

## QUALITY LEVEL OF APPLIED PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES IN THE EGYPTIAN TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY SECTOR TO CONFRONT THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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*Abstract.* The COVID-19 Pandemic reached Egypt at the beginning of 2020. It resulted in serious repercussions in many sectors in Egypt, including the tourism sector. Thus, tourism and hospitality establishments in Egypt have been trying to do their utmost to come up with a solution to confront this global pandemic, or at least to alleviate its consequences. This research sheds light on the quality level of precautionary measures that have been taken by the Egyptian tourism and hospitality sector to approach the COVID19 Pandemic.

**Key words:** COVID-19, tourism, hospitality, Egypt, quality level

### INTRODUCTION

At the end of December 2019, the new COVID-19, Corona Virus disease of 2019 was recognized after its first outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan, which resulted in creating an epidemic in China [14]. Symptoms and signs of this communicable disease include shortness of breath, problems in the respiratory system, cough and fever. In the acute cases, this disease can lead to lungs failure and then death [17]. The rapid spread of the COVID-19's infection has created a serious global pandemic, as many cases were recorded in different countries around the globe [17].

Therefore, the World Health Organization (WHO) has made a set of specific recommendations and guidelines that people in all countries must obey in order to prevent the spread of this fatal pandemic. These recommendations and guidelines included hand sanitising either by using alcohol or soap and water, using disposable tissue papers, putting on facemask and keeping a social distancing amongst people [17].

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In Egypt, particularly from the third of January 2020 to the eighteenth of October 2021, there have been 318,456 confirmed cases of COVID-19 with 17,970 deaths, reported to the World Health Organization. On the eighth of October 2021, a total number of 20,154,366 vaccine doses against COVID-19 became available [23].

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

The primary purpose of the research is to identify the precautionary measures that have been applied in the Egyptian tourism and hospitality sector for confronting COVID-19. Hence, the method that were utilized in this research were: research and analysis.

### RESEARCH RESULTS

Tourism is the process, which involves the traveling process of people to a certain place for having new experiences apart from their daily routine [11]. It is an essential activity in the economic mechanism structure and an important component in the

modernization and development of societies. Tourism is also considered the perfect towards social and cultural alignment amongst communities [14].

In Egypt, tourism is considered one of the most important industries and one of the labor-intensive sectors. It plays a vital role in the Egyptian economy as well as in the entire development process of Egypt. It also helps in reducing the number of unemployed people, as it provides different job opportunities to young people; constituting 12.6% of the total Egyptian labor [15]. Furthermore, the Egyptian tourism sector represents an important source of foreign currency. In 2018, it constituted 9.3% to the Egyptian gross domestic product and 26.2% to the Egyptian total exports [10].

Tourism is one of the most affected sectors by the COVID-19 pandemic, which left its repercussions on livelihoods, economies, public services and opportunities on all continents [22]. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck the world, there was a noticeable decline in both of inbound and outbound tourist arrivals. This decline was apparent at the first quarter of 2020 compared to previous years. The global tourism data demonstrated that there was a serious decline in tourists' numbers at the first three months of 2020; representing 22%. This decline resulted in a loss of 67 million international tourists' arrivals and nearly 80 billion American dollars in export revenues from the international tourism [4]. Furthermore, COVID-19 resulted in more than 30% losses in the international airline sector by the end of 2020 [12].

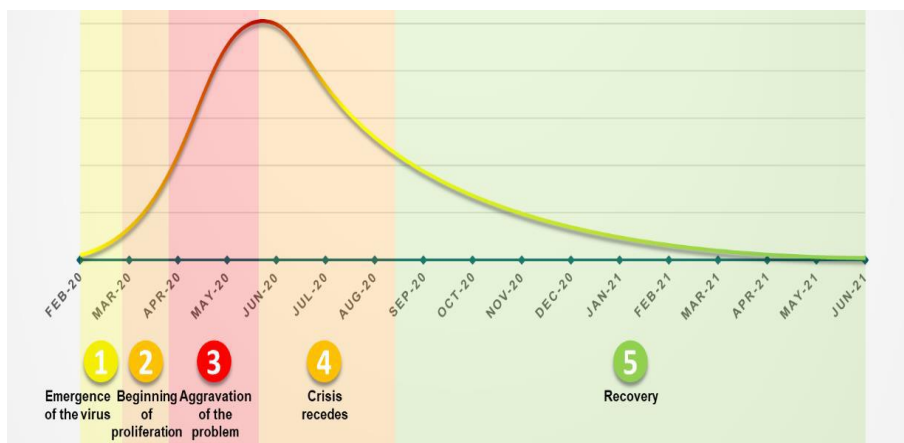
When the COVID-19 pandemic reached Egypt in 2020, many Egyptian sectors e.g. remittances, financial markets and tourism have been affected negatively. The government estimated that there was around a loss of 1 billion American dollar of income from tourism per month, which represented 12.5 billion American dollar per year and contributes to 12% of gross domestic product. Tourist cancellations have already reached 80% in the middle of March, 2020 compared with the same period of time in 2019, with an initial 138,000 job were at risk [21]. The COVID-19 pandemic affected negatively on domestic tourists' way of travelling, as tourists refused to travel in groups organized by travel agencies. Instead, they chose to travel with their relatives by using their own cars [13].

The Egyptian frontiers' closure and the international restriction of travel resulted in another decline in international travel and tourism to Egypt, which made a noticeable decrease in the gross domestic product as well as the rate of employment [6].

As to Egypt Air; the flag carrier of Egypt, all its flights were suspended on the nineteenth of March 2020 in response to the drastic decline in its revenues as well as in response to the suspension of all the international air traffic [14].

The spread of COVID-19, the increased travel restrictions and low number of tourists were affected negatively on the Egyptian hospitality industry. This came up with the policy that many accommodation facilities were forced to implement as a strategy to reduce the number of their employees e.g. partial downsizing and redundancies [2,19], so that the employment cost could be cut [8,18,20].

The following figure illustrates the five phases of the COVID-19 crisis' cycle in Egypt in the period from February 2020 to June 2021. These five phases are: the emergence of the virus, the beginning of the proliferation, aggravation of the problem, crisis recedes and finally recovery. It is apparent that the COVID-19 crisis reached its peak in June 2020 and afterwards it declined gradually to the normal average in June 2021.



**Figure 1. The COVID-19 Crisis' Cycle in Egypt from February 2020 to June 2021**

Source: ECES, 2020

The Egyptian tourism sector has taken a set of effectual approaches to limit the aftereffects of COVID-19. This has come up by applying a set of precautionary measures so that the Egyptian tourism could be resorted and returned to its normal position. These measures are indicated in the following points [3,7,9,10,16]:

a) Increasing the number of awareness campaigns about the precautionary measures that have been applied in Egyptian tourism and hospitality establishments.

b) Issuing health instructions and carrying out periodical medical checkup campaigns by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to ensure the safety of employees working in Egyptian Hotels as well as make certain that all precautionary measures are applied.

c) Carrying out training sessions under the supervision of the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities to all employees working in hotel establishments to raise their awareness about the precautionary measures that should be followed to avoid the COVID-19's infection.

d) Implementing the teleworking i.e. telecommuting by managers of travel agencies in Egypt in order to enable employees to work from homes or anywhere, and do not commute to their central workplace.

e) Providing travelers with all necessary information about the respiratory system infections via travel agencies and travel health clinics.

f) Implementing all required precautionary measures in Egyptian tourism and hospitality establishments as well as Egyptian airports e.g. wearing facemasks or face shields, keeping the social distancing and implementing the cleanliness and sterilization measures with pinpoint accuracy.

g) Sterilizing all Egyptian tourism establishments, hospitality establishments museums, and airports through a fruitful co-operation amongst the Egyptian Tourism and Antiquities, the Egyptian Ministry of Health and the Egyptian Hotel Chamber.

h) Offering disinfection and sterilization rules to be obeyed in Egyptian tourism and hospitality establishments as well as museums through a successful co-operation between the Egyptian Ministry of Health and the Egyptian Tourism of Tourism and Antiquities.

i) Doing online tourism promotional campaigns and virtual tourism tours by the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities depending on social media and the modern technology.

j) Launching the good health symbol in the hotels, which affirms that the hotel implements all the precautionary measures of COVID-19.

k) Vaccinating all employees working in tourism and hospitality establishments against COVID-19.

## CONCLUSIONS

It can be inferred from the previous theoretical discussion that COVID-19 has affected negatively on the global tourism sector. In Egypt, this pandemic reached its peak in June 2020, and as a result many precautionary measures have been taken to overcome the crisis e.g. vaccination, hygienic procedures, awareness campaigns and telecommuting. The efforts of the Egyptian tourism and hospitality were and still on increase to completely approach COVID-19 and to ensure a safe sector without infected cases.

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