

2023

The social response to crisis management in the Jordanian hotel sector from the government perspective

Mousa Alsheyab
University of Girona, Spain

Francesc Fusté-Forné
University of Girona, Spain

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jsr>



Part of the [Human Geography Commons](#), [Indigenous Studies Commons](#), [Strategic Management Policy Commons](#), [Tourism Commons](#), and the [Tourism and Travel Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Alsheyab, Mousa and Fusté-Forné, Francesc (2023) "The social response to crisis management in the Jordanian hotel sector from the government perspective," *Journal of Sustainability and Resilience*: Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/jsr/vol3/iss1/2>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the M3 Center at the University of South Florida Sarasota-Manatee at Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Sustainability and Resilience by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ University of South Florida. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@usf.edu.

Publisher's Note: Journal of Sustainability and Resilience (JSR) (ISSN:2744-3620) is published bi-annually by the Sustainability and Resilience Institute (SRI) of New Zealand. The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of SRI. SRI remains neutral about jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

The social response to crisis management in the Jordanian hotel sector from the government perspective

Mousa Alsheyab ¹  and Francesc Fusté-Forné ^{*2} 

1 PhD candidate, Department of Business, University of Girona, Catalonia, Spain. Email: mousasheyab@gmail.com

2 Department of Business, University of Girona, Catalonia, Spain. Email: francesc.fusteforne@udg.edu

* Corresponding author

Received: 15/11/2022

Revised: 25/11/2022

Accepted: 12/12/2022

Published: 01/02/2023

Abstract: This paper is part of a major research project that discusses corporate social responsibility practices adopted in Jordan, by hotel managers and other related stakeholders, representing the community and the service providers, during the pandemic crisis. In this paper we focus on the role and measures taken by the government in general, and the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in particular, to deal with the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Amid the Covid-19 outbreak, the hospitality and tourism sectors were challenged and the business policies were adapted. This paper analyzes the measures implemented to secure safety and some tourism expectations as part of the hotel sector's corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy, based on a qualitative study conducted interviews with ten Jordanian hotels and a comprehensive personal interview with a Jordanian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities representative at the National Center for Security and Crisis Management. Results of the qualitative study show that the most important measures the hotels implemented refer to the use of the hotel facilities by both employees and visitors, the interaction between staff and guests, and the staff workflow.

Keywords: crisis management, hospitality industry, Jordan, safe tourism.

1. Introduction and method

As a result of the distress and dangerous impact of Covid-19 on global business (Rizwan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020) and the hospitality industry-specific (Hao et al., 2020), some business policies had to be reconsidered, which has already occurred in the Jordanian hospitality sector. These corporate social responsibility policies are classified as positive measures that aid the organization's ability to survive and recover during the crisis (Erkama & Vaara, 2010), as some amendments to these policies were made after evaluating the impact of these strategies on their recipients. Because the matter became naturally dependent on this activity, whether it is compatible with the

epidemiological situation or not, and whether it has the government's approval to conduct it or not, some of them were stopped, while others were continued. In addition, new social policies were implemented with the goal of assisting affected people and limiting the spread of the pandemic (Sigala, 2020).

We depart from a qualitative study based on personal interviews conducted with managers from ten five-star hotels (out of fifteen) located in Amman and the Dead Sea, hotels which took the lead in implementing corporate social responsibility programs with the onset of the pandemic. The hotels included in the analysis took the initiative to serve as quarantine centres for the people infected

with Covid-19 as well as for those heading from outside Jordan. The collected data were analyzed using the qualitative data analysis software "QDA Miner". This research aims to analyze the specific measures implemented by the hospitality industry as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Apart from the personal interviews with the hotel managers, we conducted a comprehensive personal interview with a representative of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities in the National Center for Security and Crisis Management, to contextualize the hotels' measures and observe the cooperation procedures between the tourism sector and the government to help overcome the crisis.

2. Providing a safe framework for pandemics

The safety guidelines of the Jordanian government

The Jordanian government has taken a set of measures to limit the pandemic spread, which began on March 17, 2020, when all land and air borders were closed. Universities, schools, and places of worship, as well as most community activities, all public and private institutions, and departments, except for the vital sectors and the health sector, were all suspended. On March 26, 2020, a curfew was imposed that ranged from partial to total, depending on the epidemiological situation. After mid-April, the virus began to fade slowly, and the government gradually eased the curfew to include economic and productive sectors, allowing life to regain some degree of normality. Meanwhile, the Jordanian government has received requests from Jordanians living abroad who wanted to return home, despite the fact that the airport was closed.

As a result, the government announced the creation of an online platform to register requests for Jordanians wishing to return

home. Indeed, trips dedicated solely to evacuating Jordanians from various countries around the world have begun. Those arrivals, however, had to be quarantined for 14 days due to coordination efforts between the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and a group of five-star hotels in both the Dead Sea and the capital Amman to host them under the supervision of the Ministry of Health. Over time, as the number of requests has increased, with some complaints about the high costs of quarantine, the government was forced to develop a second alternative, and caravan rooms, equipped with all amenities, were established as alternative quarantine places, at a lower cost. Later, the government made it possible for all hotels, of all categories, to participate in the quarantine process, based on their desire and in coordination with the Ministries of Tourism and Health. As previously stated, these hotels stopped accepting new guests and began working as quarantine establishments with new operating protocols. When the epidemiological situation stabilized, some hotels, particularly the five-star hotels, ceased operating as quarantine facilities and resumed normal operations.

In terms of CSR strategy, hotels have never failed, as the cost of accommodation for those coming from abroad was free for the first batch, after which the hotels began to charge only the operational cost, and some hotels even donated the entire amount as a support to the government. Some people, who demonstrated a lack of financial resources, were completely exempt from payment, and two hotels were outfitted with beds and ventilators and placed on demand in case the epidemiological situation worsened. In terms of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities contribution, it aided the sector by halting all forms of government fines and delaying benefits to establishments, particularly licensing fines and settlements with social security institutions and the Income and Sales Tax Department.

In addition to facilitating the payment of monthly bills incurred by hotel establishments (e.g., electricity and water bills) without halting them, were also implemented other measures, such as waiving all licensing fees, the return of bank guarantees, the provision of soft loans, and the reduction of tourism sector's sales tax from 16% to 8%, and of the service allowance tax from 10% to 5%, respectively. Freezing loan and interest repayment, without fines until the end of the crisis, benefited both the hotel establishments and their employees. The government also launched a free training program for all tourism and hospitality workers on how to implement safety and health protection standards through an online platform managed by the Tourism and Hospitality National Sector Skills Council (SSCJO, 2020).

In terms of tourism revitalization, due to the suspension of airport operations in most countries, the Ministry focused on domestic tourism through the 'Our Jordan is Paradise' program, which was aimed to encourage domestic tourism by pumping 14\$ million to support local airlines, tourist transport, restaurants, and tourism and travel agents, hotels, and tourist guides, as the program provided free transportation and 40% discount for all tourist attractions, in addition to 25,000 free overnight stays in Petra hotels and 15,000 free nights in Wadi Rum. The program targeted the local community members too, by encouraging them to do internal tourism and so participate in the process of supporting the tourism sector, by deepening their knowledge about their country, and by supporting the various sectors that are targeted by sustainable tourism development processes, such as the handicrafts sector, which usually target local communities in less successful touristic areas.

The Ministry has also created a "Visit Jordan from Home" website, which aimed

to promote tourism to Jordan, both locally and internationally, in a way that was consistent with the difficult conditions the world was experiencing because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The World Tourism and Travel Council (WTTC) decided to put Jordan on the list of safe destinations and awarded it the "Safe Travel Stamp" (WTTC, 2020), as a culmination of the country's efforts and as a reflection of the Jordanian model as the best possible response to dealing with the Covid-19 pandemic, making it also a model to follow when comes about safe tourism. In addition, the Ministry has worked to begin receiving film tourism and health tourism, and also initiated plans to rehabilitate tourist and archaeological sites, and infrastructures.

The safety measures adopted by the hotels

Research evidence shows that the ability of hospitality institutions to follow methods to protect their customers from the risk of infection is stringent for overhauling market confidence in areas where employees, customers, and societies are most vulnerable to pandemics (He & Harris, 2020). Most Jordanian hotels have taken measures to maintain operational activity, while ensuring recovery, without delay, in accordance with the government instructions, as the hotels' resilience grows in response to Covid-19, the severity of the pandemic is reduced (Filimonau et al., 2020), as most of their business policies were modified in response to the nature of the pandemic and according to the recommendations of the government and of the Jordanian Hotel Association.

The most important measures implemented by the hotels can be divided into three blocks and related to: using hotel facilities by employees and visitors; initial interaction with guests; and staff workflow (see Table 1)

Table 1. Pandemic safety measures adopted by the Jordanian hotel sector.

Using hotel facilities by employees and visitors	Initial interaction with guests	Staff workflow
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provision with two face masks, gloves, and sanitizer of the personnel in charge of everyday rooms' maintenance. - Rooms cleanliness, where the doors and doorknobs, furniture, lighting switches, windows, bathroom, and any high-touch points like telephone, TV remote control, tablet, hangers, are cleaned and sanitized regularly. - Buffet was stopped and replaced by a table layout, considering the social distancing. - Continuous cleaning of public spaces, corridors, and entrances, and sterilization of all areas of frequent contact. - Keeping the room unoccupied for 48 hours after the last client's check-out. - Preparing one hotel floor just for suspected cases. - Using single-use food utensils. - Occupancy rate should not exceed 50% of the hotel's capacity. - Removal of the valet parking service. - Prohibition of any parties and events in the hotel. - Gyms were closed and suspended. - Water pools periodically sterilized with chlorine. - Room occupancy should not exceed two adults. - Regular sterilization of elevators and the limitation of their capacity only to two people. - Placing of informative panels in public spaces to alert guests to frequently wash hands and use the sterilizers spread everywhere in the hotel. - Check the temperature for everyone who has contact with the hotel, such as contractors, suppliers, and service providers. - Send an email to guests with information about new hotel procedures with the protection and safety methods for all parties. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All guests are asked to fill health check forms and undergo a temperature check upon entering the hotel to ensure the safety of guests. - Use protective glass barriers between staff and visitors in the front office area and floor markers to maintain safe spacing. - Room keys, guest amenities, and other items are disinfected before being handed to guests. - Guests' luggage is sterilized before entering and departing the hotel. - Alert the customers to wear face coverings with some exceptions: children under six years, when in your room, restaurant, cafeteria while having food or beverages. - Developing an application that facilitates services, reduces the direct connection between employees and guests, as this application allows check-in and out without having to wait, ordering services, view the invoice, and make any modifications to the reservation or any services provided by the hotel. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staff receive ongoing training for infection controls and enhanced awareness and the ways of delivering service, as well as social distancing, sanitizing, Personal protective equipment, etc. to always being up to date on the latest developments in dealing with Covid-19. - Checking staff temperature before accessing and leave the hotel. - Conduct periodic checking of employees and look out for respiratory symptoms such as shortness of breath or runny nose or cough. - Wearing masks and gloves while serving and replacing them periodically and asking employees to maintain social distancing and avoid close contact. - Hotel employees present at the hotel facilities should not exceed 50% of the total staff. - Provide fully equipped transportation to bring and return workers. - Regular cleaning of back offices, dressing rooms, and lounges.

Own source.

CSR and the guests

Concerning CSR, COVID-19 and the guests and tourists, the results of the qualitative study show that they were handled according to standard procedure for all hotels when the curfew was announced, whereby the residency of local citizens suspended. As for foreigners, their stay in hotels continued for free, until the entry into force of the decision to quarantine arrivals from abroad in some hotels, and they were evacuated from these hotels that will be used for quarantine and transferred to other hotels, then coordination with their embassies by cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to bring them home. Moreover, as a form of support, to encourage local and national tourism and to avoid increasing losses some price discounts were used, booking facilities and other special hotel reservations offers been made, for instance, book twice from July until December and get another free day reservation anytime, book a room and get breakfast as well as free lunch or dinner, a free double room for every employee who worked during the quarantine period, book a room and get a free spa treatment, reducing the room reservation price by specific rates when booking for one day and reducing it to a higher percentage when the number of booking days' increases with a positive association, 50% discount on the second room if two rooms had been a book, book two rooms and get the third free, create flexible policies to fit with uncertain situations like free cancellations, or modifications the reservation 24 hours before arriving, book a room and get a complimentary upgrade or discount on the original price.

In terms of hotel managers' expectations about the nature of tourism and tourist behavior, roughly 70% were optimistic about the future of tourism after the crisis, while 30% were rather pessimistic. Thus, optimists believe that post-Covid-19

tourism will be at its peak, both nationally and internationally, because people have been living through a period of fear, travel restrictions, and curfews, so they will be eager to do more tourism; their desire to travel to their preferred tourist destinations has not changed, but they will eventually be more cautious about their actions, and if they feel at peace, their behavior will be as normal as usual. Furthermore, as tourists will need to see sharp drops in prices and more offers from hotels and airlines to encourage tourism and increase people's demand for tourism activity, this will lead to the recruitment and emergence of a new group of tourists who would not have had this opportunity without the price drop. In addition, the positive impact of the hygiene and sterilization protocol followed by hotels during the virus spread must be considered, in order to increase people's reassurance and encourage them to travel again; tourists may feel more secure in luxury hotels, compared to other hospitality facilities, given that Covid-19 affected consumers' right to participate in and enjoy hospitality and tourism events. (Baum & Hai, 2020).

The pessimistic managers' point of view revolved around the argument that, while people will initially be concerned about international travel, the recession effects will be felt, and it will take a long time to recover; this is consistent with the context stated by Dube et al. (2021), who predicted that demand for hospitality services would decrease due to health and hygiene concerns. So, focusing on the domestic tourism sector, it remains to be seen where the local, environmental, and sustainable tourism will be led by the new tourism scenario; international tourism will perhaps be the least fortunate and, due to the fear of some tourists from gatherings in closed places, it is also expected an increase in tourists' use of private transportation. Furthermore, because many tourism investors will lose their businesses and many workers will lose their jobs, there will

be a fear of investing in the tourism sector, as indicated by Goger and Loh (2020), who estimate that 75% of small hospitality businesses will not reopen in both Europe and the United States following the pandemic. Moreover, estimates indicate a possible sharp contraction in the hospitality industry due to the Covid-19, a rather disappointing scenario for the aspirations of current and future investors, and workers in this sector (Taylor et al., 2020).

3. Concluding remarks

This research note adds texture to the understanding of governments and hotels' response to the pandemic (Salem et al., 2022) by providing specific evidence for the case of Jordanian hospitality sector and the CSR strategy. Findings show a close interaction between policy-makers and hotel managers during the pandemic, as well as a rapid response from the hotels' in implementing all the safety measures and regulations imposed by the governmental authorities. Finally, the two probabilistic scenarios -optimistic and pessimistic- about the future of the tourism sector in Jordan, offer interesting managerial insights, leaving room to further research that could encompass both the local community's and tourists' visions.

Publisher's Note: The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the Sustainability and Resilience Institute New Zealand official policy. The institute remains neutral about jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



© 2023 by the authors. The article is submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

References

- Baum, T., & Hai, N. T. T. (2020). Hospitality, tourism, human rights and the impact of COVID-19. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 32(7), 2397-2407.
- Dube, K., Nhamo, G., Chikodzi, D. (2021). COVID-19 cripple's global restaurant and hospitality industry. *Current Issues in Tourism. Volume 24*(11), 1487-1490.
- Erkama, N., & Vaara, E. (2010). Struggles over legitimacy in global organizational restructuring: a rhetorical perspective on legitimation strategies and dynamics in a shutdown case. *Organization Studies*. 31 (7), 813-839.
- Filimonau, V., Derqui, B., & Matute, J. (2020). The COVID-19 pandemic and organisational commitment of senior hotel managers. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 91, 102659.
- Goger, A., & Loh, T. (2020). A Band-Aid on a gunshot wound': How the restaurant industry is responding to COVID-19 relief. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/a-band-aid-on-a-gunshot-wound-how-the-restaurant-industry-is-responding-to-covid-19-relief>.
- Hao, F., Xiao, Q., & Chon, K. (2020). COVID-19 and China's Hotel Industry: Impacts, a Disaster Management Framework, and Post-Pandemic Agenda. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 90, 102636.
- He, H., & Harris, L. (2020). The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy. *Journal of Business Research*, 116, 176-182.
- Rizwan, M. S., Ahmad, G., & Ashraf, D. (2020). Systemic risk: The impact

- of COVID-19. *Finance Research Letters*, 36, 101682.
- Salem, I. E., Elkhwesky, Z., & Ramkissoon, H. (2022). A content analysis for government's and hotels' response to COVID-19 pandemic in Egypt. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 22(1), 42-59.
- Sigala, M. (2020). Tourism and COVID-19: Impacts and implications for advancing and resetting industry and research. *Journal of Business Research*, 117, 312-321.
- Taylor, C. B., E. Fitzsimmons-Craft, and A. Graham. (2020). Digital Technology Can Revolutionize Mental Health Services Delivery: The COVID-19 Crisis as a Catalyst for Change. *International Journal of Eating Disorders*, 53 (7): 1155-1157.
- Tourism and Hospitality National Sector Skills Council SSCJO. (2020). *Courses*. <https://sscjo.online/enrol/index.php?id=2>.
- World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). (2021). *Economic Impact Reports*. <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact>.
- Zhang, D., Hu, M., & Ji, Q. (2020). Financial markets under the global pandemic of COVID-19. *Finance Research Letters*, 36, 101528.

Author profile



Mousa Alsheyab is a PhD candidate of business administration at the University of Girona. He received his M.Sc. in business administration in 2018, and a B.Sc. in Hotel Management in 2015, from Yarmouk University, Jordan. His master's thesis focused on the impact of electronic human resource recruitment on the quality of services in the hotel sector, where it was one of the first researches on this topic within the hospitality sector in Jordan. Mousa's primary research interests are in the hospitality industry's sustainability and CSR, although he also has a passion to write about the latest and novel events in the hospitality world.

Author profile



Francesc Fusté-Forné is a lecturer and researcher at the Department of Business, University of Girona. He is undertaking research on culinary and rural heritages from a marketing and travel perspective. Particularly, he focuses on the food tourism phenomenon, making connections among food identities, landscapes, regional development, rural activities, street food, and tourist experiences. He also conducts applied research on the role of gastronomy in relation to mass media and as a driver of social changes.