# EGYPT'S TOURISM INDUSTRY AND THE ARAB SPRING

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Tourism is an uncertain industry and in many cases it has been exposed as the giant with feet of clay that it really is, as its evolution remains very sensitive to sudden/violent changes in the tourism environment. Changes in the macro and/or micro environment in the form of political instability, revolution and terrorism can greatly dictate the future of tourist destinations and their viability. Egypt has a long history of turmoil and it has experienced political change through all of the above elements that had a profound effect on the country, its people and its very resilient tourism industry. The recent Arab Spring and a chain of ensuing events and continuous crisis are testing Egyptian tourism's bounce-back ability to its limits

## Introduction

In an era of volatility, instability, political turmoil and extremism, tourism is faced with significant challenges. As tourism is a very vulnerable and sensitive industry political stability, peace and above all safety, are prerequisites to tourism. In addition, tourists and tourism markets are prone to panic and events, such as civil unrest and terrorism can cause tourists to second-guess their decisions to visit certain destinations. In turn, the immediate impact and the short term, midterm and long term aftermath of such occurrences can be catastrophic, not only for the country destination, but also for the region as a whole. It is not only the economic loss that a destination will have to face; it is also a general sense of instability and economic malaise that discourages investment and inevitably reinforces the cycle of violence and instability as young people, especially are left unemployed, with no prospects and grow increasingly nihilistic and thus suggestible to extremist ideologies. At the time of writing no country has been able to completely shield its tourism sector against these impacts. Affected countries and regions inevitably experience decline in tourist arrivals and in tourism receipts.

Egypt is an excellent example of what can happen to the tourism industry in such cases. The Arab Spring and the toppling of President Mubarak in 2011 saw tourist arrivals decline by nearly a third by comparison to 2010, a record year for tourist arrivals in Egypt. Given its unique history and heritage the country's tourism industry bounced back in 2102, just so that it could drop again a year later in 2013 when President Mursi was also ousted by the Egyptian armed forces. In this chapter we will see that the media play an important role as they translate political turbulence into tourism decline by reporting negative accounts and images that can create unfavourable perceptions that could last for years. As illustrated in this chapter, in times

of crisis decline does not magically appear, but it is almost inevitable as tour operators and travel agents scale back operations reacting to low booking numbers (actual or forecasts) and of course insurance and liability fears.

## Tourism and war, conflict and terrorism

Given the publicity of recent events in the Middle East and North Africa, it is surprising perhaps that Albattat et al (2013) identified a lack of studies related to the effect of the Arab Spring revolution on the tourism industry. In one recent study Avraham (2015) found that the Arab Spring uprising has had a negative effect on the tourism industry in the Middle East but very little is known about the specific effects of the crisis, for example on individual aspects of tourism or selected markets. This gap was addressed by the work of Mansfeld and Winckler, 2015) who illustrate that the Arab Spring crisis is something never seen before in tourism studies as its aftermath has been going on for more than five years, and on top of that it has to be mentioned that the crisis is being reconfirmed or funnelled by new sporadic events or isolated attacks that have dominated the international media as recently as May 2016 with the Egyptair Crash and the controversy of the kidnapping and alleged torture of an Italian Student the most recent examples. So, while international tourism hit record heights worldwide in 2015, growing by 4.5% year-on-year to reach almost 1.2 billion tourist worldwide (UNWTO, 2015), Egypt failed to capitalise on this bonanza mired in local and regional events. In the meantime other Middle East destinations are booming, for example the UAE that in the same time saw annual growth of around 3% welcoming 54 million tourists in 2015 (UNWTO).

There is a plethora of studies related to tourism in war zones and tourism in areas affected by political, economic or financial crisis. "Tourism and War" (2013) by Butler and Suntikul provides a solid basis to gain insight into the inter-relationship between tourism and war. The relationships with and responses of Tourism to crisis represent a fairly new area of study but the literature suggests that both tourism demand and supply in general, are very sensitive to war, political unrest and/or violence and terrorism, often with negative or even catastrophic consequences (Fleischer and Buccola, 2002; Richter, 1983; Ryan, 1993; Smith, 1998). The example of former Yugoslavia illustrates this point; it had been a very attractive tourism destination for many Europeans, until the early 1990s when the industry came to an abrupt halt when the civil war started (Timothy, 2013).

War stigmatises conflict zones and severely damages their reputation, not only as tourist destinations (Rivera, 2008) but also as zones for mutual benefitting business exchanges

(Podolny, 2005). Additionally war or conflict may also have severe negative impacts on a country's institutions, political stability, economic development and harmony among different cultures and ethnicities, which results in a reduction in foreign direct investment (FDI) along with the ability to get credit in the international financial markets (Bandelj, 2002). According to Saha and Yap (2014) the effect of violent conflicts or terrorist attacks on the tourism industry is highly dependent on the level of political stability of the countries involved. Those with lower political instability experience a much smaller impact and are far more resilient than countries with higher political instability (Saha and Yap, 2014). Northern Ireland suffered a massive decline in inbound visitor numbers during the years of conflict between 1969 and 1994 because of well-publicised ongoing political unrest and high terrorist activity (Boyd, 2013). Violent conflicts or political instability, in whatever form, therefore may have long lasting economic impacts that affect the tourism sector both directly and indirectly (Pizam and Mansfeld, 1996). Terrorism is another aspect of conflict and could be studied under the same prism. While terror attacks in most cases have only short term impacts, continuous political unrest may have a long term impact on local tourism and may result in the degradation of a destination's image and attractiveness, ultimately shifting global tourism demand from one location to another (Araña and León, 2008). Butler and Suntikul (2013: 7) noted Portugal's and Spain's booming tourism industries during WWII because of their neutrality in the conflict and how they benefited to a large extent by this displacement phenomenon. Ultimately the effect of conflict and turmoil on a tourist destination can be assessed as a question of resiliency

Modern tourism is one of the most vulnerable sectors to such crises (Blake and Sinclair, 2003; Zahed et al, 2014) and very few (if any) destinations are immune (Blackman and Ritchie, 2007; Faulkner, 2001). Crises may range from political instability, terrorist attacks, war and economic recessions to various forms of natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods (Faulkner, 2001). Studies show that most destinations do not have effective crises/disaster management plans in place (Avraham, 2013; Faulkner, 2001). In theory organisations should learn from past crises via an organisational learning process to evolve their knowledge, training and preparations in the possible event of another crisis (Blackman and Ritchie, 2007; Borodzicz and Van Haperen, 2002; Faulkner, 2001; Santana, 2004). Santana (2004) states that collaboration between all of a destination's stakeholders, combined training and learning activities and resource pooling are crucial elements of an effective crisis management strategy to ensure the highest level of, what Rittichainuwat (2013) outlines as a perceived image of tourist safety. Scott et al (2013: 1-3) believe that organisations ought, to some extent, to view crises as opportunities and adapt new

strategies in operation procedures, marketing or human resources. Inevitably, cooperation and alliances with different stakeholders,  social networking, strategic planning and innovation are at the core of tourism recovery and are proactive key elements in avoiding possible future disasters or crises (Ritchie, 2004; Scott et al, 2013).

It is hardly possible to describe North Africa and the Middle East, in particular countries such as Egypt, Israel, Libya or Tunisia as entirely peaceful regions even if no formal warfare is taking place (Butler and Suntikul, 2013: 3). Other types of hostile behaviour may include territorial conflicts, religious discords and ethnical differences (Timothy, 2013). What may be defined as warfare may be subject to discussion itself, however, it is of little relevance to this chapter, so for the needs of this chapter henceforth Egypt shall be defined as a zone of moderate conflict and political instability (Sönmez, 1998) with sporadic violent acts and terrorist attacks throughout the country to be taken into consideration (Saha and Yap, 2014).

Tourism is generally considered an economic sector that requires peace to flourish (Butler and Suntikul, 2013: 1). While the importance of this notion to this chapter is insignificant, it is important to acknowledge that tourism, or sites that may attract visitors and thus create positive economic benefits to be clearer, may also be the initial cause of a conflict (Isaac, 2013; Lee et al, 2010). Two parties sharing different views, cultures, opinions or religion may simply dispute over a resource or may not want the opposition to gain any economic benefits (Isaac, 2013; Lee et al, 2010). However, tourism is a phenomenon found during peace and war and sometimes tourism has benefited during times of conflict while other economic areas suffered (Butler and Suntikul, 2013: 1). The conventional view of opposition between war and tourism thus may not necessarily be entirely accurate (Butler and Suntikul, 2013: 3; Weaver, 2011). Weaver (2011) goes one step further and states that tourism and war are complementary in certain aspects with some forms of tourism proving immune to its effects, like the pilgrim tourism attraction of Medjugorje that remained completely unaffected by the surrounding Yugoslavia conflict (Jurkovich and Gesler, 1997), and other certain forms of tourism that particularly thrive in conflict. Smith (1998) describes war as a supporting element of tourism in several places around the globe.  Adams (2001) takes this even further with the example of specialised war tourism in Afghanistan visiting places of combat or destroyed Al Qaida training camps. While the ethical ramifications of such tourism niches do not fall into the scope of this chapter, there is an argument to be made about the resiliency of tourism as it adapts and fosters change.

# Tourism Resiliency and the Effect of Instability and Conflict

There are some studies providing evidence that tourism in some countries is quite resilient to political unrest or terrorist attacks (Korstanje and Clayton, 2012; Uriely et al, 2009). Uriely et al (2009) highlight that sometimes geopolitical differences and hostilities are ignored and political topics are simply not discussed as long as tourism serves the economic interest of both sides (e.g. Israeli guests in the Egyptian Sinai). Such symbiosis is the exception to the rule and it is always important to avoid associations of a destination's tourism brand with war, conflict and instability. For example, the State of Israel has created a flourishing tourism industry during times of constant armed conflicts, shelling and various other hostilities by using its biblical name, the Holy Land, as a kind of brand association that conveniently represses geographical details associated with risk (Krakover, 2013) and other dangers and instability that are usually associated with that part of the globe. However, in this era of instant information and real-time news cycles, this is becoming increasingly harder.

Clearly tourism has been significantly affected in the Middle East by the Arab Spring, despite general Western sympathy for the political idealism that fostered the crisis (Avraham, 2015). While being sympathetic many Western tourists are also risk averse and as a result have turned their backs on the area as a potential destination for their holidays even though there are some encouraging signs that the region is on the road to recovery, even though this trend may be driven by the success of Gulf destinations such as the UAE and Qatar. According to the 2015 UNWTO Annual Report international tourist arrivals in the Middle East grew at the rate of 3% and the projections for 2016 conservatively estimate growth, yet with some trepidation given the volatility of the region. Furthermore, barring any unforeseen events or more instability, the UNWTO long term forecast anticipates the Middle East to be among the fastest growing tourism region looking ahead to 2030 (UNWTO, 2015). This of course is only a prediction given the history of instability and the vulnerability of the tourism sector.  In any case, marketers and governments in the region have tried hard to implement different strategies that, at least in theory, could change destination image for the better, while in some cases some governments have also chosen to block media or threaten journalists which of course is less appreciated by Western cultures (Avraham, 2015). Overall the tourism sector in the Arab countries itself has experienced a rapid decline during the Arab Spring Revolution and the subsequent continuous political unrest and instability (Saeid et al, 2012) which can be traced in the life cycle of Egypt as a tourist destination.

The Egyptian tourism industry had been on the rise for nearly three decades before the Arab Spring revolution started, even though there had been a few blips. According to the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) monthly tourist arrivals averaged 471,460 from 1982 until 2016 reaching an all-time high of 1.486 million in October 2010 and a record low of 57,000 in February 1991. The 1990s saw the start of a violent Islamic insurgency that targeted police and government officials but also civilians, including tourists. The violence escalated, especially in 1993 when a total of 1,106 people were killed or wounded in a barrage of attacks and violent incidents. The climax of these events, the Luxor massacre in November 1997 was an extremely violent episode that specifically targeted tourists at the Temple of Hatshepsut and killed 62 people (BBC, 1997). What becomes apparent is that the tourism industry in Egypt has been experiencing roller coaster ride highs and lows for the best part of three decades. During this time the number of international tourists fluctuated in line with regional or international events and when crisis hit, rapid recovery took place as the industry and the tourists rallied back. Even after the 1997 Luxor massacre the industry quickly bounced back reaching 4.5 million arrivals in 1999 compared to 3.2 in the previous year.

As illustrated in Figure 1, Egypt has a long history of terrorism and other high impact events that have been widely reported in the media. Going back two decades we can see a series of occurrences including armed attacks, explosions and kidnappings leading up to the events of 2011 and the ousting of President Mubarak, followed by the removal of Mursi in 2013. More recently and still very raw in memory are the 2015 Sharmel el Sheikh plane crash that left 224 dead and of course the May 2016 Egyptair crash that brings this chapter up to date with current events. All these cases and particularly the frequency of these occurrences do not paint a very good picture for safety for tourists. As illustrated in Figure 1, in almost every case the victims were tourists-soft targets- who found themselves at the wrong place at the wrong time. In an attempt to put these events into context it might be useful to take a closer look at Egypt and its volatility.

[PLEASE INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

Using the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) for 2015, we can see that Egypt ranks in 13th place globally with a score of 6.813. This index is produced by the Institute of Economics and Peace (IEP) and it ranks countries according to terrorist activity. It combines a number of factors associated with terrorist attacks to build an explicit picture of the impact of terrorism over a ten-year period (Economicsandpeace.org). The GTI is based on data form the Global Terrorism

Database (GTD) which is collected and collated by the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism (START). The GTD is considered to be the most comprehensive dataset on terrorist activity globally and has codified over 125,000 terrorist incidents worldwide. As illustrated in Figure 2 there was a spike in terrorist related activity between the years 2013 and 2015 and that affected the tourist industry. Interestingly, the year 2010 that saw record numbers of visitors was also the year with the lowest GTI score. Figure 2 also demonstrates that Egypt has continuously been experiencing turmoil in one way or another for almost a decade, yet its tourism industry kept coming back.

[PLEASE TAKE FIGURE 2 HERE]

The secret to this resiliency or bounce-back quality of the Egyptian tourism industry could be attributed to the pull factors of the country and its unique history and heritage, but also to the fact that Egypt has long been successful in spatially compartmentalising its tourist product by physically insulating some touristic places from areas of political unrest and/or violence. In parts of Egypt, along the Red Sea there are isolated resorts and enclaved cities that to some extent remained immune to political instability and turmoil. Yet as we are going to see later in this section, even those enclaves could not escape the negativity associated with the plane crashes in 2015 and 2016, as in their aftermath flights to and from the area had to be cancelled and there are no signs that the industry will bounce back anytime soon. Whilst the country attracted around 15 million visitors a year, up until the 2011 'revolution' figures dropped to just 9 million in 2014. Subsequent event as we are going to see in the next section ate into tourist confidence and the numbers have never topped 10 million since, falling under 9 million in 2015 and things do not look any better for 2016. Maybe this 'Spring' that started in 2011 for Egypt has lasted a bit too long for the tourism industry's comfort.

[PLEASE TAKE FIGURE 3 HERE]

## When will this 'Spring End?'

*The following analysis is entirely based on secondary data provided by various official entities, such as the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE), CAPMAS, the Arab Republic of Egypt Ministry of Finance in combination with other sources e.g. Trading Economics, The Economist, the Financial Times, Reuters and other news agencies. Certain statistics are estimated because the responsible authorities calculated them according to calendar years, others according to fiscal years. These estimations have no significant effects on the results because the variations to the actual numbers are not significant*

Mass media coverage has the power to change the perception of a destination (Lahav et al, 2013; Stepchenkova and Eales, 2011), and media reports may change a destination's image

positively or negatively depending on their depiction of a destination's natural resources and culture, safety for tourists and standard of infrastructure (Stepchenkova and Eales, 2011). Research however suggests that negative events, such as terrorism, major incidents and political instability, are dominant in terms of coverage in contemporary media (Baral et al, 2004). Media often may also exaggerate facts and the true dimensions of events and evoke fear and insecurity in potential visitors (Baral et al, 2004; Hystad and Keller, 2008). Research conducted by Avraham (2013; 2015) outlined the devastating effects the negative media coverage has had on the tourism industry in Egypt over the past 4 years. The Economist (2013) reported that tourism in Egypt had been affected for years by continuous off-putting news coverage. Kingsley (2014) stated that ongoing reports of political unrest and travel warnings issued by the foreign offices of several Western countries have been hurting the tourism industry in Egypt since 2011. The coverage of the coup against Islamist President Mohamed Mursi in 2013 was another event that resulted in many visitors either suspending or cancelling their holiday plans entirely (Georgy, 2014). In order to understand the extent of the impact of the events that started to unfold in 2011 it is useful to turn the clock back to the year 2010.

Things could not have been better for the Egyptian tourism industry in the summer of 2010. It had recently announced record visitor numbers and it had contributed to the local economy as the country dealt with the fiscal losses caused by falling oil revenues (Richter and Steiner, 2008). At the time, estimates suggested that tourism accounted for 20% of the total Egyptian economy including all tourist spending (Richter and Steiner, 2008). Clearly growth in the tourism sector was interrupted when events in Tunisia inspired the Egyptian Revolution on the 25th of January 2011 resulting in the resignation of Hosni Mubarak some weeks later (Doucet, 2013; Nassar, 2012). After a series of strikes, marches and violent clashes between demonstrators, security forces and supporters of Hosni Mubarak in Cairo in 2011, many countries including the US, UK, Japan and Germany among other European States issued travel warnings and evacuated their citizens (CNN, 2011; Nassar, 2012) and escalation in the protests that followed urged other businesses and organizations to repatriate their employees (CNN, 2011). Not only did the revolution fail to lead the country to a more open, middle class-orientated political system, it also considerably affected the Egyptian economy and investment outlook (Nassar, 2012; Roe, 2011). In tourism terms, many flights and accommodation reservations were cancelled (Nassar, 2012), travel insurance premiums increased or did not cover travel to the country (Direct Travel Insurance, 2015; TravelChimps, 2015) and popular attractions were left almost deserted. This paints a very clear picture about the immediate effect

of the crisis on the livelihoods of people depending on tourism income. In 2010 approximately 1.65 million people or 7% of the total workforce were directly employed in tourism (WTTC, 2014). The total contribution of travel and tourism in wider forms of investment and suppliers were approximately 3.36 million jobs, or 12.9% of total employment (The Economist, 2013; WTTC, 2014).

When this is put in tourism revenue terms, 2010 was the year Egypt recorded the highest ever tourism revenue of between $ 12.5 - $ 13.8 billion (Arab Republic of Egypt Ministry of Finance, 2015; Ragab, 2014). In contrast, it is estimated that tourism revenue in 2014 was around $ 7 – 7.5 billion (Arab Republic of Egypt Ministry of Finance, 2015; Smith, 2014). Hence tourism revenues fell between 40.00% - 54.34% compared to 2010. According to Kingsley (2014) overall tourism revenues were down by 54%. And that brought constraints on foreign currency reserves. Economic performance for the first half of 2014 was relatively weak (Daragahi, 2014; Kingsley, 2014) as evident in the revenue of ancient Egyptian monuments and cultural attractions that were down to just £ 10.5 million from £ 250 million in 2010 (Kingsley, 2014). Clearly then, one of the biggest problems is he absence of revenues created by cultural tourism, for example in Luxor and the area surrounding Cairo, which normally attracts high spending visitors and big price reductions on package deals (Daragahi , 2014; Kingsley, 2014; The Economist, 2014). This corresponds to an almost 96% fall in revenue and a big headache for the government as it was not able to pay all its employees in the tourism sector. In spite of this, the second half of 2014 tourism revenues spiked, because travel warnings were eased by important markets such as Germany, the UK, Italy and Belgium (Daragahi, 2014). Furthermore the Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and other senior officials promised to raise security standards and the private companies and the tourism authority implemented more aggressive marketing strategies following the positive change in travel advisory information (Georgy, 2014).

This brought a brief ray of hope for the industry as Egypt recorded growth of 19.5% on a real year on year basis ([www.mof.gov.eg](www.mof.gov.eg)), which did not last long as tourism revenues declined rapidly in 2015 when the Sinai plane crash took place and when in September 2015 an Egyptian military airstrike hit a Mexican tour group killing 12 people. The tourists were mistaken for a group of insurgents (BBC, 2015). These events were reflected in tourism industry losses recorded for 2016. According to CAPMAS the first quarter was down by 40% compared to 2015. This heavy loss can be attributed to the plane crash, but also to the recent kidnapping and torture of Italian graduate student Giulio Regeni whose body was found in February 2016

bearing marks suggestive of security services torture according to human rights groups (Reuters, 2016). Looking more closely at the figures for early 2016 it becomes apparent that 363,500 foreign tourists visited Egypt during January 2016 spending a total of 2.6 million nights in the country- a 62.5% decline from January 2015. Since the October 2015 Russian Metrojet crash that killed 224 passengers tourist statistics have plunged. In October 2015 around 909,400 foreign tourists entered the country and that reveals a drop of 60% in the space of three months- which can clearly be linked to the Metrojet crash. According to CAPMAS the decline can be clearly attributed to the almost complete absence of Russian tourists, citing a 99% decline in the number of nights Russian nationals spent in Egypt. This does not come as a surprise as flights from Russia to Egypt were suspended and the disaster also prompted visitors from other countries to stay away. As a result tourist figures from Western Europe declined by 35.2%, while the number of tourists from the Middle East declined by 28.6 (CAPMAS, 2016).

[PLEASE TAKE FIGURE 4 HERE]

The impact this period has had on the Egyptian tourism industry is better understood by taking into account the effect on the previously immune to crisis tourism enclaves in the area of around Sharm el Sheik. After the 2016 plane crash the pictures of 20,000 stranded UK tourists made uncomfortable viewing for tourism stakeholders in Egypt. As UK flights to and from the resort were grounded on Prime Minister David Cameron's orders and cemented the perception that Egyptian airports and Egypt in general is not a safe tourist destination. In a recent interview with *Al Monitor* Egypt's tourism minister stated that Egypt had its work cut out to change the safety perception of Egyptian Airports and rectify fallacies about Egyptian airports blown out of proportion by the Western media. The effects of these high profile events were catastrophic for the tourism industry in the region. Occupancy rates have fallen by 90% in Sharm el Sheik and by 80% in Hurghada. Many hotels in both cities have stopped their operations, and the ones that are still welcoming guests are operating at an occupancy rate of 5% at best. This has resulted in many layoffs adding to the total of job losses to the Egyptian tourism sector which has now reached 900,000 since the 2011 revolution (CAPMAS, 2016). Samir Abdel-Fattah, CEO of the Red Sea Hotels Company interviewed by the Egyptian press, suggested that the sector's losses were taking their toll and that there was no much hope for improvement due to the continuing flight restrictions imposed by sending countries (Nowar, 2016). Clearly the figures leave no doubt about the impact of this continuing crisis and that merits an analogous response by the Egyptian authorities.

# Crisis management

Sun and sea holidays underpinned the Egyptian economy for many decades, but recent incidents have led to a severe drop in visitor numbers. A string of high profile terrorist attacks, fear of more violence and official travel advisories have led to a catastrophic collapse in visitor numbers. This period of turmoil that started in 2011 and continues today has left its mark on the Egyptian tourism. This raises the question what was the response of the Egyptian authorities in terms of dealing with this series of crises. According to Georgy (2014) between January 2011 and 2013 until the ousting of former President Mohamed Mursi tourism management and in particular crisis management was particularly poor. There are though signs that the current President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has started to implement improved security measures and to form coalitions to deal with future security threats, such as the up rise of the Islamic State. Creating a sense of security was deemed crucial so on September 19th 2013 Egyptian forces stormed the tourist town of Kerdasa (about 4.5 km from Giza) that had turned into an Islamic stronghold (Mansfeld and Winckler, 2015) in an attempt to remove any potential threat to visitors. In addition, while there is little evidence of serious and strategic advertising efforts from the tourism authorities between 2011 – 2013 (Avraham, 2013; 2015), private businesses and the tourism authorities have started to increase their marketing and advertising since 2014 after travel warnings were eased by several foreign offices (Smith, 2014). According to Smith (2014) most of the advertising used online and social media, such as Google, Twitter or Facebook. However, the new crisis and the severe drop in numbers have created a need for an even more robust response, if the tourism industry is to be salvaged.

The first response to the most recent crisis was for Egypt to fill the gap left by Americans and Europeans by relaxing visa restrictions on Chinese tourist groups. This almost immediate response was followed by a social media campaign in December 2015 that aimed to rehabilitate the image of the country. The #thisisEgypt was launched to boost the image of the country. However, due to unfortunate timing, after the alleged kidnapping and torture by Egyptian security services of Giulio Regeni, this social media campaign fell flat as the hash tag was high jacked and lampooned using examples of Egypt's abysmal human rights record.

In terms of improving the image of its airports, Cairo hired the global security consultancy firm 'Control Risk' which specialises in assessing risk at airports, to obtain an internationally accredited by a neutral party safety certificate for its airports. The message they are trying to send is clear- Egyptian airports are safe. In addition, in order to reassure the lucrative Russian markets the Egyptian government hosted Russian committees tasked with assessing airport security systems for themselves. It could be speculated that the Russian market has grown in

emphasis in 2016 as Egypt (and other countries in the region) are hoping to capitalise on the frosty Russian-Turkish relationships after the downing of a Russian aircraft in Syria.

Most importantly Egypt in 2016 signed the UNWTO cooperation protocol which aims to provide the country's tourism sector with long term technical and political support in addition to crisis management expertise. According to the minister of tourism interviewed by the Egyptian press (Al-Shuwekhi, 2016), the four areas of cooperation are outlined as security, historical/cultural tourism, new ministerial committee and promotion/marketing. So at this early stage we can summarise the response strategy as follows:

1. Security-Control Risk company consultancy
2. Promotion-Highlight Egypt's unique historical heritage
3. Research-Bringing together of international experts and representative from the private sector to help develop Egyptian tourism further
4. Image Rehabilitation-Mount international promotion campaigns telling the world about Egypt and promoting it as a world-class tourist destination.

Turing our attention to marketing and promotion the #thisisEgypt campaign was continued in 2016 and received funding of $68 million and it is to continue until 2018. Furthermore there is an attempt to use p2p advocacy by encouraging young Egyptians to share their favourite photos of Egypt on social media. Finally, there is a rigorous advertising effort in 27 countries with popular celebrities giving their endorsement to Egypt (recent recruits, the Spanish footballer Carles Puyol and the actor Morgan Freeman (#thisisEgypt.com).

Looking inwards, tourism authorities are also working to promote domestic tourism by offering subsidised tourism packages allowing all Egyptian social classes to visit all touristic sites. In addition Egyptian authorities are also very keen to support the struggling tourism sector by offering certain conveniences to tourism businesses. On the 23rd February 2016 the Central Bank of Egypt (CBE) decided the deferral of debts owned by the tourism sector to the banks for a maximum of three years. On top of that they also announced the creation of a special unit within the CBE that would contribute to the restructuring of the tourism sector's debts and coordinate between clients and banks taking part in the initiative. Furthermore, the ministry of electricity agreed to postpone the tourism sector's dues for six months and then allowing them to be repaid in instalments over two years (CBE, 2016). Clearly the Egyptian authorities and tourism stakeholders are responding to the crisis, but they do face an uphill task.

## Summary

This chapter drew on various sources in order to discuss the continuous crisis facing the Egyptian tourism industry. It became apparent that Egypt has for a long time been associated with terrorist events and/or political turmoil. As a result the performance of the tourism industry has suffered at different times but it always bounced back. What makes the crisis that started in 2011 different is that the aftermath- direct and indirect of the Arab Spring inspired revolution is still having a considerable effect on the tourism industry. There was a sign of recovery in 2014 as reflected in the presented figures, but tragic events, accidents and planned terrorist attacks have dented again the country's image and have turned 2015/16 into a year 'lost' to the Egyptian Tourism industry. This has had a knock on effect on employment and of course on the country's economic performance and outlook as tourist confidence has declined as the months went by before the final nail in the coffin was hammered by the May 2016 plane crash. The situation looks bleak and the response of the authorities, though slow on the uptake, is finally appearing to be capable of offering some sort of timely boost to the country's image, but also relief to the tourism businesses that have suffered heavy losses. The rehabilitation effort revolves around improving the image of Egypt's airports and also harnessing the power of social media to boost the country's market pull. What became apparent in this chapter was that even the best campaign can suffer and become subject to ridicule, in the aftermath of unforeseen events, such as the Regeni incident in 2016. Egypt's response to this was to double its marketing efforts (funding) and hope that no other mishaps take place, but given the history of the region, this looks very unlikely.

Perhaps this is a very pessimistic outlook, but this chapter set out to discuss the effects of political turmoil and instability on the Egyptian tourism industry, because the history of Egyptian tourism is to some extent a history of dealing with crisis and moving on. So while the crises are a worrying sign, they are also a reminder of the resiliency of Egypt as a country, but also the recovery powers of the tourism industry.

Yet there are some good news, looking ahead into the future, the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism commissioned research to assess the potential of the industry. The research was conducted by US polling company Penn Schoen Berland in January 2016 and covered several key markets (UK, Russia, Germany, USA, Italy, Saudi Arabia and UAE) with 2,805 quantitative interviews. It revealed that 61% of the respondents saw Egypt as a place they wanted to visit in their lifetime and 53% identified Egypt as the next big thing in the near future (www.mof.gov.eg). If anything this shows the potential of Egypt to recover and become a top tourist destination.

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