Percentage	Frequencies	Percentage	Frequencies	Percentage
Tourist guides	11	8.6%	3	2.3%	14	10.9%
Taxi drivers	3	2.3%	12	9.4%	15	11.7%
Hotels employees	14	10.9%	9	7%	23	18%
Beach boys	12	9.4%	8	6.3%	20	15.6%
Vendors	6	4.7%	19	14.9%	25	19.5%
Travel agents	8	6.3%	5	3.9%	13	10.2%
Beggars	4	3.1%	14	10.9%	18	14.1%

Table 9 shows that the main group of harassers identified by tourists are vendors (19.5 %, n=25), followed by hotels employees (18%, n=23), beach boys (15.6%, n=20), beggars (14.1%, n=18), taxi drivers (11.7%, n=15), tourist guides (10.9 %, n=14) and travel agents (10.2 %, n=13).

The high percentage of male tourists encountering harassment by vendors can be attributed to that male tourists have more say on purchases than female tourists. On the other hand, the highest percentage of female tourists has encountered harassment by hotels employees.

Section (3): Intention to revisit Egypt

In this section the main objective is to determine the effect of harassment on the intention to revisit Egypt (218 respondents answered this section).

Table 10 the attitude of tourists toward Egypt as a tourist destination

		(1) Strongly agree	(2) Agree	(3) Neutral	(4) Disagree	(5) Strongly disagree	Mean	Standard deviation
1- Had got a good impression about Egypt	Frequencies	7	43	3	14	151	4.188	1.326
	Percentage	3.2%	19.7%	1.4%	6.4%	69.3%		
2- Enjoyed such experience, and satisfied with holiday	Frequencies	12	31	-	47	128	4.138	1.281
	Percentage	5.5%	14.2%	-	21.6%	58.7%		
3- Egypt is safe and secure	Frequencies	-	17	-	22	179	4.665	0.833
	Percentage	-	7.8%	-	10.1%	82.1%		
4 - Will recommend Egypt to others	Frequencies	5	9	1	83	120	4.395	0.880
	Percentage	2.3%	4.1%	0.5%	38.1%	55%		
5-Intention to revisit Egypt	Frequencies	9	27	-	56	126	4.206	1.187
	Percentage	4.1%	12.4%	-	25.7%	57.8%		
Total attitude							4.318	1.101

- 1-5 Scale: where 1= strongly agree, and 5= strongly disagree

Table 10 reports the respondents' attitude toward Egypt as a tourist destination, their experience, satisfaction, and intention to travel, either now or in the near future, to Egypt. The respondents have answered on a scale of one to five, where one means 'strongly agree' and five means 'strongly disagree'. As shown, the answer of respondents to all statements is negative with a mean of 4.318, and a standard deviation of 1.101. The standard deviation of the means ranges from 0.83 to 1.32, reflecting their smallness. Also, the mean differences range from 4.13 to 4.66.

Respondents who have got a bad impression on Egypt are 75.7%. Also, the majority of the respondents (80.3%) were not satisfied with the experience and did not enjoyed it. Moreover, 92.2 % of the respondents

thought that Egypt is an unsafe destination. Again, 93.1% assured that they will not recommend Egypt to their friends; and finally a very large portion of the respondents (83.5%) said that they would not revisit Egypt due to their exposure to harassment.

Conclusion and recommendations

Harassment is a negative behavior which has a great impact on one's experiences. Tourists' satisfaction is heavily reliant on the host community and on safety. Moreover, negative experiences may result in negative attitudes toward the choice of destination causing travelers to amend their travel plans. Also, the word-of-mouth of family and friends is the most important influential source affecting destination choice. Few studies have focused on the effect of harassment on tourists' travel decision, and specifically on the choice of tourist destinations. Therefore, this study aims to identify the types of tourists' harassment, determine the factors leading to this problem in Egypt, and investigate the effect of harassment on tourists' decisions to travel to Egypt. The findings of the study points out that tourists aged 25 years to less than 40 are more likely to be harassed than other ages. It also demonstrates that tourists on first visit to Egypt are more likely to experience harassment than those on repeated visits. Furthermore, the results indicate that verbal harassment is the main type of harassment, followed by begging, vendor persistence, and physical harassment, respectively. In addition, the results illustrate that male tourists are slightly more harassed than female tourists, and harassment incidences vary by gender. Also, a high percentage of female tourists encounter harassment by hotels employees. As a result, the tourists' opinion of traveling to Egypt is negative. As being an unsafe destination; they got a bad impression and will not recommend Egypt to their friends, and would not revisit it. Finally, the study recommends a number of actions that could be taken to minimize these incidences. A positive anti-harassment campaign should be mounted to protect tourists and make them feel welcome. Also, setting up a complaints center seems necessary to deal with complaints, beside increasing the presence of tourists' police to track harassment at tourist sites, increasing citizens' awareness of the importance of tourism to the economy of the destination, taking legal actions, implementing ordinances to regulate the vending of goods and services, and punishing vendors without licenses.

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دراسة أثر ظاهرة التحرش بالسياح في اختيار المقصد السياحي دراسة حالة : مصر

غادة محمد خيرت عبد الحميد

كلية السياحة والفنادق - جامعة مدينة السادات

الملخص العربي

يعد شعور السائح بالأمان من أهم العوامل التي تؤثر في اختياره للمقصد السياحي، حيث يختار المقصد الذي تتحقق فيه سلامته الشخصية بعيدا عن المخاطر وأعمال العنف، وقد انتشرت ظاهرة التحرش في مصر في الآونة الأخيرة وامتدت إلى قطاع السياحة و أخذت أشكالاً مختلفة منها تحرش البائعين، والمتسولين، والتحرش اللفظي، والتحرش البصري، والتحرش الجسدي والجنسي. هذا وقد أصبحت هذه الظاهرة تشكل خطورة شديدة نظراً لتأثيراتها السلبية في سمعة وصورة مصر السياحية حيث تخلق لدى السائح صورة سلبية تنعكس على قراره بالعودة إلى مصر مرة أخرى. لذا تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على الأسباب التي تؤدي إلى انتشار ظاهرة التحرش، وأنواع التحرش، ونوعية المتحرش، وعدد المرات التي تعرض فيها السائح لتجربة التحرش، علاوة على آراء السياح في مدى تأثير هذه التجربة التي تعرضوا لها على قرارهم لاختيار مصر كمقصد سياحي؛ وقد اعتمدت الدراسة على إجراء دراسة استقصائية مع 218 سائح بغرض التعرف على تجاربهم مع التحرش. أشارت نتائج الدراسة إلى أن السياح الذين تتراوح أعمارهم بين 25 إلى أقل من 40 سنة كانوا أكثر عرضة للتحرش والمضايقة من الأعمار الأخرى. كما أوضحت الدراسة أيضاً أن السياح في أول زيارة لهم لمصر كانوا أكثر تعرضاً للتحرش من هؤلاء الذين قاموا بتكرار الزيارة، وذلك لاستفادتهم من التجربة السابقة واكتسابهم الخبرة التي تساعدهم على تجنب التحرش بهم مرة أخرى. أيضاً أشارت النتائج إلى أن التحرش اللفظي هو من أكثر أنواع التحرش، يليه مطاردة المتسولين، وإلحاح البائعين، ثم التحرش الجسدي؛ كما أظهرت النتائج أن السياح الذكور أكثر تعرضاً للمضايقات مقارنة بالإناث، وقد كانت آراء السياح سلبية فيما يتعلق باختيار مصر كمقصد سياحي و تكرار الزيارة إليها مستقبلياً، وذلك ظناً منهم أن مصر وجهة غير آمنة، ولن يوصوا أصدقاءهم بزيارة مصر، ولن يقوموا بتكرار الزيارة إليها. وأخيراً تقترح الدراسة أنه ينبغي تفعيل خط ساخن يتم إخطار السياح به للاتصال في حالة طلب المساعدة السريعة عند التعرض للتحرش، وضرورة سن قانون رادع وفقاً لنوع التحرش ووضع العقوبات المناسبة لكل نوع بما يتناسب مع طبيعته، وإقامة مراكز في مختلف المناطق التي يتواجد بها السياح تختص باستقبال شكاواهم الخاصة بالتحرش، فضلاً عن ضرورة تكثيف التواجد الأمني والجدي في تحرير المخالفات للبايعات الجائلين.