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The Impact of COVID-19 on Tourism Land Transportation Companies

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Abstract:

The study aimed to shed light on the problems facing the tourism land transportation companies and to explore the impact of the pandemic on this sector. The descriptive-analytical methodology was used to carry out this study and a sample of 117 employees of the Jordanian tourism land transportation companies were selected. An electronic questionnaire was distributed via e-mail to the study sample. The results showed that the tourism land transportation sector suffers from a number of difficulties such as traffic jams, unqualified infrastructure, instability of oil derivative prices, and tourist seasonality. Results showed a negative impact of the Corona pandemic on the land tourism transportation sector, as many of the procedures taken had dire consequences on this sector. The study presented some solutions from the point of view of workers in tourist land transportation companies.

Keywords:

Tourist land transportation, Corona pandemic, Ebb and Flow, Jordan.

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Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most growing and prosperous industries in the modern world, as tourism has been defined as a social, cultural, and economic phenomenon that requires people to move to countries or places outside their usual environment for personal or commercial/professional purposes (UNWTO, 2020). Where the definition of tourism clarified the importance of moving from the normal environment of the tourist to other places. This explains the importance of tourist transportation. Roads and means of transportation constitute a basic and effective driver of tourism activities, as it works to secure various movement requirements and spatial exchange operations for resources and people by transportation tourists from their original places of residence to the tourist destination (Na'es, 2009; Alananzeh et al., 2018). Many companies are interested in the issue of tourist transportation, including the many airlines in the world, ships, and other boats to transportation tourists across the seas and oceans, or companies that use vehicles such as cars and buses to transportation tourists from one place to another across the land. "Tourism transportation is considered at the present time one of the main pillars for the development of the tourism industry with all its components. The development of tourism transportation modes changes the nature of travel and tourist trips, as it is not possible to talk about developing the tourism sector without an effective transportation system" (Peeters, et al., 2019).

At the present time, the world is facing a new pandemic, which is the Coronavirus (COVID-19), which spread from Wuhan, China at the end of 2019. The United Nations Development Fund has indicated that (COVID-19) is the global health crisis of our time and the biggest challenge it has faced the world since World War II, as the world has reached the tragic stage of the death of more than a million people (United Nations Development Fund, 2020). The World Health Organization has also defined coronaviruses as a "widespread family of viruses known to cause diseases ranging from common colds to more severe diseases, such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS)". The emerging coronavirus (new CoV) is a new strain of the virus that has not been previously discovered in humans" (International Labour Organization, 2020). The impact of COVID-19 on the transportation sector first appeared in China because China plays a large role in global industrialization (with Wuhan, the epicenter of the epidemic). In addition, China plays a more important role in tourism, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), in 2018 Chinese tourists spent more than \$ 277 billion outside China; that it accounts for 21% of global travel spending. Now, the recent travel restrictions have affected the mobility of all tourist and international mobility no longer exists (Uğur & Akbıyık, 2020). After that, the epidemic spread to the rest of the world, which led to closures and border closures that restricted the movement of transportation and the issuance of additional protocols such as social distancing in companies and transportation means to ensure the safety of workers and travelers, which contributed to reducing tourism movement and increasing transportation and shipping costs. The epidemic demonstrated the importance of understanding the relationship between the transportation system and its users. As it became clear that the first sector affected by disasters is the transportation sector, which is considered the artery of modern life (Hendrickson & Rilett, 2020).

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Land transportation, unlike sea and air transportation, remained generally available in part worldwide as roads remained operational, except in countries that are under severe closures. Trucking continued slightly due to demand for transportation food and other medical supplies - under lockdown, along with reduced staffing (due to restrictions linked to COVID-19), leading to higher transportation fares. Other economic sectors that require road transportation, such as tourism, in general have not been fully operational due to the lockdowns. As a result, the tourism transportation companies were affected greatly (International Finance Corporation, 2020).

The current study deals with the case of the tourist land transportation companies in Jordan at the present time, as with the spread of the Coronavirus, many activities in the Kingdom of Jordan have been stopped, which in turn severely affected the tourism sector as it limited the capacity of the tourism and hotel facilities in the Kingdom in addition to stopping some of the services provided in these facilities, such as health care services in recreation centers in resorts and hotels which reduced the tourism movement in the Kingdom since the beginning of the second of November, 2020, which led to a reduction in the demand for tourism transportation companies due to the weakness of the international and domestic tourism movement in the Kingdom of Jordan.

The Corona epidemic crisis is a global economic and political crisis, and Jordan is one of the countries that have been affected by the epidemic as well as the tourism transportation companies. Unfortunately, Jordanian tourism has been in increasing growth during the last period, and large programs, offers, and coordination have been prepared for tourism to Jordan. But because of this epidemic, these programs, offers, and coordination stopped, and the Jordanian government took the most severe measures to deal with the Coronavirus; it began to close the international airport, close border crossings, impose a comprehensive ban, and then partial ban and close the tourist facility, tourist land transportation companies. Thus, due to the scarce research which concerns the issue of the impact of the Coronavirus on the Jordanian tourism land transportation companies inside Jordan, the current study came in order to shed light on the problems facing the tourism land transportation companies and increase the interest in the tourism transportation companies. Therefore, this study aimed at shedding light on the Jordanian land tourism transportation, identifying the most important difficulties that this sector suffers from, highlighting the impact of the global pandemic on this sector, finding solutions for the tourist facilities that were impacted by the Corona pandemic. The importance of this study came from the importance of the tourist land transportation sector in the tourism industry, which is considered one of the important tourism sectors that brought a high financial return on the state's treasury, as well as a hub for the national economy and the sector that provides many job opportunities for Jordanian citizens

Literature Review

COVID-19

In November 2019, COVID-19 was announced for the first time. After that, it spread in all countries of the world and became the biggest problem facing societies. COVID-19 has severely affected all sectors of industry and social life. Coronavirus forces the inhabitants of the planet to stay indoors (Ahmad, 2020; Al-Dmour et al., 2020; Beaunoyer et al.,

2020). COVID-19 has a clear impact on the import and export process, and this is the reason for the decrease in the freight movement of import and export of the commodity and the traffic between the continents of the globe greatly. No import and export mean no commercial activity or human movement, which means that it is difficult to move around or work that requires direct contact (Hunaiti et al., 2009; Masa'deh, 2012; Moh'd et al., 2013 a,b; Tarhini et al., 2015; Obeidat et al., 2017; Abuhashesh et al., 2019; Obeidat et al., 2019 a,b; Alrowwad et al., 2020; Hasanat et al., 2020; Madani et al., 2020).

Due to the suspension of import and export operations, companies and their employees were clearly affected. In the middle of 2020, many countries began to open partially their organizations from June to July and begin the process of improving communication means and developing "new norms" laws to protect employees. Likewise, global transportation companies have adopted a set of laws to maintain public health, such as wearing gloves and masks and social distancing, as well as reducing the number of passengers in the means of transportation by half. As a result, there was congestion in the means of transportation, which reduced the tourism movement and raised the price of airland tickets in order to cover the operational cost and profit margin (Abu Zayyad et al., 2020; Hamid et al., 2020; Lee & Lee, 2020).

Although many industries required their employees to work from their homes to maintain their health and the health of society, the transportation sector relies heavily on direct work (Al-Dmour et al., 2017; Sanders et al., 2020; Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). For this reason, transportation operators were required to install protective barriers between them and the passenger, and embarkation and disembarkation doors were specified. Also, some companies have relied on advanced technologies to avoid transmitting the virus, such as for the driver to open doors automatically or remotely so that the employee or traveller does not have to touch buttons or door handles (European Commission, 2020).

Tourism Transportation

On the other hand, a report dealing with the losses suffered by the land and tourism transportation sector in Jordan indicated that there are fears of stumbling and bankruptcy of public transportation companies, specialized tourism transportation and international transportation due to the disruption of their work since the spread of the new Corona virus, because those sectors were the first affected and will be the last recoveries of the consequences of the epidemic, as these companies are going through a big dilemma because their business was completely disrupted and reached the zero stage, especially tourism and international ones.

Here, government intervention is necessary to save the transportation sector because these companies are no longer able to pay the salaries of their employees and cover their obligations, operating costs and other expenses incurred by them, and what made the problem worse is that transportation companies suffer -originally- from accumulated difficulties before the emergence of the Corona virus, but it has deepened more after the epidemic has stopped its income completely due to the restrictions brought by the pandemic of public safety restrictions that imposed the reduction of the number of

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passengers by half, which led to the sector incurring large losses in the sector that may lead to the closure of many of these companies and declaring them bankrupt.

It is essential to analyze the potential impact of (COVID-19) on the transportation sector and how the sector will deal with the new conditions in light of the further spread of the epidemic in the future. The outbreak had a profound impact on the sector, as it stopped passenger movement, sea and air freight traffic decreased dramatically, and railways were used less for transportation (Tardivo et al., 2021; Tolmet & Marazqah, 2018). Arellana et al. (2020) investigated the impact of the various policies adopted by the government and local authorities to contain the spread of COVID-19 on Colombia's transportation system. The study used official and secondary data on the seven most densely populated Colombian cities, and analyzed impacts on air transportation, freight transportation, and urban transportation. The study found that national policies and local decisions reduced the demand for cross-city flights, which reduced congestion levels, reduced the number of passengers, and led to a decrease in external factors for transportation, negative consequences for the economics of the aviation industry due to the state's ban on passenger air transportation and only permitting it. With the air cargo of essential medical supplies, air cargo flights will reduce, affecting incoming goods. The study recommended the importance of government support for the transportation sector due to the financial losses that the sector will suffer due to the epidemic. Medyakova et al. (2020) by studying the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the transportation system in Russia, the authors showed how the transportation and shipping process has changed during the pandemic. The authors have identified the need for accelerated digitization of the transportation sector to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ebb and Flow in tourism

Ebb and flow (tides) are very long waves that move across the oceans under the influence of the moon and the sun, and when these waves advance towards the coast they appear as a regular rise and fall of sea water, and the reason for these waves is the earth's rotation around itself, and the moon's rotation around the earth. This is as a result of the gravitational pull of the moon water in the oceans towards it, and the tide occurs in the face of the moon, and the opposite side to it. In other words, Flow is a temporary, gradual rise in the water level of an ocean or sea surface. Ebb is a temporary, gradual decrease in the water level of the surface of the ocean or the sea (National Ocean Services, 2020). The fisherman understands (sectors of the tourism and hospitality industry) from these fish (the tourism movement), they leave their dens (tourists' origin) to eat at the time of the flow (prosperity, prosperity, and peace) and return again at the time of the ebb (disasters and crises). This means that stakeholders of the tourism and hospitality industry must know how to make the most of the flow period and how to deal with planning to manage crises and disasters in the ebb (National Geographic, 2020).

In the tourism and hospitality industry, tourism companies rely in particular on the ebb and flow of tourists in their investments and prosperity. Where the flow indicates the influx of tourists, and therefore a large tourism activity that requires tourism movement and congestion in the means of tourist transportation. From here, the tourism companies

begin to provide competitive services and coordination with the providers of tourism and travel offices and other tourism companies. The flow is considered joy and prosperity season for tourist transportation companies. But every flow must be followed by an ebb, which is a decrease in the number of tourists, or the so-called low season, and here companies must follow strategic plans to deal with the ebb. However, the Corona pandemic period was a long ebb, which required the government to intervene to save the transportation sector until the flow came (Herath & Herath, 2020).

The main causes of the ebb in tourist transportation are world wars and the flu epidemic, starting from a year 1918 where there is a comparison between the results of the current pandemic and those disasters in a wide range of consequences. Unfortunately, we can expect other major disturbances in the future (Hendrickson & Rilett, 2020). The tourism industry has gone through many crises over the past 20 years (Ebb). In 2003 during the SARS epidemic, the events of September 11, 2001, and the global economic and financial crisis in 2009. But after these crises, the tourism and hospitality industry will return to its previous state, and perhaps much better, as it flourishes and revives strongly and quickly (Flow).

Methodology

Study area

The tourism sector is considered one of the most important sectors in creating job opportunities in Jordan and supporting the local economy. Due to its location in the heart of the Middle East and its richness in natural and cultural heritage resources, Jordan is the most attractive destination in the region. Consequently, the number of foreign tourists coming to Jordan has been increasing since the 1990s due to the presence of different types of tourism activities that can take place in the country such as archaeological, event tourism, adventure, natural or cultural (Alananzeh et al., 2015). In addition, Jordan was considered the most important medical tourism destination in the Middle East (Al Muala & Al Qurneh, 2012; Masa'deh et al., 2017; 2019 a,b). Wadi Rum is also a popular tourist destination and a nature reserve. So is the Dead Sea, which is also the largest spa in the world. Moreover, Petra is a very successful destination that attracts many tourists to a level that may surpass other destinations not only in Jordan but in the Middle East (Steiner et al., 2010).

The transportation sector in Jordan plays a major role in the Jordanian economy and contributes to 8.2% of the GDP. There is a remarkable growth in this sector at an annual rate of 6% and it employs approximately 7.6% of Jordanians, resulting in the creation of about 126,000 jobs (Jordan Investment Commission, 2017).

Research design

The study followed the descriptive and analytical methodology, whereby a study tool was developed and distributed electronically to workers in tourism transportation companies in Jordan Kingdom due to the epidemiological situation in the Kingdom. The questionnaire was divided into three parts; the first parts contain some demographic variables to collect information about the respondents, the second part contains two variables one about the difficulties faced transportation sector in general and the second

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variable is about the impact of the pandemic on the tourist transportation sector. The third part was an open-ended question where the respondents present some suggestion to overcome this ebb period. The study population consisted of all the companies that operate in land transportation and are tourist licensed in Jordan. The sample was chosen from the Jordanian tourism land transportation companies, which numbered six companies for tourist land transportation in Jordan: these are The Smart Way for specialized tourist transportation, Jordan Company for Investment and Tourism Transportation, Al-Sultan Tourism Transportation Company, Rum Group for Transportation and Tourism Investment, Misk Company for Tourist Transportation, and Jordan Tourist Transportation Company JET (Land Transportation Regulatory Authority). These companies were selected from the website of the Jordan Land Transportation Regulatory Authority, and they are the only companies specialized in tourist land transportation in Jordan.

Results and Discussion

The sample of the study consisted of (117) male and female employees of the land transportation company who were chosen randomly through an electronic questionnaire on the land transportation companies via e-mail. The number of males reached (33) employees, at a percentage (28.2%), and the number of females was (84) employees at a percentage (71.8%). The number of those with experience in the land tourism transportation companies from 0-3 years (74) employees by a percentage (63.2%), from 4-7 years (26) employees by a percentage (22.2%), from 8-11 years (9) employees by a percentage (7.7%), the number of those with experience of 12 years and over reached (8) employees with a percentage (6.8%).

It is evident from Table (1) that the mean values of the first and second variables were high, which indicates the approval of the study sample for the content of these variables, and the standard deviation came with values that show the majority of the study sample agree on the same answers and this shows that, in general, the land tourism transportation sector suffers from a number of problems and difficulties, which we will address later. It also explains that the Corona pandemic and the measures taken under it have a negative impact on the land tourism transportation sector.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the study variables

Variables	Means	Standard deviation
General Difficulties	3.9359	0.68320
The Corona Pandemic	4.2286	0.52402

The general difficulties faced by the tourism land transportation sector

Table (2) shows that the unqualified infrastructure is the most important difficulty facing the tourist land transportation sector with mean (4.0855) and a standard deviation of (0.77206). The traffic crises and congestion are other difficulties facing the tourism land transportation sector with mean (3.8462) and a standard deviation (0.84706). While the instability of the prices of oil derivatives constitutes one of the difficulties facing the tourism road transportation sector with mean (3.8462) and a standard deviation (0.94336). And that the tourist seasonality affects the tourist land transportation sector with mean (3.9658) and a standard deviation (0.84007).

It is evident from Table No. (2) that the land tourism transportation sector faces a number of difficulties, including (crises and traffic jams, unqualified infrastructure, instability of oil derivative prices, and the tourist seasonality).

The impact of the Corona pandemic on the transportation sector

It is evident from Table (2) that the Corona pandemic has a negative impact on the land tourism transportation sector, as many of the measures taken have had dire consequences on this sector as the imposition of a partial and comprehensive ban, the closure of crossings and land and air borders, the use of hotels for purposes quarantine, the closure of a number of tourist establishments has reduced the number of tourist groups in addition to the number of tourist trips in Jordan and the capacity of one trip, thus reducing the revenues of the land tourism transportation sector, and this is evidenced by the fact that all paragraphs of the second variable obtained high values of the arithmetic mean, ranging between (3.8889 -4.4188).

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for the study variables

General Difficulties	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean
Crises and traffic congestion constitute one of the difficulties facing the tourism road transportation sector	0.84706	3.8462
The unqualified infrastructure constitutes one of the difficulties facing the tourism road transportation sector	0.77206	4.0855
The instability in the prices of petroleum products constitutes one of the difficulties facing the tourism road transportation sector	0.94336	3.8462
The tourist seasonality is one of the difficulties facing the tourist road transportation sector	0.84007	3.9658
The Corona Pandemic	Standard deviation	Arithmetic mean
The Corona pandemic has reduced revenues for the transportation sector	0.64647	4.4188
The Corona pandemic reduced the capacity of a single voyage	0.84627	4.2051
The Corona pandemic reduced the number of tourist travels in Jordan	0.71436	4.3675
The Corona pandemic has reduced the number of tourist groups	0.70784	4.2906
The closure of a number of tourist establishments contributed to reducing the number of tourist trips in Jordan	0.85640	4.1282
Using hotels for quarantine purposes, stop tourist travel in Jordan	0.91706	3.8889
The closure of border crossings and land and air borders reduced the number of tourist travels in Jordan	0.78615	4.2821

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From the point of view of the employees of these companies, the most important solutions to reduce the impact of the Corona pandemic on the tourism road transportation companies are as follows: reducing the periods of partial and comprehensive quarantine. Following a strict health protocol with imposing fines to adhere to preventive and sterile measures. Providing financial government support to companies, in addition to enacting laws that support these companies. Encouraging domestic tourism, opening the crossings, reducing prices to suit citizens, finding an alternative to using hotels for quarantine purposes, and cooperating with international tourism offices to promote safe tourism to Jordan in this difficult period. Also, focusing on improving the infrastructure for developing tourism and ensuring the return of tourists.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study showed the extent to which the land tourism transportation sector in Jordan is affected by the COVID-19 pandemic on companies and their employees and the extent of this reflection on the rest of the institutions and other tourism sectors. The results of this study showed that the tourism land transportation sector is very sensitive to global crises. The COVID-19 crisis has become a focal point for travel and tourism companies, whether they are land, sea or air, local or global. However, the scale of the consequences of Covid-19 cannot be compared to any of the crises the tourism industry has faced before.

Travelers are reacting to sudden changes and travel companies need more time to prepare alternative plans. It is therefore imperative that the main players in the tourism sector undertake careful risk analysis and put in place appropriate crisis management policies in order to survive. The results also provide original evidence in terms of the necessary steps that the government and private sector must take to revive the industry. First, tourism transportation companies should encourage safe transportation by offering a cheap price, providing travelers with confidence that they are moving in a safe environment, and developing future travel plans. Second: The government must take into account the recommendations of workers in this sector by encouraging local tourism, supporting small and medium enterprises, reducing or eliminating taxes, direct financial support for tourism transportation companies or for those working in these companies, and forming special committees to study the changing situations of the epidemic and how to deal with it to preserve vital sectors, reduce quarantine hours, not use hotels for treatment purposes, but rather use private and government hospitals, and cooperate with neighbouring countries to encourage safe tourism.

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