How the "Arab Spring" Influenced Tourism and Hospitality Industry in Jordan: Perceptions of Workers in Tourism and Hospitality Business

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Abstract

This study aims at exploring the impact of "Arab Spring" on tourism and hospitality industry in Jordan from the perception of employees in the private sector. A questionnaire was designed to include a number of questions which are derived from reports on the economic impact of Arab Spring, and studies on crisis management models, this questionnaire targeted the workers in hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and other service providers since these were mostly influenced by Arab Spring. In general, the respondents agreed that there was a negative influence of the political instability in MENA (Middle East & North Africa) Region on the performance of tourism and hospitality sectors, especially for indicators concerning number of arrivals, revenues, tourist spending and offered job opportunities. Moreover, there is a general dissatisfaction with the actions taken by Jordanian tourism authorities to manage this crisis. The study then gives suggestions on dealing with such emergent situation.

Keywords: Crisis Management, Arab Spring, Economic Tourism Impacts, Terrorism, Jordanian Tourism and Hospitality Sector

1 Introduction

A series of revolutionary waves of popular revolts have spread in the Arab world since December 2010, known as the "Arab Spring". Protests took place in several countries in the region, starting in Tunisia and Egypt, reaching the Middle Eastern region shortly after. Protests were mainly fuelled by dissatisfied and unemployed youth looking for more rights, improved living conditions and a better future for themselves and for their children. Protests were expressed in demonstrations, rallies, marches and strikes, often closely interlinked with social media. While some of the uprisings resulted in the president's fall, as in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Yemen, some other governments, particularly the monarchies of Morocco and Jordan, have undertaken a gradual process of political reform. In other countries, opposition groups are still fighting the governments and its military forces up to the present day, as it is apparent in Syria where military fights continued for more than five years. Political conditions are still not stable in countries like Yemen, where the allied forces led by Saudi Arabia are still fighting the opposition parties and the old regime. Blasts targeting military forces occur frequently in Egypt. In Libya, the situation is taking a positive trend towards better negotiation between fighting parties, no doubt such conditions hamper the socio- economic development in these countries and the region as a whole. The economies of countries in MENA region (Middle East & North Africa) were drastically influenced; this was regarding Gross Domestic Product (GDP), employment, Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), and performance of tourism sector, which led to a real crisis (Masetti & Körner, 2013). To date, enormous authors have attempted to define the crisis. Darling (1994:5) described crisis as a "turning point for better or worse", "decisive moment", or "crucial time". Smith & Elliot (2006) argue that the term 'crisis' is often used to describe events and situations that are not easy to deal with even did not cause damaging. Pearson and Mitroff (1993) referred to crisis as "an incident or event that poses a threat to the organization's reputation and viability.

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Crises are usually indefinite, unforeseen, numerous, unexpected, unpredictable, occur regularly, act as a shock on the tourism industry and are usually poorly handled. In a broad classification two main types of tourism crisis may be identified: natural crisis or disaster and human caused crisis or security incidents (Santana, 2004:299-321). The natural crises include earthquakes, storms or volcano result in damage to the natural environment, and thus have harmful impact on the tourism infrastructure or health issues related to the dispersion of epidemics diseases, which usually limit access to tourist destinations. The human caused crises or security incidents take four possible important forms: crime-related incidents, terrorism, war, and civil/political unrest. This research deals with a form of human caused crises. According to Ali et al (2012), the influence of Arab Spring on tourism industry in MENA region was seen in: decline in the volume of incoming tourism to the Arab countries as well as tourist revenue and fees on tourism activities, substituting Arab countries with alternative destinations such as Turkey, the countries of Eastern Europe and some Asian countries such as Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, and others, low occupancy of hotels and decline in tourists numbers led to the damage to tourist facilities. Both GDP and employment rates decreases were witnessed mainly in Egypt, Syria, and Tunisia (OECD, 2011). Such drastic impacts were clearly and quickly taking place after the outbreak of revolts in MENA region; Welgert (2012) (citing reports of WTO (World Tourism Organization) & WTTC (World Travel & Tourism Council) of 2010/2011) stated that a fall of 31% and 33% in international arrivals were recorded in Tunisia and Egypt over 2010, while revenues decreased by 51% and 26% respectively. The case was the same for Syria which had a decline in its international arrivals of 41%, and 24% for Lebanon. Other countries though witnessed an increase in its tourist arrivals as Morocco and Bahrain. There was a recovery in the number of tourist arrivals to the region in 2012, but it was still below pre-revolutionary levels, moreover, the decrease of GPD had its dramatic influence since tourism receipts account for over 20% of GDP in Lebanon, 12% in Jordan and between 5% and 8% of GDP in Morocco, Tunisia and Egypt. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows also were influenced; between 2010 and 2011 FDI inflows fell by 46% to USD 11.4 bn, their lowest level since 2004, this was mostly in Egypt, Tunisia and Lebanon (Masetti & Körner, 2013). Figure 1 shows the economic impact of Arab Spring on different countries in MENA region in terms of GDP, tourist arrivals (2011 vs. 2010) and FDI inflows.

Even in the case of Jordan, which remained as a politically stable country, the tourism industry witnessed a heavy loss; many visitors from Europe and America cancelled their visits originally planned for Jordan, there was a drop in the number of tourist arrivals of 16% over the year 2015, while the number of tourist arrivals declined by 22%. This paper intends to explore the impact of the so called "Arab Spring" on the tourism industry in Jordan. The work presented here is based on a quantitative research method; a questionnaire was designed to include a number of questions which are derived from researches and reports on the economic impact of Arab Spring, and studies on crisis management models, this questionnaire targeted the workers in hotels and travel agencies since these are the services mostly influenced by Arab Spring. This study further presents different indicators as the number of tourist arrivals and tourism revenues for the years after 2010. This will consequently lead to suggest a number of recommendations and courses of action as part of crisis management needed to deal with the turbulent economic and political situations in MENA region.
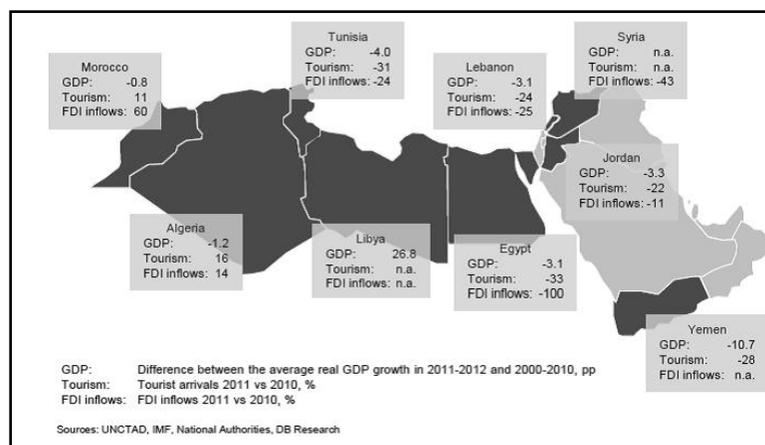
Figure 1: The economic impact of Arab Spring on different countries in MENA region
(Masetti & Körner, 2013)

2 Crisis Management in Tourism

Ritchie (2004: 680) noted that "a small but growing body of research on crisis and disaster management has been conducted in the tourism industry. This may be due, in part, to the chaotic and complex nature of these incidents and an inability by some managers and researchers to understand such phenomena". "Crisis management can be defined as an ongoing integrated and comprehensive effort that organizations effectively put into place in an attempt to first and foremost understand and prevent crisis, and to effectively manage those that occur, taking into account in each and every step of their planning and training activities, the interest of their stakeholders" (Santana,2003). Crisis management seeks to prevent or mitigate the negative outcomes of a crisis and thereby protect the organization,

Stakeholders, and industry from harm (Coombs, 2007). As a result, the crisis management appears as a strategy to concentrate on the issue of instability that results from the crisis and develop strategic objectives to overcome the problems. Crisis management could be divided into two main phases: Proactive and Reactive crisis managements. Proactive crisis management is concentrated on the pre-crisis stage. It refers to measures or communications that should be taken to prevent crises from happening. In contrast, reactive crisis management refers to the post-crisis actions that must be taken to mitigate and control existing crises and their effects (Pauchant & Mitroff, 2001).

Central to the concern of crisis management scholars have been the designation of several models of crisis management that attempt to deal with crisis. Fink's (1986) approach is one of the first to treat a crisis as an extended event. Of particular importance to his model is that warning signs precede the trigger event. The duty of crisis managers goes beyond traditional tasks and becomes more proactive when they come across warning signs. Therefore, well-prepared crisis managers do not just enact the crisis management plan when a crisis hits (being reactive); they are more involved in identifying and resolving situations that could become or lead to a crisis (being proactive). In addition, Fink divides the crisis event into three stages. A crisis does not just happen, it evolves. It begins with a trigger event (acute phase), moves to extended efforts to deal with the crisis (chronic phase), and concludes with a clear ending (resolution).

The second influential approach is from Mitroff (1994). He divided crisis management into five phases: (1) signal detection: new crisis warning signs should be identified and acted upon to prevent a crisis, (2) probing and prevention: search known crisis risk factors and work to reduce their harmful potentials, (3) damage containment: prevent the crisis damage from spreading into uncontaminated parts of the organization or its environment, (4) recovery: return to normal business operations as soon as possible, and (5) learning: organization members review and critique their crisis management efforts, thereby adding to the organization's memory.

There is still only a few works on crisis management in the field of tourism and hospitality, which consider the concept systematically and holistically (Glaesser, 2006; Laws & Prideaux, 2006; Scott & Laws 2006; Mansfield & Pizam 2006). The mainstream literature also proved to be "event-centered" which is more descriptive and thus less likely to create models and theories. Such studies consider peculiar events or issues, such as the impact of crisis on specific sectors in the tourism and hospitality industry, such as on hotels, restaurants and tourism agencies and most importantly on the airline companies.

Yet many scholars called for holistic approaches. For instance, Faulkner (2001: 146) calls for creating a rigor framework 'to structure the cumulative development of knowledge about the impacts of, and effective responses to, tourism disasters'. Similarly, Ritchie (2004: 680) stressed the demanding of a "proactive planning, effective implementation of strategies as well as the monitoring and evaluation of outcomes."

Faulkner (2001) developed a strategic and holistic model which brings together many previous contributions in the field. The model was further refined by Faulkner and Vikulov (2001) and applied to many cases. The model incorporated insights derived from the general analysis of disaster and crises management strategies to those obtained from the more specific examination of tourism disaster strategies to produce the first tourism specific disaster management framework which proved to be applicable with minor modifications to diverse cases. Faulkner (2001:138) has pointed out that the key elements of crisis situations are: a triggering event that challenges the existing structure, routine operations or survival of the organization; High threat featured by short decision time and an element of surprise and urgency; a perception of an inability to cope among those directly affected; and a turning point, when decisive change, which may have both positive and negative connotation, is imminent.

The decisive innovation made by Faulkner (2001) is the distinction he pointed between a crisis and disaster. To him, the crisis results from organizational malfunction or inability to respond. However, a disaster has been seen as an abrupt event that takes the organization with surprise. Crisis management is separate by Faulkner into a pre-event phase, in which contingency plans are designed and possible assessments are undertaken, in this stage it is possible to mitigate or prevent a disaster before it reaches to prodromal phase, in which there is a little chance to prevent crisis, and all should be undertaken is to put into action the contingency plans developed earlier. In the emergency phase, the disaster's effects are felt by stakeholders and the priority is given to those actions that help protect tourists and properties in tourism destinations. The role of media communication strategy during this stage is also crucial. In the recovery phase, there is need to a more long-term approach to reverse situation to the normal. Finally, in resolution phase what has been done during the crisis is evaluated, and the shortcoming will be improved.

Ritchie (2004) has distilled the Faulkner's models in an attempt to propose a comprehensive model. He initially chose to discuss the classification and analysis of crises. As he stressed, crises range from the slight issues such as staff illness through to natural disasters , terrorist incidents and those causing huge trouble to business and everyday activities. He proceeded to outline a strategic framework within which one is able to manage the crises in a predictable way. In short, his model consists of three main components: a. prevention and planning; b. implementation; and c. evaluation and feedback. What set this model apart from previous ones is its adaptability to a wide range of crises ranging from employee protest to terrorist attacks and economic depressions. Academic scholars, tourism practitioners. associations and government authorities have developed practical guidelines of how to manage a crisis. The prime examples are those tourism crisis manuals which were published by the World Tourism Organization (WTO 2003) and the Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA 2003). Among others, PATA handbook is widely employed by tourism practitioners. The handbook provides a suggested framework to take action on risk and crisis management using the Four R's approach. Such approach shows how destinations and small businesses can effectively manage the four distinct phases of a crisis: Reduction, Readiness, Response and Recovery.

3 Arab Springs and its Effect on the Jordanian Tourism and Hospitality Sector

By looking at the statistical reports of Jordanian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities for the years (2010-2015); it can be said that Arab Spring events had their significant effect on tourism performance, a general decrease can be noticed for the year 2011 if compared to 2010; the number of arrivals had a decline of (15.7%), the same can be seen for same day and overnight tourists' numbers which went down by 26.3% and 5.9% respectively. The relative change for receipts between 2010 and 2011 was -16.3% (from 2545.2 million JD to 2431.5 million JD), for tourist nights, they decreased from 5,301,639 in 2010 to 4,638,399 in 2011. Occupancy rates for both rooms and beds in all accommodations also declined, though, this was not the case for hotel apartments and suites, which had a very slight increase. In the period (2012-2015), the previously mentioned indicators were in fluctuation, the relative changes were less if compared to those between 2010 and 2011. Table 1 shows the main indicators for Jordanian tourism for the years (2010-2015).

Table 1: The main indicators of tourism performance in Jordan for the years (2010-2015)

Year	Indicators									
	Arrivals	Receipts (JD Million)	No of Package Tourists	No of Overnight Tourists	No of Same Day Tourists	No Tourist Nights	Occupancy Rates (%) / Hotel Apartments & Suites (Aprt. Vs. Beds)		Occupancy Rates (%) / Accommodation (Rooms Vs. Beds)	
2010	8,078,380	2545.2	707,735	4,557,024	3,690,112	5,301,639	39.3	28.8	43.7	36.1
2011	6,812,438	2431.5	419,571	3,959,651	2,852,787	4,638,399	40.3	29.1	41.1	34.5
2012	6,314,250	2883.6	446,165	4,162,367	2,151,883	5,806,317	54.3	39.4	50.3	44.7
2013	4,136928	2212.2	307,348	3,022,192	1,114,736	4,970,581	39.7	30.0	43.8	35.8
2014	5,326,501	3106.6	443,226	3,989,913	1,336,501	2,019,287	NA	NA	NA	NA
2015	4,811,352	2886.1	300,970	3,763,150	1,048,202	1,125,159	NA	NA	NA	NA

4 Methodology

Based on the previously mentioned crisis management models, as well as reports about the economic impacts of Arab Spring on tourism in Middle East & North Africa region, a survey was designed to explore the perceptions of workers in tourism and hospitality about the influence of Arab Spring on the performance of this sector, also their evaluation of procedures taken by Jordanian tourism authorities to deal with this crisis.

The survey included 3 main sections: the first section includes questions on the characteristics of establishment and respondent. The second section is composed of items that focused on the impacts of Arab spring on economic tourism indicators and markets, also if strategies were taken by the industry to deal with this crisis, these items were measured on 5-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree to 5: strongly agree). The third section focused on the change of both number of tourists and revenues of the establishment for the years from 2010 to 2015. The distribution of questionnaires took place during October 2015-February 2016. The validity of the research instrument was tested by consulting some tourism faculty members and practitioners0, who gave their feedback on the questions and items in the questionnaire.

5 Results

A random sample of 77 establishments responded to the questionnaire (14 travel agencies/tour operators, 28 hotels, 12 rent a car offices, 5 transport companies, and 18 tourist restaurants). For location, 39 of these establishments were in Amman, 19 in Petra and 19 were in Irbid. The majority of the respondents were of males (42); also sixty of them hold a bachelor or a diploma degree (only 10 finished high school, 7 finished graduate studies). Thirty nine of the respondents have top management occupations in their establishments, while twenty nine in the middle level and nine in the lower level.

For the perception of respondents on the impact of Arab Spring on the performance of tourism sector; it is noticed that most of the means for the measured items ranged from 3 (Neutral) to 5 (Strongly Disagree), reflecting then a general negative perception, the descriptive of these items are shown in Table 2.This was clear particularly for the items reflecting: decrease in the numbers of incoming tourists (M = 4.88, SD =0.33), decrease in tourism revenues (M = 4.90, SD = 0.30), partial tourism un-employability (M =4.51, SD =1.14), decrease in the numbers of offered direct tourism job opportunities (M =4.42, SD =0.66), having alternative tourism destinations other than Jordan (M =4.41, SD =0.70), and decrease in tourists spending (M =4.41, SD =1.22). It was also noticed that positive possible influence on national tourism were not strongly perceived; this is seen in the following two items, where means of responses ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 2 (Disagree): having events of Arab Spring led to an increase in the numbers of domestic tourists (M = 1.78, SD =0.92), and having events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in the numbers of outgoing tourists (M = 1.48, SD =0.89).

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of items concerning the evaluation of tourism sector performance

Item	Number of Valid Responses	Mean	Std. Deviation
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in the numbers of incoming tourists.	76	4.8816	.32525
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in tourism revenues.	70	4.9000	.30217
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in the numbers of offered direct tourism job opportunities.	72	4.4167	.62235
The events of Arab Spring led to a partial tourism un-employability.	76	4.3947	1.29696
The events of Arab Spring led to having alternative tourism destinations other than Jordan.	76	4.4079	.71512
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant change in tourism markets (e.g. country of origin).	74	3.9595	1.12797
The events of Arab Spring led to the closing of several tourism services.	73	2.1507	.92303
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in the tourists' length of stay.	75	3.8400	1.24162
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in tourists sending (mainly incoming tourists).	74	4.1622	1.46210
The events of Arab Spring led to an increase in the numbers of domestic tourists.	73	1.8082	.89221
The events of Arab Spring led to a significant decrease in the numbers of outgoing tourists.	74	1.4865	.81498
Generally, the events of Arab Spring a drastic negative effect on the performance of tourism sector in Jordan.	74	3.6351	1.27757

For the evaluation of respondents for the strategies that were taken by the industry to deal with this crisis; it is noticed that most of the means for the measured items ranged from 1 (Strongly disagree) to 2 (Disagree), reflecting then a general negative evaluation for the performance of tourism authorities, the descriptive of these items are shown in Table 3.This was clear particularly for the items: The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities has a clear plan for tourism services on how to deal with current crisis (M =1.36, SD = 0.70), Tourism services witnessed a clear cooperation by tourism authorities to deal with the crisis (M =1.40, SD =0.61), and Generally, Jordanian tourism authorities have shown a great readiness in dealing with the crisis (M =1.42, SD =0.60).

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of items for the evaluation of strategies and actions taken by tourism authorities

Item	Number of Valid Responses	Mean	Std. Deviation
The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities has shown a great readiness in dealing with the current crisis.	73	1.9589	1.11104
The Jordanian Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities has a clear plan for tourism services on how to deal with current crisis.	75	1.4000	.67783
Jordan Tourism Board effectively modified their marketing plans to deal with the current crisis.	75	1.9867	.95143
Tourism services could effectively deal with current crisis since they have prior plans.	76	2.1974	1.30660
Sufficient finances have been allocated by stakeholders in the tourism sector to deal with the crisis	77	1.7403	1.10504
Tourism services witnessed a clear cooperation by tourism authorities to deal with the crisis.	76	1.4605	.68197
As far to my knowledge, official authorities have a plan for the management of tourism crises	76	1.8289	.88526
Our establishment has a clear written plan for crisis management.	74	1.4459	.57676
Generally, Jordanian tourism authorities have shown a great readiness in dealing with the crisis.	76	1.4474	.59766

The respondents assessed the decrease in both the revenues and numbers of clients in their establishments, it can be indicated that such losses in most cases are not more than 50%. Tables 4 & 5 show the frequencies of responses for these questions.

Table 4: The evaluation of the sample for the decrease in revenues for the years (2010-2015) in their businesses

Decrease %	Year					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
25% or less	25	20	25	24	26	33
26%-50%	16	31	28	28	28	22
51%-75%	2	1	1	2	3	3
76%-100%	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total number of valid cases	44	53	55	55	58	59

Table 5: The evaluation of the sample for the decrease in clients for the years (2010-2015) in their businesses

Decrease %	Year					
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
25% or less	19	13	15	17	18	26
26%-50%	21	30	26	23	25	20
51%-75%	5	9	9	10	10	12
76%-100%	1	1	1	1	1	1
Total number of valid cases	46	53	51	55	54	59

6 Discussion & Conclusions

Jordan was highly influenced by the regional and global political instability during the last decades. Recently, the tourism business in the Kingdom has been also influenced by revolts, protests and heavy violence in different Arab countries throughout the past few years. This has resulted in a destabilization of the tourism performance, restricting its overall growth to a limited rate and far below aspirations. As has been seen throughout the past years in Jordan, there is a direct, though not necessarily linear, correlation between the political stability or the lack thereof and the performance of the tourism industry as measured by number of tourist arrivals and tourism revenue, which is also perceived in the responses of individuals in the sample targeted in this study.

In the case of Jordan's crisis management, the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities started to target the Arab market, especially the Gulf countries, in the hope that Arab tourists, who usually went to Syria and Egypt for the summer escaping the heat in the Gulf countries, would look for alternative travel destinations. The Ministry further plans to promote Jordan as tourism destination in eastern countries such as Russia, Ukraine and Poland hoping to fill the gap of western tourists' loss. As for the action plans undertaken by tourism authorities and the performance indicators of the tourism business, it is obvious that Jordan Tourism Board could only come up with an emergency plan to raise the international profile of the country by mainly targeting specific markets as those in Gulf countries, Turkey, and Far East, that is besides boosting services as medical tourism, though, there is an obvious negative perception among Jordanians in tourism industry that authorities are not doing enough (Jordan Times, July 21, 2015); this was also clearly indicated in the results given by respondents to the survey of this study.

Referring to previous studies on crisis management (Fink, 1986; Mitroff, 1994; Faulkner, 2001; Ritchie, 2004; PATA, 2003; and WTO, 2003) (see above), a key factor in dealing effectively with a crisis is adopting a proactive approach, in which early signs of disasters or critical situations are detected in very early phases, and clear strategies are to be already developed to deal with them (i.e. readiness in dealing with crisis time). According to Sönmez et. al. (1999), any destination should incorporate crisis management planning into the overall tourism planning, marketing, and management strategies. Such approach was not perceived in the case of Jordanian Tourism. What is needed then (as stated by Sönmez et. al. (1999)) besides targeting markets and increasing promotion efforts is the creation of a task force in which officials and professionals from government and other sectors are involved, this group is to be responsible for providing a unified voice to convey a positive true image about destination to the media, tracking changes in destination image, gathering information on the consequences of the disaster, and raise funds to support crisis management efforts. Moreover, the development of a crisis management guidebook, in which the responsibilities and duties of such task force are explained, is not less important as a procedure to be taken by this task force.

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