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# The Impact of the Arab Spring on Tourism

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## **Abstract**

The events of the Arab Spring have put the spotlights on North Africa and the Middle East as long-term dictators were right away removed from office and a democratic wave hit the region. Notwithstanding, the outcomes of the Arab Spring revolutions are yet to be defined, what we can determine from the uprisings is that those collective attitudes played a major role in inserting serious challenges to existing political systems. Over the past years Egypt has suffered many crises such as wars, terrorist attacks, internal political tensions and brutal changes in government. As a consequence, all of these had a negative effect on the flow of tourism into the country. This work examines the importance of the dramatic events as a result of these widespread protests and their impact on the status quo especially with regard to tourism in Egypt.

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## **1. Introduction**

Tourism is an unstable industry. It can act powerfully, when general conditions are good. When conditions are not favorable anymore specially under political instability with higher risk of becoming worse, it is probably to perform poor.

This scenario often leads to crises in tourist destinations often observed in developing countries and threshold nations. The tourism industry in the Middle East has been threatened by the uprising in 2011, also known as Arab Spring which had a tremendous impact on its industry not only in countries like Egypt or Tunisia but also in various European countries.

This present work will raise knowledge about crises in tourism by taking the example of the Arab Spring. It investigates what impacts do crises have on tourism, especially what impact it has had in Egypt, and benefited countries. The Arab Spring was a sequence of insurrections against dictatorship regimes that have been governing the involved countries for many years without any democracy, or justice for their own citizens. So, the population in the Arab World rose up against their governments to get their basic rights. As tourism is source of huge income for many countries in North Africa and the Middle East, the series of uprisings had both positive and negative effects in some tourist destinations. (Smale, 2011)

Tourism was largely affected by the Arab Spring in Egypt, since it is a very popular destination mainly for the British tourists. Egypt is an excellent example of what can happen to the tourism industry in such cases. In February 2011, tourism dropped 80 percent compared to the previous year and it fell 60 percent in March. That was a devastating blow for a sector that accounts for one of every seven Egyptian jobs and makes up about 11 percent of the nation's economy. Tourism is the number one foreign-currency earned in Egypt. (Kunkle, 2011)

### **1.2 Objectives**

The aim of this work is to analyze the relationship between the Arab spring and tourism. Arab Spring was a political and social crisis that triggered in 2011 in Tunisia and spread throughout the Middle East. Many of these Northern African countries developed a strong tourism industry that was affected by the events resulting from it.

## 2. Arab Spring

### 2.1 Geographical location

The “Arab world” (Figure 1) refers to Arabic-speaking countries, which are extended from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the Arabian Sea in the east and from the Mediterranean Sea in the north to the Horn of Africa and the Indian Ocean in the southeast. The Arab world exists of 24 countries and territories and has a population of about 325 million people. The term “Arab” generally implies the Middle East, but an important part of the Arab world is located in North Africa. (Ambergh Education, 2019)

A few of these countries are well known tourist destinations like Egypt, Tunisia, Morocco, Oman and the United Arab Emirates.



Figure 1: North Africa and the Middle East. (Haas & Lesch, 2013)

### 2.2 Origin and its course

This chapter will provide a brief sequential review of the principal happenings and its background in the Middle East during the origin of the Arab Spring. In the absence of a better concept, the Arab Spring has been generally used in the media as well as in academia to portray the avalanche of events in the year 2011 that have changed the profile of the Arab World. All the other denominations such as Arab awakening, new awakening, uprising, unrest, transformation, revolt, an Erhal revolution are also used to illustrate the turbulent changes of the year 2011. (Seikaly & Mattar, 2014, p. 38)

The Arab spring started on 17 December 2010, when Mohamed Bouazzi a market seller in the small Tunisian town of Sidi Bouzid, set fire on himself in protest at the appropriation of his products and persecution and humiliation that he related had been inflicted on him by local agent. This provoked an enormous wave of protests that advanced through Tunisia and the Arab world. Bouazzi was the catalyst for the Arab Spring, the motivations of which had risen over many years. They comprised the lack of democracy, freedom and justice as well as crony capitalism and elitism that convey the benefits of economic progress into the hands of small groups closely related to the regime. Economic causes were also part of it: rising food prices, complaints about standards of

living, high unemployment rate, especially among the young and increasing disparity in the distribution of income and wealth. Also, many Arab countries had low and even fading rankings of dominant governance indicators for levels of corruption, government effectiveness and the quality of public services. Bouazizi and millions of other Arabs wanted to be part of the economy so that they could survive, if not succeed. Change in the politics was the means to accomplish that objective. Demographic components also played a role in the Arab Spring included population growth, a change in the age-structure of the population mostly the youth bulge. In the economic sector, Arab states have been greatly affected by a number of developments within the region and the international economy. The first was the increase of oil prices, which has ended up in huge increases in the revenues of oil producers and also led to the rising cost of food. Middle East tourism experienced a healthy increase between 2007 and 2010, but then dropped about 20 per cent, largely as a result of the Arab Spring. The most drastic examples are Egypt, Syria and Yemen, each of the latter have been affected by internal conflict. The number of tourists entering Egypt fell sharply, as did the foreign investment. (Rivlin, 2017, pp. 243-245)

## **2.3 Consequences of the Arab Spring**

The protests were first motivated by the demands of millions of people underprivileged by autocrats and dictators. They wanted a say in governing their countries, an end to corruption and better opportunities in economies stalled by cronyism, fraud and bureaucracy. And their anger, once sparked off, was enough to topple some strongmen and seriously threaten several more. But in most places, it was not followed by the hoped-for reforms. Rather the insurrections spread war and chaos across the region. In Syria dictator Bashar al-Assad's battle to hold power is coming to an end, but the country cannot be put back together as it was before the war. Hundreds of thousands are dead, millions will remain displaced, and Syria has been fragmented at the whim of external powers, and reconstruction may not begin for many years in some areas. For many other Arab Spring countries, the perspective is similarly bleak. Below is a summary of what has happened in other key countries. (Graham-Harrison, 2018)

### **2.3.1 Tunisia**

The cradle of Arab Spring has established democracy, has endured terror attacks and economic troubles, serving as a reference of hope to progressive intellectuals and activists around the region. But Isis assaults on the crucial tourism industry were a heavy blow, and the country still struggles to control extremism and reinforce a weak economy to combat youth unemployment. The revolution of 2011 in Tunisia led to social, economic and political troubles which in order greatly affected all sectors of the economy, most notably tourism. The first season after it was notably hard for the business in the country, watching the loss of two million visitors and 3,000 employees, and a 33% reduction in revenue. In 2015 international arrivals accounted for 2,329,200 passengers, 18% less than in 2014, which were 2,852,810 arrivals and by more than 20% compared with the numbers in the first post-revolution year, 2010, 2,952,056 arrivals. Overnight stays had also reduced, by more than 20% and 36% against the figures for those two previous years respectively. Tourism revenue was likewise in serious decline: the total of 580 million USD. It was 16.8% with

regard to 2014 and 10.8% lower than that for 2010. (Noureddine, 2017 & Ministry of Tourism and Handicrafts, 2011-2019)

### **2.3.2 Egypt**

Egypt is one of the most populous countries in the Arab world and has performed a central role in Middle Eastern politics for centuries. In the last several decades, decisions and policies made in Cairo have greatly impacted regional and international systems. In the 1950s and 1960s, President Gamal Abdel Nasser first promoted Arab nationalism and fought for the non-aligned movement. President Anwar Al-Sadat, Nasser's successor, was the first Arab leader to recognize and make peace with Israel. The impacts of removing President Hosni Mubarak, the rise and fall of the Muslim Brotherhood and the ascendancy of President Abdel Fatah Al-Sisi are yet to be assessed. (Bahgat, 2015)

### **2.3.3 Other countries**

The Middle East and North Africa observed clear decline. The number of tourists has dropped sharply in the March 2011 in the Middle East as reported by the World Tourism Organization. In 2010 reached 54.8 million visitors after an increase of 14.9%. In North Africa, the percentage declined to 9.9% with 16.9% in 2011 after witnessed a 6.5% increase in the previous year. Tourism activities fell by 41% in Syria, 24% in Lebanon and 16% in Jordan in the first seven months of 2011. Considering, that tourism is major contributor to the GDP in most of these countries. Monarchies did better than the autocrats, but from Bahrain to Jordan and Morocco, all were forced to make cessions and are still dealing with the Arab Spring fallout. The absolute rulers of the Gulf States including Qatar, the UAE and Saudi Arabia put down what little dissent they faced. But revolts elsewhere worried leaders, pushing them into external clashes, particularly in Yemen, to protect their power. There is greater tension between them, particularly Qatar and Saudi Arabia, and the wars have complicated their relations with western allies. (Graham-Harrison, 2018). The Arab Spring has produced a sharp drop in tourism in countries at the center of the revolts in favor of safe destinations in the region. Major tourist destinations such as Tunisia and Egypt saw the numbers of visitors dropping because of upheavals in 2011 that spread to other nations where confrontations with dictatorial regimes turned deadly. The Gulf city state of Dubai, and Turkey in another hand, became the focuses of amused tourism as well as popular destinations outside the Middle East. In Turkey the flow of tourists coming from Egypt increased 400 percent. In 2011, Dubai registered a 10 percent rise in guests at hotels and hotel apartments, reaching \$4.4 billion, 20 percent up from 2010. According to Dubai authorities, the number of guests increased nine percent to 2.6 million guests in the first quarter of 2012 and the expectations are that the number of tourists hit 10 million in the current year. Safe destinations and quality services are two aspects which tourists look for. In this regard, UAE had profited from this diversification of tourism, notable from neighboring Gulf countries. A reposition of visitors over the past few months has pointing to an important flow of tourists in Dubai from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and other Gulf nations. (Traveller, 2017)

### 3. Definition of Crisis

“A crisis is a situation in which something or someone is affected by one or more very serious problems.” (Collins Dictionary, 2019)

The word crisis comes from the Greek word *krisis*, which means to separate or decision. Nowadays in everyday language usage the word crisis is usually connected with a negative situation or event.

In connection with tourism Glaesser (2013, p. 8) defines crisis as:

“An unwanted, unusual situation for an organization, which, due to the seriousness of the event, demands an immediate entrepreneurial response.”

Glaesser (2013, p. 7) also cites a definition of Sönmez, Bachmann and Allen (1994) who define ‘tourism crises’ as:

“Any occurrence which can threaten the normal operations and conduct of tourism related businesses; damage a tourist destination’s overall reputation for safety, attractiveness, and comfort by negatively affecting visitors’ perceptions of that destination; and, in turn, cause downturn in the local travel and tourism economy, and interrupt the continuity of business operations for the local travel and tourism industry, by the reduction in tourist arrivals and expenditures. “

#### 3.1 Classification of crisis

Glaesser (2013, pp. 9-10) considers a three-phase crisis process, which divides a crisis into potential, latent and acute crises:

- **Potential crises** are distinguishing a phase in which the crisis is just created imaginary. Those crises are neither identifiable nor existing.
- **Latent crises** define the period of time in which the crisis has already broken out but is not yet ascertainable with the common tools. In this phase counteractions are not yet issue to apparent restrictions.
- **Acute crises** are the phase in which the destructive effect of the crisis is recognized and endeavors to manage. The obvious symptoms in the acute crises phase are acknowledged as an evidence of crises. The perception of a crisis’ situation is announced by method of company reporting.

In addition, in tourism there are two other categories **human-induced** and **natural** crises.

Crisis which are caused by humans differ in their effect from crises caused by negative events in nature, for example, tropical cyclones, avalanches, earthquakes, storm tides or others. Negative events that were triggered by humans provoke a much longer loss of faith and to more negative consequences than natural crises which can be traced back to inexorable causes.

### **3.2 The crisis caused by the Arab Spring**

The sequences of revolutions of the Arab Spring has created great worry for Israel and other countries on the scope of terrorism. The degree to which the new Arab governments are involved in terrorism will depend on what the nature of these regimes is; how strong the Islamist and Jihadist elements will become; how solid the new governments will be; and whether, or to what extent, the new regimes will focus their efforts on internal affairs or attempt to send out their Islamist ideology beyond their borders. (Ganor, 2013, pp. 89-91)

The economic implications of the Arab Spring in a long run context is needed to be able to completely analyze the economic consequences of it and how the changes will affect the region. Prior 2010 the second country hit by the Arab Spring, Egypt, was considered an economic success. The country's economic challenges were huge, and in recent years the Egyptian government had approved a policy of reforms, which allowed growth and increased foreign investment. Between 2004 and 2008 Egypt reaped the benefits of these economics' reforms, but was hit by the global economic problems. The countries involved in the Arab Spring share many economic and political aspects: very high levels of unemployment, notably among young men, the increase in food prices as MENA (middle East and North Africa) is the world's greatest food importer. In Egypt some of the instantaneous consequences of the insurrections were the increase of the unemployment since 2011, capital flight had also an impact on the economy of the country as elite members of society that own enormous sums of money have been leaving Egypt at an extraordinary pace. The public sector is unable to supply the jobs and the salaries demanded by the population and the private sector has still to produce the necessary opportunities. Tourism is a great source of income and employment in Egypt. The Arab Tourism Organization, estimates that the Arab Spring has cost the region \$7 billion in tourism. Egyptian tourism earnings dropped to approximately \$10 billion in 2011, from \$12,5 billion in 2010. The economic repercussions of the Arab Spring have not been limited exclusively to Arab countries. Losses have also been faced globally. The oil industry has experienced a particularly destabilizing effect and the establishment of Islamist regimes is changing regional and global relationships. Studies have shown that 22 percent of businesses worldwide have been hit by the Arab Spring, with the businesses affected hardest being those in retail, travel and construction. (Feiler, 2013, pp. 111-117)

The direction the movement took by the end of 2012 illustrates that system change in some countries, the control of political disturbance in various states, raise in Islamic trends, divergent trends, in a few political units and disintegration of economic circumstances. In another words, with respect to internal politics the Arab World remains to deal with the challenge of modernization and regional uncertainty. (Inbar, 2013, p. 1)

### **3.3 Crises in Tourism**

The appearing boosts in the impacts of political instability, natural disasters or economic declination on tourism are not a result of any increase in those happenings but instead demonstrate the way in which the world's economy, media, communication network have now become so unified that, when one area or market has been afflicted, then the whole system can suffer from lasting impacts. Tourism is a worldwide ratio industry which more and more impacts on

the cultural, economic and social extensions at international, national, regional and local ratio. Many regions in the world are nowadays increasingly committed to the tourism sector and tourism is as well intensely affected by larger processes like political instability, climate change or financial instability which present major challenges on a range of fronts. Crisis in Tourism is probably a continued and ever-changing threat for regions that focus on tourism-led development – economic or any other way. It is evenly crucial that the crisis has different impacts on tourism systems that lead to crisis in some places but chances elsewhere and across various tourism product fields. Visser and Ferreira (2013) also mention that Crises are significantly leading to changes of tourist behavior and demand and their consequent effects on destination. (Visser & Ferreira, 2013, pp. 1-2)

### **3.4 The Importance of Tourism**

Traveling and tourism industry are two of the main impelling powers of economic growth in industrialized, less developed and developing countries.

Tourism industry contributes heavily to:

- substantial economic growth
- producing skilled and semi-skilled jobs
- larger export returns
- foreign financing and currencies and
- secure economy and social stability.

Tourism belongs to one of the world's main industries and job engines. It supplies a huge amount of job opportunities, mainly for women and young people, assisting many to get out of poverty by raising human capital and creating new perspectives for future generations. The travel and tourism sector offer a huge range of different jobs and involve a wide field of income levels. Furthermore, unskilled and skilled workers get job opportunities with the development of small and medium sized businesses which are located in already existing centers and rural areas. The tourist's spending in a destination flows straight to the sector that attends to the visitors and indirectly to the many other enterprises which provide services and goods to those tourism activities. The profit from the tourist's spending run through local, regional, state and national economies and all over communities. (Doone, Kean & Moore, 2006, pp. 6-7)

Tourism is a notably attractive opportunity to provoke development in rural and low-income countries and regions which earlier mainly depended on agriculture and natural resource extraction. Often tourism development brings the two-fold advantages, as already mentioned, of generating jobs and income while promoting cultural heritage and traditions.

Tourism has the power to support economic development in the country, partially, because the industry traverses and is connected to other industries in the economy and is creating a demand in a wide field of professions and services. Tourism develops as well very important spinoff profit by generating infrastructure which other industries can make use of. Other industries, which are not directly related to tourism can also benefit by intensifying trade, investments and skills. (World Travel & Tourism Council, 2012, p. 10)

According to the World Tourism Organization (2013 & 2018) 982 million international tourists traveled the world in 2011, in 2017 destinations worldwide welcomed already 1,323 million tourists' arrivals. In 2011 international tourism receipts reached over US\$ 1 trillion. The World Travel & Tourism Council (2018, p. 5) confirms that Tourism is one of the biggest economic sectors which is supporting almost 1 in 10 jobs worldwide and is contributing to the global GDP by 10.4%.

### **3.5 Impact of crises in the tourism sector**

Tourism is usually portrayed as a fragile industry. In that demand for travel is highly vulnerable to numerous shocks, such as wars, outbreaks of deadly contagious diseases, incidents of terrorism, economic oscillations, currency fluctuations, energy crises, and so on. The global tourism industry has experienced many serious crises and disasters in late years including terrorist attacks, political instability, economic collapses, biosecurity threats and natural disasters. (Boniface & Cooper, 2005, pp. 476-488) The literature on tourism crises has increased considerably in recent years, notably in the light of the impacts on destinations of the September 11 events, besides the impacts of other political events, natural disasters, diseases, crimes or wars. Regardless how far the existing literature has gone, there is a constant demand for understanding better such incidents and explore strategies that can be adopted to stop or limit their impacts on a developing and important industry sector. (Martin et al., 2005, pp. 21-34)

According to Parsons (1996), there are three types of crises determined by their period of evolution: a) Immediate crises, where little or no warning exists therefore organizations are unable to examine the problem or prepare a plan before the crisis strikes, b). emerging crises, these are slower advancing and perhaps able to be stopped or limited by organizational response, and c) Sustained crises: that may last for weeks, months or even years.

Five major reasons that produce a destination crisis:

- International war or conflict and extended manifestations of internal conflict.
- A specific act or acts of terrorism, particularly those directed at or involving tourists.
- A large-scale criminal act or crime wave, especially when tourists are targeted.
- A natural disaster, such as a storm, an earthquake or volcano, leading to damage to the natural environment or urban areas having as a consequence impacts on the tourism infrastructure.
- Health matters linked to epidemics and diseases; these may be diseases which effect on humans directly or diseases affecting animals, which restrict access to tourist attractions. (Beirman, 2003)

Tourists are often the specific aims of terrorist organizations. Tourism is considered to represent capitalism and evident consumption so, an attack on tourists signifies ideological opposition to these western values. In other areas of the world, where tourism is a state sponsored industry, an attack on tourists can illustrate an attack on the government. (Richter & Waugh, 1986, pp. 230-238)

Terrorist incidents and other threats to personal safety, even if they are natural disasters or deadly contagious diseases, decline people's propensity to travel. The attacks on the World Trade Center clearly demonstrate the potential risk which terrorism represents for the tourism industry. (Sönmez, 1998, pp. 416-456)

Natural catastrophes also have serious impact on tourism and are also responsible for producing crises in this sector. The exposure of tourism to natural disasters is associated with the attractiveness of many high-risk exotic areas, where events such as hurricanes, avalanches and volcanic activity are common. The consequences are very serious: destruction of infrastructure and facilities which affect directly the tourism industry, such as transportation facilities, stations, ports, motorways, hospitality facilities. This means that businesses that are involved with tourist activities have to modify their patterns in order to adapt them to the new reality. For instance, an airport destroyed by a natural disaster and which serves as a transfer terminal for other tourist destination, has to have its routes' schedule modified or even stop flights to this area. (Zhang, 2005, pp. 433-435 & World Trade Organization, 2006, pp. 30-41)

Political instability and war also cause damage on tourism. At first sight, political instability and terrorism may appear detached. Closer observation, however, brings into focus certain situations, which demonstrate it in another way. Just as terrorism, political instability and war can increase the awareness of risk at a destination. In 1990, an enormous redirection of tourist off the Middle East was caused by the Persian Gulf War. (Hollier, 1991, pp. 2-4 & Hotel Online, n.d.)

The SARS epidemic, which started in a province of China, is an emblematic example of an epidemic with a huge negative impact on tourism around the world. In East Asia, tourist arrivals suffered a 41% reduction between April 1st and April 21st compared to the same period in 2002, along with other Asian destinations in particular China, Hong Kong, Vietnam and Singapore. (Wilder-Smith, 2006, pp. 53-60)

## 4. Global Tourism and Middle East Tourism in 2010

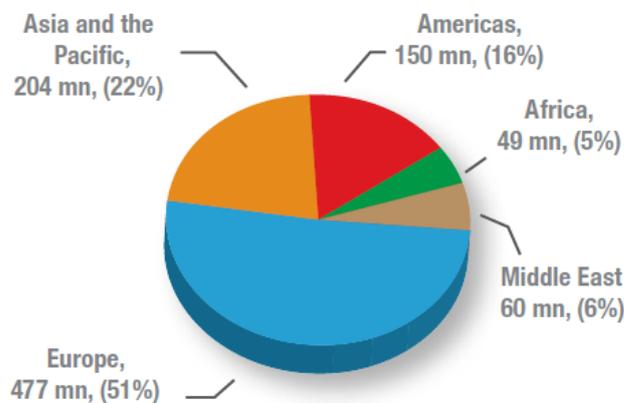
According to the World Tourism Organization (2011) in 2010 international visitor arrivals grew by 7% to 940 million tourists (Figure 2) and receipts reached Euro 693 billion. There could be a positive growth reported in all regions around the world, except of Europe where receipts stood still. Tourism is an immensely solid sector which has given its contribution to the worldwide economic growth after the economic turndown in 2008-2009.



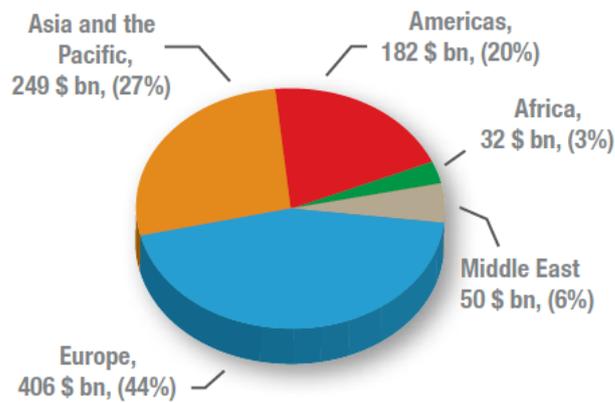
**Figure 2:** World: Inbound Tourism International Tourist Arrivals. (World Tourism Organization, 2011)

The greater number of destinations reported positive figures (Figure 3 and Figure 4), enough to balance the 2009 losses and the tourism sector recovered faster than expected.

Asia and the Pacific were the first to overcome the crisis in 2009 and continued to grow powerfully with a plus of 13%. The Middle East also grew strongly in 2010 (+14%) after experiencing depressed figures in 2009. In the Americas tourism grew up to plus 6% and in Africa plus 7%. Europe which was the region most gravely hit by the global economic crisis just experienced a growth of 3% due to the economic doubt affecting the euro zone and the air traffic disorder caused by the eruption of the Eyjafjallajokull volcano.

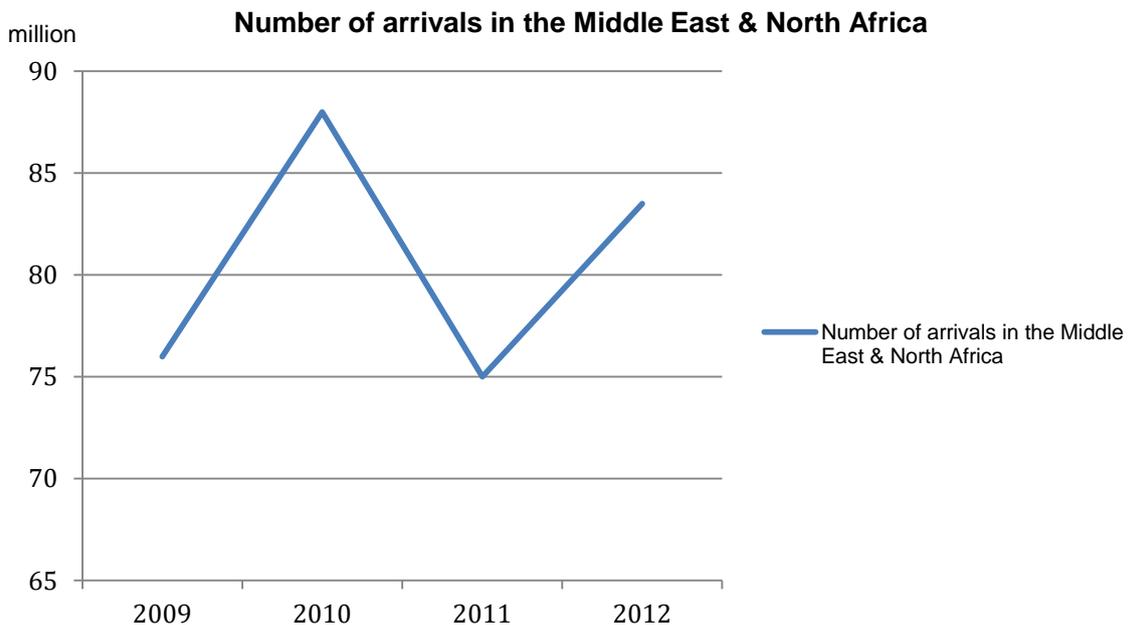


**Figure 3:** International Tourist Arrivals, 2010. (World Tourism Organization, 2011)



**Figure 4:** International Tourism Receipts, 2010. (World Tourism Organization, 2011)

Looking closer to the Middle East and North Africa according to The World Bank Group (2019) we can see a growth of visitor numbers from 75,990,782 to 87,833,705 in 2010 compared to the previous year. In 2010 the visitors spent in the Middle East and North Africa US\$78,823 Billion, in 2009 it was US\$71,17 Billion. Tunisia counted in 2010 7,828 million International tourists and Egypt reached a total number of 14,051,000 International visitors. Both countries were heavily affected by the Arab Spring. The following figure (5) is demonstrating the numbers of International tourist arrivals, which shows a very unstable figure between 2009 and 2012.



**Figure 5:** International tourism, number of arrivals in the Middle East (Syria, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Bahrain) & North Africa (Tunisia, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria and Libya). (The World Bank Group, 2019)

#### 4.1 Egypt as a Tourist destination

Egypt is the most visited tourist destination in North Africa and the Middle East. It is among the top 30 biggest countries in the world, with 1 million square kilometers of land, is covering 240 km of the Mediterranean coastline. Only 5% of the whole land is used by 99% of Egypt's inhabitants but almost 100% of its aquatic reserves. A central point of urban planning and a hotspot for tourists to

experience the Nile cruises is the river Nile with its 6,695 km. Another attractive and relevant part of the country is the Red Sea coast. The main attraction of the Red sea coast are the amazing island reefs close to the resort of Hurghada and the smaller communities of Port Safaga, El-Quseir and Marsa Alam to the south. The region experienced a quick transformation arisen by the growth of annual visitors in the last 20 years Those destinations offer an extensive variety to travelers. Shark-diving, kite-surfing and snorkeling spread next to golfing, private beaches, and excellent night life attractiveness. The Egyptian landscape, mostly of sand and dust is impressive. Another main tourist attraction is the Egyptian culture which dates back thousands of years to the ancient Pharaohs. The pyramids in the Nile Valley, the stunning temples of Luxor have attracted visitors from all around the world for many years. (Egypt, 2017)

#### **4.1.1 The effect of the Arab Spring in Egypt**

In 2011, the army overthrew longtime President Hosni Mubarak, a military officer and politician who established an authoritarian regime in Egypt from October 1981 until February 2011, when popular unrest forced him to step down in the middle of the Arab Spring riots. Pres. Mohammed Morsi from the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, replaced Mubarak in 2013. The forthcoming political instability led to the election of a new parliament and recurring street protests, together with an army coup deposed Mubarak's unpopular successor. In July 2013 Abdel Fatah al-Sisi an Egyptian military officer became Egypt's de facto leader. Sisi was elected president in May 2014 and elected to a second term in March 2018. The hostile economy, a big driver of the original protests, is struggling as it did before 2011, with ordinary Egyptians left out of an apparent recovery. (Graham-Harrison, 2018)

Egypt's economy suffered during and after the 2011 revolution as the country experienced an abrupt decline in tourism revenues and foreign direct investment, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth in Egypt declined from 5.1% in 2010 to 1.8% in 2011 and still remains below the pre-revolution level, averaging 2.1% in 2013. Egypt's economy has not totally recovered since the 2011 revolution. EGPC owes foreign oil and gas operators billions of dollars, which has led foreign operators to lag their investments in existing and new oil and natural gas projects. EGPC accumulated US\$6.3 billion in outstanding liabilities to foreign oil and gas companies, of which US\$1.5 billion was paid back in December 2013. The debt has since raised back to US\$7.5 billion as of June 2014, and continues to grow.

Over the past few years, oil flows through the Suez Canal have risen, rebounding from previous lower levels during the global economic downturn. The country has struggled to distribute the earnings of growth among the large and expanding population, nearly half of which lives on less than US\$2 per day. Growth has not converted into adequate jobs for the growing number of young people of working age. Unemployment is particularly high among young people with college degrees, who rely heavily on jobs in the public sector and the government. Political and security doubts have dealt a heavy blow to tourism – a crucial national industry. Hisham Zizou, Minister of Tourism, stated that 2013 was the worst year on record for Egypt's tourism industry. (Bahgat, 2015)

The tourism sector is Egypt's greatest collaborator of foreign income covering approximately 11% of the country's GDP. Over 14 million tourists visited Egypt in 2010, injecting \$12.5 bn to the economy. Nonetheless, in 2011 due to the political unrest, the number of tourists declined to 9.4 million while the same year recorded a drop in the tourist receipt estimated at US\$8.7 billion. Even though the number of tourists increased in 2012 to 11.5 million it retreated to about 10 million in 2013. In addition, since 2011 the occupancy rate has dropped by nearly 60%. The negative repercussions have also been extended to the labor force as tourism employs 2.83 million professionals without counting the indirect jobs generated by the relevant sectors. However, Egypt's Sustainable Tourism Strategy 2020 seeks 30 to 35 million international arrivals and a 30% increase in average tourism investment.

Economic policy remains directed towards fiscal and business-related structural reforms to reestablish financial stability and develop the business environment after years of political turmoil. Although fuel and electricity subsidies have been cut down, they are still substantial. Progress in development of investment and bankruptcy laws has been slow. Weak institutional capacity and hard opposition from interest groups continue to block needed economic reforms. (The Heritage Foundation, 2019; Almuhrzi, Alriyami & Scott, 2017, p. 74)

In 2011, the Arab Spring revolution significantly cut down Egypt's 8% growth achieved between 2004 and 2009. Its nominal gross domestic product (GDP) for 2015 was \$330.765 billion, and GDP per capita was around \$4,000. It has a workforce of 28.4 million. Of these individuals, approximately 47% work in the service industry. This is followed by 29% in agriculture and 24% in industry. (Worldatlas.com, 2019)

The constant protests, violence and political turmoils gave way to a reduction in tourism, an industry long considered an expressive economic lifeline to Egypt. The thing that protesters had demanded since 2011 -- a better economy -- didn't materialize, experts said. Food prices and unemployment continued to rise. (Fantz, 2016)

#### **4.1.2 Changing in Egypt's visitor numbers after the Arab Spring**

Tourism, a booster of Egypt's economy, has been hit by two years of political chaos. In 2010, the last year before Egypt's revolution, a record 14.7 million tourists arrived. The sector was 13% of GDP and directly or indirectly employed one in seven workers. Arrivals collapsed to 9.8 million in 2011, and have yet to rebound. A tourism economics' consultancy, predicted that 11.4 million tourists would come in 2013. Tourism in Egypt reached its maximum apogee in 2010. Then, in the agony of the Arab Spring in January 2011, the Egyptian people gathered to demand that President Hosni Mubarak quit after three decades in power. After eighteen days of protests in Tahrir Square, Mubarak resigned. The military took control, until a popular vote elected Mohamed Morsi from the conservative Muslim Brotherhood as president. A second wave of protests deposed Morsi in 2013, and Abdel Fattah el-Sisi was elected president. He has been in power since, and the country has been peaceful.

The tourism industry took another hit in 2015, when a chartered Russian airplane crashed in the Sinai Peninsula in an alleged terrorist attack. The following year, tourism dropped to its lowest number in years: 5.4 million. Now, three years later, the political situation has stabilized, and tourists are returning

to Egypt. There were 8.3 million visitors in 2017, and the 2018 numbers look even more promising. (The Economist, 2019)

In 2018, the country registered 11.3 million, up 36 percent from 2017. The Capital Economics report associated the recovery of tourism to enhanced security nationwide.

While the numbers are improving, the report observed that hotel occupancy rates are still about 10 percent lower than they were before 2011. (Fox, 2019 & CEIC, n.d.)

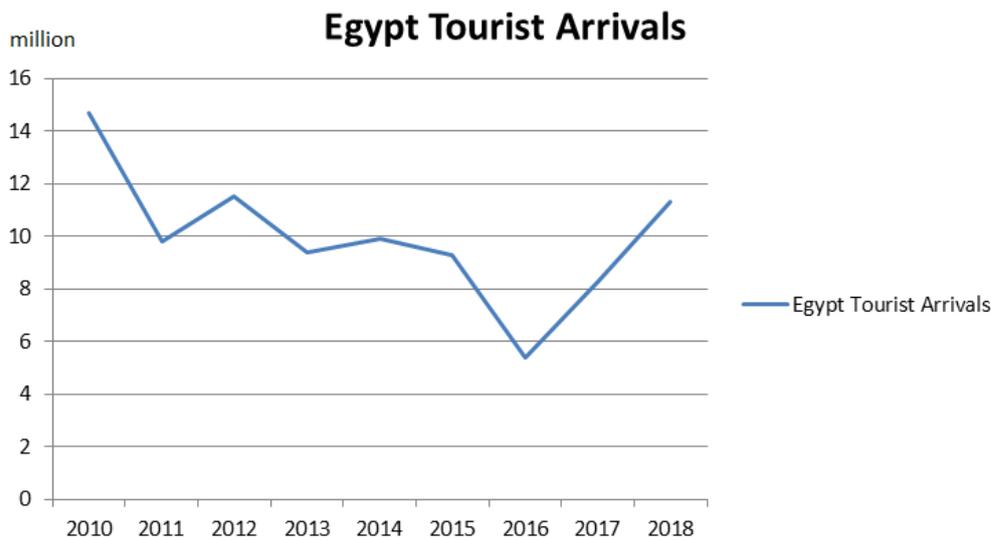


Figure 6: Egypt Tourist Arrivals 2010 - 2018

#### 4.1.3 Changing of Egypt's image

Egyptian tourism is heavily tied to its political fortunes. A revolution in early 2011, a popularly supported military coup in 2013, and a series of notorious airline disasters, beginning with the downing of Metrojet 7K9268 in Sharm el-Sheikh in October 2015. Metrojet flight 9268 crash killed 224 passengers on 31 October during its journey to St Petersburg, only 23 minutes after its took off. An Egyptian faction of the so-called Islamic State, Wilayat Sinai, promptly claimed responsibility. (Dearden, 2016)

These events have wrecked an industry that made up 11.4% of Egypt's GDP in 2015. Critics say that unless Egypt is very transparent about the motivations behind the Metrojet crash as well as the crash of EgyptAir flight 804 in May this year, tourists won't come back with confidence. Figures issued by Egypt's official statistic agency, Capmas show that tourist numbers in July this year (2016), decreased 41.9%, compared to the same period in 2015. It illustrates that any gains the industry made since the bump of 2011 have been reversed. However, there are hopes that Russia could suspend its flight ban on Egypt before the end of the year, and Germany recently started again direct flights to the popular Sinai resort of Sharm el-Sheikh. The town used to be the main source of tourism for Egypt and essential for UK tour companies. Kuoni, a luxury operator has noticed a considerable drop in vocations to Egypt in the last five years, especially after the interruption of flights into Sharm el-Sheikh. The percentage of clients travelling to Egypt has decreased from under 6% to under 3% added Thomas Cook. And Heathrow recently returned a direct EgyptAir flight to Luxor. According to John Telfer of Explore Worldwide on this issue, it

means good news for travelers and businesses and it expresses that the country is improving and recovering its stability. The company has seen a 75% decline in bookings to Egypt since 2011, with this year's figures a 20% drop on the already low booking figures of 2015.

“The question [everyone is asking] is, is Egypt stable? This is why the Luxor flight is good news for the industry as a whole.” (Michaelson, 2016)

## **5. Post Revolution - positive and negative effects of the Arab spring**

The Arab Spring's impact on the Middle East has been dramatic, even if in many places its final aftermath might not become clear for at least a generation. The initial stages of The Arab Spring were marked by political turbulence, economic difficulties and strife, the protests widespread across the region in early 2011, caused long- term process of political and social transformation. The biggest single accomplishment of the Arab Spring was in proving that Arab dictators can be ousted through a core popular revolt, rather than a military coup or foreign interference as was the norm in the past. By the end of 2011, the governments in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen were toppled by popular revolts, in an unprecedented show of people power.

Even if many other authoritarian rulers managed to keep in power, they can no longer take the assent of the masses for granted. The governments across the region have been forced into reform, aware that corruption, incompetence and police brutality will no longer be unchallenged.

countries where the insurgencies successfully removed the long-serving leaders. Hundreds of political parties, civil society groups, newspapers, TV stations, and online media have been created, as Arabs scramble to reclaim their country from petrified ruling elites. In Libya no less than 374 party lists contested the 2012 parliamentary elections, in a country where all political parties were banned for decades under Col. Muammar al-Gaddafi's regime. The result is a very colorful but also fragmented and fluid political scenario, ranging from far-left organizations to liberals and hardline Islamists (Salafis). This plethora of choices usually confuses the voters in emerging democracies such as Egypt, Tunisia and Libya. The Arab Spring's "children" are still developing firm political fidelities, and it will take time before mature political parties consolidate. Hopes for a smooth transition to stable democratic systems were quickly dampened, however, as deep divisions emerged over new constitutions and the speed of reform. In Egypt and Tunisia in particular, the society divided into Islamist and secular camps that fought fiercely over the role of Islam in politics and society. As a result of deep wariness, a winner-take-all mentality prevailed among the winners of first free elections, and the room for compromise began to narrow. It became clear that the Arab Spring conducted in a prolonged period of political instability, unleashing all the political, social and religious divisions that had been swept under the carpet by the former regimes. In some countries, the collapse of the old order led to armed conflict. In contrast to most of Communist Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, the Arab regimes didn't give up easily, while the opposition failed to establish a common front. The conflict in Libya ended with the victory of anti-government rebels relatively fast only due to the intervention of the NATO alliance and Gulf Arab states. The uprising in Syria, a multi-religious society ruled by one of the most repressive Arab regimes, tumbled into a brutal civil war prolonged by outside interference.

Dissatisfaction at youth unemployment and poor living conditions was one of the key factors that led to the Arab Spring. The national debate on economic policy has taken the back seat in most countries, as rival political groups quarrel over the division of power. Meanwhile, ongoing unrest restrains investors and scares off foreign tourists. Removing corrupt dictators was a positive step for

the future, but ordinary people persist a long time away from seeing tangible improvements to their economic opportunities. (Manfreda, 2018)

### 5.1 Post revolution for Egypt

Observers of the Egyptian scene are faced with a bleak reality on all levels, such that the Mubarak era now appears like a lost golden age. Nevertheless, the 25 January revolution is still vivid in the minds of Egyptians and their awareness of their right to freedom and dignity after having seen their own ability to break the wall of fear and topple a dictator. Most of all, they have discovered that a despot they had thought was a pharaoh had turned out to be nothing more than a paper tiger. It is true that Egypt has witnessed a huge setback but in terms of individual and collective consciousness, it is no longer possible to go back to square one. The 25 January revolution presented a new dynamic into Egyptian and Arab reality, despite the strong resistance of the army and counter-revolutionary forces. Sooner or later, this new political consciousness and this refusal of dictatorship will reflect into real acts on the ground. Today, everyone knows that the cycle of revolution will inevitably complete its course towards the handover of power to civilian forces that express the will of the people and the return of the army to its barracks. The 13 July coup, however severe its brutality and repression cannot hold back the future of Egypt and the entire Arab world. (Ghannoushi, 2018)

During the last decade, the Egyptian economy experienced a number of exceptional events that were directly translated into the performance of the macro economy and the direction of the country's fiscal policy. Following the impacts of the global financial crisis, the real growth rate fell to 4.7% in 2008/2009 after high growth rates of 7.2% in 2007 / 2008. Then the growth rate decreased sharply further in the wake of the political and economic instability that followed the January 25, 2011 revolution, reaching a low of 1.8% in 2010/2011 and 2.2% in 2011/2012. The economic growth faced years of stumbling and slow rebound in the years subsequent the revolution as a result of the decline in investments until 2014/2015 and the growth rhythm is back to rise above 4% beginning in the year and two years following it.

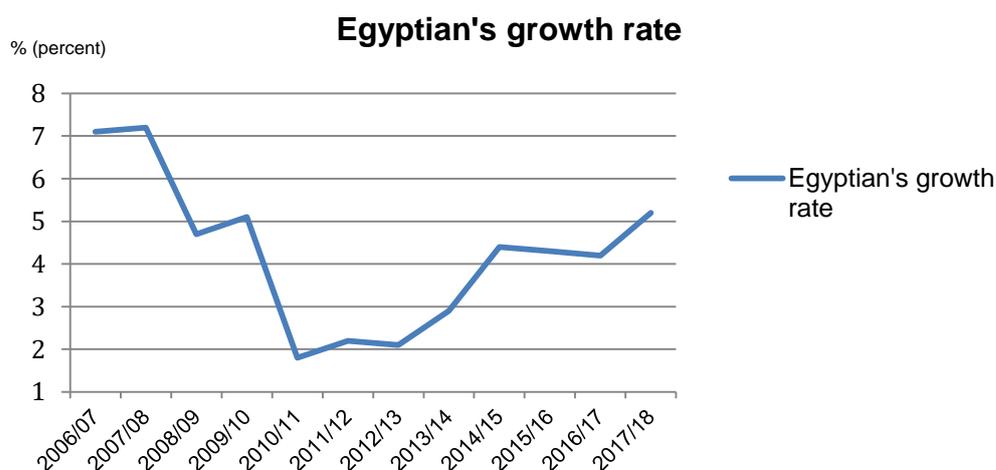


Figure 7: The real growth rate during the period 2007 - 2017

On the Political Level Egypt's security environment is now featured by instability and acute terrorists' attacks as well as regular conflicts between military forces and Islamist militants in the Sinai Peninsula, dramatically declined tourism

industry, which caused economic/political crises. Unfortunately, tourists are regular targets of terrorist attacks, alongside military staff and government officials. After the overthrow of the Mubarak regime, Egyptians exerted their political participation right in decision making through referendum constitutional amendments March 9, 2011 and the participation rate reached 41%. In the course of time, they participated in the presidential elections in 2012, the participation rate reached 46.42%. People were ready to elect the first civilian president in a fair election for the first time in the history of Egypt.

On the social level over the era of Mubarak and by the end of 2010, about 25% of Egypt's population lived below the poverty line, which relies on national income of about 2%. Unfortunately, the heavy burden increased due to the economic reform policies, especially after the floating of the pound, which led to exceptional price increases and the amount of people who lived below the poverty line reached 27% in accordance with the last research in 2015. The Unemployment rates reached 11.9% in 2011, after 8.94% in 2010. Post revolution years, many companies and factories fired off workers as a result of deteriorating economic activity and increasing production costs. The unemployment rate reached 13.4% in 2013, but with the government reforming the level of unemployment fell to 11.9% by the end of 2017. (Abdou & Zaazou, 2013)

In the tourism sector Egypt has faced blow after blow since the Egyptian Revolution of 2011. At its height, in 2010, the industry employed 12 percent of the country's labor force and generated \$12.5bn in revenue. However, a military coup in 2013, followed by a number of plane crashes, ensured that any aspect of industry growth was short lived. In July 2016, Egypt's official statistics agency, Capmas, published figures showing that tourist numbers were down 41.9 percent compared to the previous year. Despite initial figures for this year indicating a 35 percent increase in visitors since February 2017, the reality on the ground continues desolating. (Abel-Hirsch, 2018)

The Egyptian revolution started eight years ago, but few hopes continue for a better future. The revolution that began on Jan. 25, 2011, was not merely the first 18 days of protest on Tahrir Square that finally toppled Hosni Mubarak. It was a constant struggle, notably over the course of the two years that followed the uprising. It was a transformative experience, a revelation, a dream of a better place where perpetrators of injustices would be held responsible and people would be treated with dignity. Yet when that dream was expressed, it disclosed a reality of greed and violence. Following the military coup on July 3, 2013 with which the former field marshal Abdel Fattah al Sisi deposed Morsi, Egypt turned into more brutal than ever before. The crackdown began by targeting Islamists under the guise of combating extremism. Shortly thereafter, secular activists, artists, intellectuals and critics of any sort were spurned and targeted. (Eskandar, 2019)

## **6. Conclusion**

The tourism sector within the countries of Arab Spring Revolutions witnessed an important decrease in their performance and the main reason for such decrease is the lack of political stability and security. Furthermore, the scarcity of special instruments to deal with crises, which led to the upheavals in the variants of tourism activities. The crisis generated by the Arab Spring, direct or indirect are still having a considerable effect on the tourism industry of the region above all in Egypt's tourism industry. Potential tourists are conscious and cautious about the countries' risks, since the Arab Spring severely damaged destinations' image of being safe and stable, leading to decreasing in the number of visitors. In recent years, terrorist attacks and catastrophic events suppressed any attempt to recover the stability of the industry. As tourism is an important source of income for Egypt, the crisis in its activities has provoked a huge impact reflected in the high unemployment rate as well as in the overall economic performance of the country. The efforts from the authorities to foster the tourism activities and improve the overall image of the country are still modest. Policies should be created to bring back foreign investments and stimulate international tourists to visit the country again. It will be some time before Egypt and the countries involved in the revolutions recover their political and economic stability then, we can really get the real dimension of the impact of the Arab Spring on the tourism sector.

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