

Impacts of COVID-19 on Tourism Industry in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus

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ABSTRACT

The study sought to examine the impacts of COVID -19 on tourism in the case of Famagusta town, in North Cyprus. Via a qualitative research approach, data is collected through face-to-face interviews from direct and indirect tourism stakeholders operating in Famagusta. Famagusta one of the largest towns in North Cyprus is a attractive tourist destination, boasting some of the best pristine beaches for sun, sea and sand experience as we well as interesting historical sites. A judgmental sampling strategy was employed to collect data from tourism stakeholders on the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism. Descriptive data analysis is engaged to report the results. Results of the study showed that, the novel corona virus has hampered on the tourism sector in Famagusta, North Cyprus. Indeed, as the globe suffered its effects in terms of economic gains, business and business closure. It has been the same with Famagusta, while a few private sectors positively gained (Internet and Technology), all other tourism reliant sectors such as hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and the transport sector massively suffered as a result of the global lockdown due to COVID-19 pandemic. And, although restrictions have been eased off and it is back to business again, work has not been the same again. Evidently customers are less and there is reduced travel and tourist arrivals in the country. Tourism is an essential sector in the town and country at large, as such practical implications encourage all stakeholders to actively endorse precautionary measures in business. Furthermore, recommendations to ensure vaccines and strict quarantine measures are affected were made in thus study.

Keywords: Tourism Planning, Covid-19 Impacts, Pandemics

ÖZ

Çalışma, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın Gazimağusa kasabası örneğinde COVID-19'un turizm üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçladı. Nitel araştırma yaklaşımı ile veriler, Gazimağusa'da faaliyet gösteren doğrudan ve dolaylı turizm paydaşlarından yüz yüze görüşmeler yoluyla toplanmaktadır. Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın en büyük şehirlerinden biri olan Gazimağusa, güneş, deniz ve kum deneyimi için en iyi el değmemiş plajlardan bazılarının yanı sıra ilginç tarihi yerlere sahip çekici bir turizm merkezidir. Turizm paydaşlarından COVID-19'un turizm üzerindeki etkileri hakkında veri toplamak için yargılayıcı bir örnekleme stratejisi kullanıldı. Sonuçları rapor etmek için açıklayıcı veri analizi yapılır. Çalışmanın sonuçları, yeni korona virüsün Kuzey Kıbrıs'ın Gazimağusa kentinde turizm sektörünü engellediğini gösterdi. Nitekim, dünya ekonomik kazanımlar, iş ve işlerin kapanması açısından etkilerini yaşarken. Gazimağusa ile aynı durumdayken, birkaç özel sektör olumlu bir şekilde kazanırken (İnternet ve Teknoloji), oteller, restoranlar, seyahat acenteleri gibi diğer tüm turizme bağımlı sektörler ve ulaşım sektörü nedeniyle küresel kilitlenme nedeniyle büyük zarar gördü. Kovid-19 ve kısıtlamaların azaltılmasına ve tekrar faaliyete geçmesine rağmen, işler bir daha eskisi gibi olmadı. Anlaşılan, müşteriler daha az ve ülkeye seyahat ve turist girişleri azaldı. Bu tür pratik uygulamalar tüm paydaşları iş dünyasında ihtiyati tedbirleri aktif olarak kabul etmeye teşvik ettiğinden, turizm şehir ve ülke genelinde önemli bir sektördür. Ayrıca, bu çalışmada aşılardan ve sıkı karantina önlemlerinin etkilenmesini sağlayacak öneriler yapılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Turizm Planlaması, Covid-19 Etkileri, Pandemiler

DEDICATION

"This thesis is dedicated to my father Safar Jafari and my mother Manijeh Azardoust along for their endless love, support and encouragement. Furthermore, I want to thank my supervisor; Asst. Prof. Dr. Ali Özduran and my brother and teacher Mehmet Bahri Saydam for their support and love that helped me to be motivated throughout my life".

To My Motherland "Azerbaijan"

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZ.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENT.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES.....	x
LIST OF FIGURES.....	xi
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Background of the Study.....	1
1.2 Aims & Objectives.....	2
1.3 Research Question.....	5
1.4 Significance of the Study.....	5
1.5 Methodology.....	6
1.6 Thesis Outline.....	7
2 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	9
2.1 Tourism Overview.....	9
2.2 Tourism & Pandemics.....	10
2.2.1 Brief History on Diseases that affected Tourism.....	12
2.2.2 The Global Pandemic of the Coronavirus.....	15
2.3 Impact Of COVID-19 On Global Tourism Industry.....	18
2.3.1 Impacts of COVID-19 on lives.....	22
2.3.2 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Travel Industry.....	24
2.3.3 Impacts of COVID-19 in the Hospitality Sector.....	26
2.3.4 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Ecosystem.....	28

5.3.5 Feedback on Policy suggestions to minimise effects of COVID-19	62
5.3.6 Feedback on how to improve tourism in Famagusta	63
6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION	64
6.1 Discussion	64
6.2 Conclusion	66
6.3 Implications	69
6.4 Limitations	70
6.5 Recommendation	71
REFERENCES	72

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Interviewees names, affiliation and job titles 43

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: The Impact of major crises on Global Tourism.....	11
Figure 2.2: International arrivals statistics by region.....	22
Figure 2.3: COVID-19 death rates in Europe as at 29 June 2020.....	23
Figure 3.1: Cyprus Location on the Globe.....	32
Figure 3.2: Political Map of Cyprus	33

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The chapter introduces the topic by presenting a detailed background of the study as well as the aims and objectives. In addition, the introductory chapter provides an overview of the significance of the study, its contribution to the state of knowledge, the proposed methodology and outline of the thesis, and presents the research questions of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Empirical findings show that the travel and tourism industry is one of the fastest growing sectors in the world and is undoubtedly a strategic tool and plan to revive weak and dying economies in some cases (Alipour, & Kilic, 2005; Spirou, 2011). Supportively, Jucan and Jucan, (2013) precisely noted tourism as one of pillars that governments should strategically adopt to stimulate economic growth. It is a fairly pivotal sector that contributes greatly to the GDP of economies. Scholars agree that tourism industry is a major income generating sector for most developing countries (Sayeda, 2017). It goes without saying that the travel and tourism industry in general is an important growth sector. According to 2019 UNWTO reports, there were a total of about 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals in 2018, representing a 6% increase over the previous year's statistics. In addition, the UNWTO Secretary-General Zurab Pololikashvili in 2019, when looking at tourism trends and statistics over the years, recognized the industry as one of the biggest economic growth and development drivers. And he strongly calls for sustainable tourism practices in the industry to enable

tourism-dependent nations to reap long-term benefits through the industry's ability to create jobs and many other entrepreneurial opportunities. Undeniably, tourism has indeed become a huge draw over the years since its revolution.

Until the global pandemic of the 21st century - COVID -19 struck, the tourism industry stood as one of the largest markets (Uğur, & Akbıyık, 2020). The COVID -19 pandemic has led to governments around the world imposing travel restrictions, border closures, and quarantines, raising fears of an impending economic crisis and recession (Aljazeera, 2020; Buck, Arnold, Chazan, 2020; Loeb, 2020). With the rise of the COVID -19 outbreak declared a global emergency by the World Health Organization in January 2020 (Sohrabi, Alsafi, O'Neil, Khan, Kerwan, Al-Jabir, et al., 2020), this is a call of concern for the sector worldwide.

Indeed, the travel and tourism industry are currently one of the sectors most affected by the outbreak, undoubtedly impacting both travel supply and demand (Nicola, Alsafi, Sohrabi, Kerwan, Al-Jabir, et al., 2020). The World Travel and Tourism Council (2020) estimates that approximately 50 million jobs in the global travel and tourism sector are at risk. Furthermore, empirical findings from the first hard-hit economies in the Americas, Europe and Asia show that hotel industry revenues and percentage occupancy rates fell dramatically in the first quarter of the year (UK News; Hospitality Net, cited in Mar, 2020). In general, the travel industry has had and continues to have to deal with unprecedented cancellations (Nicola et. al., 2020).

1.2 Aims & Objectives

Objectives of the study are generalized statements about the research. They generally help to establish guidelines for the research and thus enable the intended research

desires to be realized. The aim of the study in this case is the general statement of what the research is intended to cover, and the objectives are the further broken-down elements or tools to achieve the main purpose of the study. In short, the objectives of the study help the researcher to stay on the right track to gather accurate information about the subject matter. They also help to narrow down the research idea so that it is easier for the readers to understand.

Considering the discussions presented above and as can be seen in the literature, the travel and tourism industry is quite sensitive to adverse events, including human-borne diseases that lead to movement restrictions (Smorfitt, Harrison, & Herbohn, 2005), such was the case with coronavirus (COVID -19). Within weeks of its emergence, the virus (COVID -19) threatened the lives and health of many people worldwide, especially in mobile, relatively affluent countries East Asia, North America, and Europe (Baum, & Hai, 2020).On January 30, the World Health Organization declared COVID -19 a global emergency and eventually declared it a pandemic in the first weeks of March 2020.

Considering destinations that are free from crime, disease, and other disasters, travel can be seen as a way to explore places and meet new people (Uğur, & Akbıyık, 2020). However, as mentioned earlier, the industry is highly affected by adverse events and contagious diseases, as would be the case with the coronavirus. Pandemics and epidemics are undeniably among the alarming news that travelers, planners, and even destination residents would love to hear or learn about (Ugur & Akbiyik, 2020)

After the virus was first detected in China in the later months of 2019, it has spread rapidly and greatly by Q1 2020, resulting in high health risks and job losses (Kim,

&Cho, 2020). As a result of the global spread of the pandemic, the hospitality, travel and tourism industry responded by halting international travel. And in some cases, strict measures were taken at the local level in some countries, forcing domestic tourism to be halted as well. In light of the arguments and discussions presented so far, this study aims to examine the impact of COVID -19 on tourism using the city of Famagusta, a highly regarded tourist destination in North Cyprus, as an example.

Noting that Famagusta, North Cyprus is a prime tourist destination, investigating the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism is essential it helps to measure tourism stakeholders' understanding of the pandemic. Furthermore, while the world at large is still working on possible adaption solutions, problem solving as mainly lay with destinations. As such investigations into the subject matter in North Cyprus, would also help measure how stakeholders are coping and intend on preventing the virus as a destination, should tourism continue.

Examining the impact of COVID -19 in Famagusta, North Cyprus as a tourism destination is essential to measure tourism stakeholders' understanding of the pandemic as well as their coping skills for survival as the world tries to find solutions for more sustainable tourism after COVID -19. Not all solutions may be suitable for all destinations, so it is necessary to also find out possible strategies of destinations to cope with the new era. Therefore, to narrow down the aim of the study, the objectives are as follows:

- To investigate the impact of COVID -19 on tourism operations in Famagusta, Northern Cyprus.

- To identify the experiences of tourism stakeholders and the challenges they face as a result of the pandemic in the city of Famagusta, Northern Cyprus.
- To assess the coping strategies of tourism stakeholders in the current pandemic.
- To provide solutions for sustainable coping strategies during and after the pandemic.

1.3 Research Question

Following the arguments presented in the background discussions and objectives of the study, this thesis attempts to answer two research questions: What is the impact of COVID -19 on tourism in the case of Famagusta, North Cyprus, and what can be done to overcome the problems that COVID -19 has on tourism of Famagusta, North Cyprus.

1.4 Significance of the Study

As strongly emphasized in the current study and noted in previous literature, COVID -19 is a major topic in literature, while it is a major scare worldwide and worries the hospitality, travel and tourism industries. Ugur and Akbiyik, (2020), tried to understand the reactions of travelers during the pandemic and found that the industry is easily affected by global crises such as coronavirus. They found that most travelers canceled or delayed their trips when they learned about the spread of the contagious virus. Jafari, Saydam, Erkanli, and Olorunsola (2020) review the impact of the pandemic on tourists' behavior and also examine tourists' travel decisions in such scenarios. Among other things, they deduce that life and therefore work and travel life will be affected. Ultimately, the travel market will be negatively affected. The issue of pandemic is undoubtedly a very hot topic considering that the impact of COVID -19 successfully put the world on hold for a while. The literature is currently trying to

understand how to proceed in the present time and the foreseeable future, highlighting the importance of the travel and tourism industry. Given the facts presented and observations of the severity of the issue, further understanding of the impact of the coronavirus at the destination level and seeking further solutions applicable to the destination is paramount. Although a global alert has been raised about the impact of the pandemic and studies exist on the subject, the results of the studies cannot be generalized. It is also very evident that the problem of the epidemic is currently an ongoing concern that needs to be further understood, at the local level or at the level of individual units, which necessitated the present study.

1.5 Methodology

Exploratory measures are considered to obtain data for the present study, that is, a qualitative research method. The research method as such is usually used when a researcher desires a deeper meaning of a problem and or phenomenon at hand. Data on the impact of COVID -19 on tourism in the case of Famagusta, Northern Cyprus, is collected through the use of in-depth interviews. Prior to the research, the researcher prepared semi structured interviewer-completed questions to help collect data from participants. In addition, set-choice and pre-coded questions are included in the data collection to analyze the data. Open-ended questions are used in the current study to delve further and deeper into the subject matter, which set-choice questions are not able to do. The sample of the study includes hotel managers, academics, restaurant/cafeteria managers, travel agents and local taxi operators from and in Famagusta, North Cyprus.

Considering the advantages of the sampling strategy that it allows the researcher to achieve the objective quickly (Crossman, 2017). Purposive sampling techniques that

follow non-probability sampling strategy were adopted and found to be most suitable for the present study. Considering the many options available in purposive sampling strategies, the present study uses the critical case sampling method and thus focuses the study on tourism operations in Famagusta, North Cyprus. Among other activities that take place in the area, tourism is one of the most important activities that keep the region afloat. For this reason, the participants of the study were asked for their opinion on the impact of COVID -19 on tourism in the Famagusta. More detailed information on the study methodology, research instruments and designs are provided in Chapter 4.

1.6 Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one (1) serves as an introduction to the study, thus providing insights into the background of the study, the aims and objectives. It also introduces the research question that the study seeks to answer and also provides the significance of the study and contributions to the body of knowledge. In addition, the chapter provides a brief overview of the methodology section and the outline of the thesis. The second chapter (2) contains the literature review, which essentially provides an overview of what has already been written on the topic. The chapters begin with a broad understanding of the impact of COVID -19 on global tourism before narrowing it down to Northern Cyprus and looking at the various impacts of the pandemic on Famagusta. This is followed by chapter (3) which provides a detailed information about the setting of the case study - Northern Cyprus. The methodology of the study is presented in chapter four. Data collection strategies, sampling procedures, research design and instruments are presented in chapter (4). Data analysis and study findings are given in chapter (5) while discussion of findings,

limitations and recommendations for future studies are presented in the final chapter (6) of the study.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter two is the literature review, which provides a detailed information on the subject matter. Precisely covered in the chapter is the tourism overview, a brief history on tourism and other pandemics before COVID-19. Furthermore, the chapter highlights on the noted impacts of COVID-19 on global tourism, thus its effects on lives, businesses, the hospitality and travel sector as well as the ecosystem.

2.1 Tourism Overview

In the literature, the hospitality, travel and tourism industry are described as a major economic force for many destinations worldwide, which has a major impact on important developments in host countries (Brida, Disegna & Otsi, 2014). UNWTO reports undoubtedly show tremendous signs of growth and expansion in the industry, while some scholars have described the tourism industry as one of the largest economic activities in the world (Romao & Nikjamp, 2017). The annual reports of the UNWTO (2016, 2017, 2018) suggest that the sector holds great promise in improving the social, economic, cultural and environmental developments of the community. Considering the facts and arguments presented in the literature, it is irrefutable that the tourism industry is an essential tool for economic development. Notable for its numerous benefits such as job creation, quality of life improvement and tax revenue (Brida et al., 2014), the tourism and hospitality sector are a major destination improver and is used to boost moribund economies. The tourism sector has not only benefited the key players in the industry but also indirectly benefited other stakeholders. For instance,

some subordinate stakeholders associated with the industry have also benefited from tourism. Therefore, it can be concluded that the sector is indeed a remarkable industry that is highly competitive in the global arena and is currently proven to be a strong contributor to global economic activities.

2.2 Tourism & Pandemics

According to the World Tourism Organization (2020), international tourism has grown steadily over the past decade, recording approximately 1.4 billion international tourist arrivals in 2019. The organization further estimates that by 2030, international tourist arrivals will reach at least 1.8 billion, with the WTO projecting growth of approximately 1.8 billion international tourist arrivals. As evidenced by the literature, it goes without saying that tourism is the reason for most human mobility worldwide (Ranasinghe, Damunupola, Wijesundara, Karunarathna, Nawarathna, Gamage, & Idroos, 2020). As mentioned in the literature, there are no other ways to explore new places and or meet new people except through travel. However, these options have been considered in the event that there is no disease- free and/or crime-free routes and destinations. In the past, pandemics and epidemics have been described as the most alarming news for vacationers, planners and tourists (Ugur & Akbiyik, 2020). pandemics not only affect tourists but also become a problem for local people in the visited destinations. In other words, pandemics and epidemics also cause harm in tourist destinations. As a result, travel becomes a catalyst for the spread of disease. There is ample evidence in the literature that travelers play a critical role in the transmission of pandemics and/or epidemics between destinations (Hollingsworth, Ferguson & Anderson, 2006).

Pandemics and epidemics are not a new thing or a new issue in tourism. In fact, global tourism has been affected and exposed to numerous crises over the years (Gossling, et.al., 2020). Examples of some of the crises (including pandemics) that have greatly affected global tourism over the past two decades (years 2000 - 2020) include the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the outbreak of SARS (the severe acute respiratory syndrome) in 2003, the global economic crisis in 2008 and 2009, and the outbreak of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MARS) in 2015. Diagrammatically, these are shown in Figure 1 below. The diagram also shows how the events affected the travel and tourism industry, i.e. an indication of tourist arrival flows during, after and across the years. There were certainly significant declines in international tourist arrivals during the time of the incidents, proving that crises have an impact on tourism. According to the World Bank report (2020a, 2020b), the impact of SARS and the global economic crisis on tourism resulted in a decline in international tourist arrivals of about -0.4% and -4.0%, respectively.

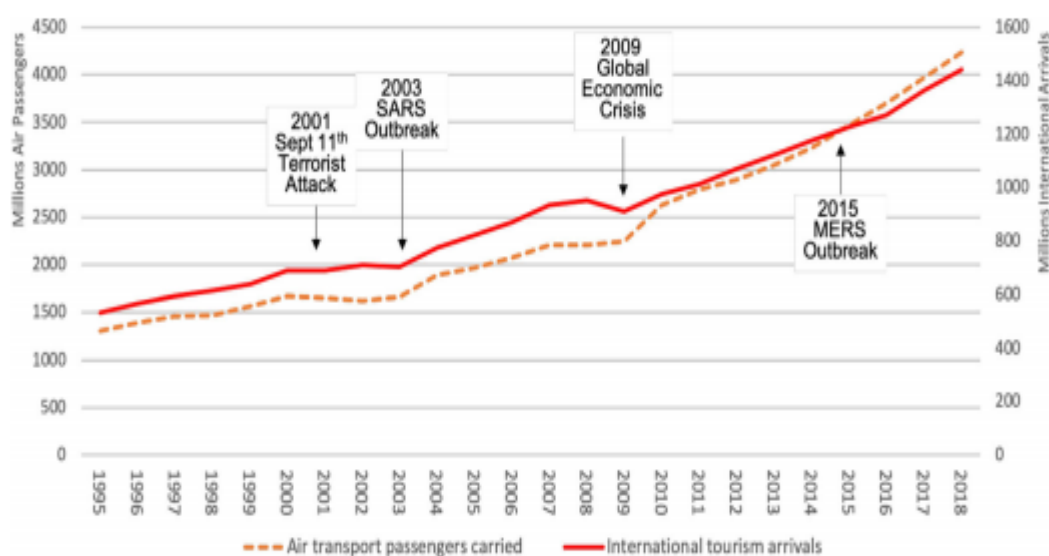


Figure 2.1: The Impact of major crises on Global Tourism
Source: World Bank (2020a, 2020b).

While the figures show significant impacts on global tourism, as reflected in the minimal declines in international tourist arrivals, it is noted elsewhere that the industry is generally resilient (Gossling, et.al., 2020). The tourism industry as a sector has generally recovered well after being hit by major crises. Figure 1 above shows and proves this beyond doubt.

2.2.1 Brief History on Diseases that affected Tourism

Neither is the world immune from disease, nor has tourism as an industry been spared its effects. Historically, three major pandemics have been recorded and noted in literature. These include the Spanish flu or influenza of 1918-19, the Asian flu of 1957 and the Hong Kong flu of 1968, which marked the 20th century. In the present, 21st century, at least four pandemics have occurred to date: SARS (2003), Avian Flu (2009), MERS (2012), and Ebola (2013 -14).

The SARS outbreak in 2003, which was recorded as an epidemic in the 21st century by WHO, apparently had some impact on tourism as a sector. According to Zeng, Carter and De Lacy (2005), they considered the disease as short term, which had significant impact on tourism in China. The literature also indicates that most cases have generally occurred in China, Hong Kong, with a few cases in Canada and Taiwan (Gossling et al., 2020). While reports show some significant impacts on economies, in the case of Hong Kong, the economic impact was not as severe as expected (Siu & Wong, 2004). In fact, however, the travel and tourism industries were severely affected, as evidenced by a decline in tourist arrivals to the destinations. From a global perspective, the epidemic cost the economy approximately US\$100 billion, including US\$48 billion in China alone as the destination country (Mckercher & Chon, 2004; Siu & Wong, 2004).

Furthermore, if we consider the impact of the SARS outbreak in destination China, one of the country's leading tourism travel agencies: China Travel Services apparently reported a loss in revenue of approximately US\$3.6 million. Further analysis of destination statistics revealed an 80% drop in outbound tourism (Dombey, 2004). In other destinations such as Canada that were affected by the epidemic, and although cases were minimal compared to China and Hong Kong, it has been reported that the accommodation and food industry suffered a loss of approximately US\$4.3 billion (Keigh, Brown & Smith, 2008).

It is clear and undeniable that the impact of epidemics and pandemics is severely affecting the tourism industry at destination level and also from a global perspective. There is not only the decline in tourism revenues but also the decline in tourist arrivals and tax revenues. Hotel occupancy rates have dropped drastically, affecting hospitality revenues and further affecting employment rates in destinations. The 2003 SARS outbreak in Singapore, for example, brought massive losses to hotels through no-show-ups and booking cancelations. According to Henderson and Ng (2004), hotel occupancy in the first quarter of the year was 21%, far below the previous year's (2002) figure of 74.5%. Room rates had also dropped to about 18.8%. As a result, jobs were lost. Singapore reported about 17 500 employees whose jobs were terminated, while Hong Kong one of the worst affected states 8 about 27 000 people lost their jobs due to SARS (Pine & McKercher, 2004).

While the figures show some mild effects of the epidemics and pandemics at the international level, significant effects have been noted regionally and in relation to a single target country. For example, Avian Flu and SARS had significant impacts on tourist arrivals in Asia as a region (Kuo, Chen, Tseng, Ju, & Huang, 2008). Whereas,

in their research, the authors found that there was a massive decrease in arrivals in the countries significantly affected by SARS. In the case of foot and mouth disease, another epidemic, the impact was found to be mainly in the United Kingdom where tourism expenditure of the destination dropped sharply (Blake, Sinclair, & Sugiyarto, 2003).

The 2009 swine flu was declared a mild pandemic but resulted in approximately 284,000 deaths worldwide (Viboud & Simonsen, 2012). The pandemic was more severe in Mexico and the United States as it spread from there. In June 2009, the outbreak of novel influenza: swine flu was declared a pandemic (H1N1) 2009 by the World Health Organization (Tracht, Del Valle, & Hyman, 2010). The report by Monterrubio (2010) showed that the hospitality and airline industries in Mexico were particularly affected in the first few weeks after the flu outbreak. Within a short period of time, Mexico as a destination lost about one million tourists and about US\$2.8 billion worth of revenue and return flights (Russy & Smith, 2013). Additionally, according to the authors, the return of some markets, especially European markets, was very slow, which ultimately destabilized the economy. In a period of about six months after its occurrence, the speed at which the flu spread around the world increased massively, which led WHO (2009) to increase the warnings of the pandemic as well. In the case of Mexico, the pandemic brought the industry to a virtual standstill after the global financial crisis (Rassy & Smith, 2013).

In general, based on the various speculations and analyses recorded in the body of knowledge and discussed in part in the above sections, it can be assumed that major impacts of diseases that occur in regions of high contagion are usually felt in the affected regions or target areas. Depending on the severity of the problem and in case

an epidemic and or pandemic is declared, the impact on the global economy is also high and more severe. Research studies on the impact of some diseases such as malaria, Yellow Fever, Ebola and dengue have undoubtedly shown that the diseases have indeed led to a remarkable decline in tourist arrivals in the affected countries (Rosselló, Santana-Gallego, & Awan, 2017).

2.2.2 The Global Pandemic of the Coronavirus

Obviously, the world has been exposed to some pandemics and has suffered some minor to major effects. As mentioned earlier, the 20th and 21st centuries have been riddled with pandemics that have greatly affected the world economy. While the world has experienced major pandemics over the years, none have been as severe as that of the novel coronavirus: COVID -19 exposed the global tourism industry and the economy in general. Gossling et.al. (2020) agree, as they also noted some major events in the last four decades, but not as extreme as COVID -19. The world has suffered and endured contagious diseases such as measles and Ebola that result in death when infected, however, COVID -19 is not as contagious, but infected people excrete the virus days before symptoms appear (Bai, Yao, Wei, Tian, Jin, Chen, & Wang, 2020). In other words, as Gossling et.al. (2020) confirm, people can acquire the COVID -19 virus and neither know nor show the symptoms, hence its ability to spread easily long before infected people know when to isolate themselves or take precautions.

The novel COVID -19 corona outbreak that began in Wuhan City Hubei Province, China, is a highly contagious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus (Kaveh, et al., 2020). At the end of 2019, Wuhan City was struck by pneumonia, the cause of which was unknown. On December 31, an official report of this pneumonia was sent to the offices of WHO in the city of Wuhan, China (Gossling, et. al., 2020). By early January 2020, at least forty-one people had been infected with the novel

coronavirus and admitted to some hospitals in China (Huang et al., 2020). As the months passed, the virus spread rapidly in China, later spreading to other nations, regions, and the world in March 2020 (Gossling et.al., 2020). As the virus spread rapidly in Wuhan and surrounding regions, alarm bells may have been ringing to take precautionary measures. And despite official warnings from intelligence agencies about the potential catalytic tendencies of the virus (Washington Post, 2020), it all fell on deaf ears as some leaders in other nations of the world disregarded the warnings (Gossling et al., 2020). While infection rates were noticeably increasing daily and spreading massively in China and other countries in Europe and the Americas, the world paid little to no attention to the news about the novel coronavirus a month after its emergence. Some officials and some onlookers around the world were under the impression that the virus was being contained in the city in China. Not even the responsible international bodies like WHO would have thought that the virus would spread to the whole world and infect them as much as it eventually did.

In mid-January, the first cases outside of China were detected in Thailand and Japan, whereupon WHO stated after the first case reported in Thailand that coronavirus disease may have a limited tendency for human-to-human (H-H) transmission (WHO,2020). It was not until the end of January, on January 21 to be exact, that WHO later confirmed definite human-to-human transmission, apparently from healthcare workers contracting the diseases. And by the end of the second month after the virus emerged, at least 98 cases had been reported in about 18 countries, with at least 4 countries severely affected and with very high H-H transmission (WHO, 2020). It was not until the third month that the disease hit the world, in February 2020, that WHO gave the coronavirus the name COVID -19. That same month, the first cases of COVID -19 were reported in Africa.

While China, where the virus was first discovered, had taken measures to contain and control the spread of the virus through lockdown and through regional and individual quarantine, the airline industry had unfortunately spread the virus to all continents, establishing it in some 146 countries (ECDC, 2020).

As the months passed and the world watched, more cases of the novel coronavirus were reported by March 2020. At WHO, it was reported that more than 100,000 people worldwide had contracted the virus and the disease was rampant in Europe. By April 15, there had been approximately 2 million confirmed cases of novel coronavirus, with 125 000 deaths recorded in over 200 countries (ECDC,2020).

Due to the obvious potential threat of the novel virus COVID -19, a Global Humanitarian Plan was launched while an emergency meeting of the G-20 was enforced to facilitate solutions to contain the spread of the virus. In addition, a COVID -19 solidarity fund was launched, as well as funds to raise awareness and support the nation's most at risk. By the end of March 2020, the number of infected people worldwide had increased, with over one million cases recorded around the world (WHO,2020).

WHO (2020), later COVID -19 declared a global pandemic on March 12, 2020. The COVID -19 is the third known highly pathogenic human coronavirus to strike the world again in the last twenty years (WTO,2020). Although there have been several pandemics that have been suffered and endured from a global perspective, none has affected the world as much as COVID -19. The pandemic brought the world to a standstill without hesitation, destabilized global socio-economic structures, and challenged global corporate operations once again (Ranasinghe et.al., 2020). In other

words, although the pandemic had numerous negative impacts, it truly has some positive attributes as well, challenging globalization and prompting the world to consider restructuring towards a sustainable globe. However, in the following sections, the observed impacts of COVID -19 on Global Tourism Industry will be discussed in detail.

2.3 Impact Of COVID-19 On Global Tourism Industry

The travel and tourism industry, which is characterized by a high degree of interconnectedness with the environment, is an open system with a plethora of connections that have myriad dimensions outside the globe that affect not only the system but also the environment (Ugur & Akbiyi. 2020). Considering that the environment is divided into several dimensions, namely socio-cultural, technological, political, economic and environmental, Haedrich, Kasper & Kreilkamp, (2010); Kreilkamp, (2010), describe the tourism sector as vulnerable to changes in the environment. This is likely due to the multiple interdependencies associated with it.

In terms of the current novel coronavirus that has hit the globe like no other pandemic before, COVID -19 has noticeably shaken the global tourism environment. Pandemics have always existed and the world has been hit by them over the years. As mentioned above, there have been at least three pandemics in the 20th century, while the 21st century has seen its fourth pandemic so far. Hall, Scott, and Gossling (2020) would not agree less with these terms as they acknowledge how the triggers of crises change and how the current crisis is currently distinguished. The waves that the novel coronavirus has made on the international tourism front is so far surpassing all. The whole world has unquestionably come to a standstill. What sets COVID -19 apart from the other pandemics the world has experienced so far is the magnitude of the impact

the virus has had on the global economy (Gossling et.al, 2020). Within a very short time, the virus had spread far beyond the borders of China, where it was first discovered. And before the world knew it and prepared to take action to control the spread of the virus, all four corners of the world were affected. COVID -19 sent the world and its inhabitants to sleep for a while solution were considered to combat the virus and restore world order. Although stringent efforts were made and some control measures were taken to contain the spread of the virus, the crisis continues to this day and is still a problem for the world. The first wave of lockdown in all countries of the world was hit, a second wave of lockdown in some destinations and more control measures were considered until today to contain the virus.

After the virus was declared a global pandemic by WHO in March 2020, literally 3 months after its December 2019 outbreak. By April 2020, an estimated 1.9 million people had contracted the virus in more than 200 countries around the world, and there were more than 120,000 deaths (Ranasinghe et.al., 2020). Following the immediate measures to contain the virus taken in Wuhan, China (lockdown and regional or self-quarantine), the world followed suit. Many countries around the world imposed total and partial lockdowns. Borders were closed, travel restrictions to COVID -19 affected countries were enforced, entry and exit bans were affected (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Curfews were imposed in most cities around the world, while international airports were completely closed in most affected countries and some countries even restricted the issuance of visas (Ranasinghe et.al.2020).

As the crisis became more widespread and showed clear signs of destruction, the WTO estimated a 57% decline in international arrivals by March 2020 (UNWTO,2020). Further predictions were noted and it was claimed that international tourism would fall

by a further 60% during the year, with the possibility of a rise to as much as 80% by the time the year ended (OECD Policy Report, 2020). Given the history of how travelers normally respond to pandemic outbreaks and or crises, UNWTO (2020) foresaw an 80% decline in air travel at the start of 2020 and concluded that the industry would contract by 20-30% in Q1 of the year. Apparently, in the first quarter, international tourist arrivals were down by about 67 million compared to the same period last year and it cost the industry export losses of about US\$80 billion.

Ten months later, international arrivals were down 72% due to travel restrictions and the global struggles to control the novel coronavirus. As of December 17, the UNWTO reported a record 900 million fewer international tourists between January and October 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. In monetary terms, the decline in tourist arrivals represents a loss of about US\$935 billion, about 10 times the loss in 2009 after the Great Depression. In other words, the impact of COVID -19 on the global tourism sector is the worst ever recorded. The WTO (2020) projects a 70%-75% decline in international arrivals for the full year 2020, which would return the global sector to levels seen 30 years ago. In addition, about 1 billion fewer arrivals are estimated over the course of the year and by year-end, amounting to about \$1.1 trillion in international revenue losses. The greater the losses in arrivals and tax revenues, the greater the impact on global GDP. At the rate the pandemic is sweeping the world, an economic loss of US\$2 trillion in global GDP is expected (WTO, 17 December, 2020). would be.

According to the Secretary-General of the UNWTO, Zurab Pololikashvili (2020), 2020 is historically the worst on record. Moreover, he added that while efforts have been made to boost traveler confidence with news of vaccine opportunities, he believes

there is still a long way to go to recover and revitalize the sector. The Secretary-General could not better emphasize the need for the globe to be proactive and step up its efforts to contain and limit COVID -19.

Below is a histogram showing the impact of COVID -19 in terms of international tourist arrivals region by region as per the WTO report of December 17, 2020. In summary, Asia and the Pacific experienced the highest declines in arrivals due to the fact that this was the region where the pandemic began. In addition, Asia and the Pacific remains the region with the highest travel restrictions to date. The Middle East saw a 73% decrease, Africa saw a 69% decrease, and the Americas and Europe saw a 68% decrease. Although Europe was massively affected by the virus in some parts (e.g. Italy, which recorded a high number of deaths from the virus), it surprisingly recorded a small decrease in arrivals in the months of September and October, due to the short recovery period during the summer months.

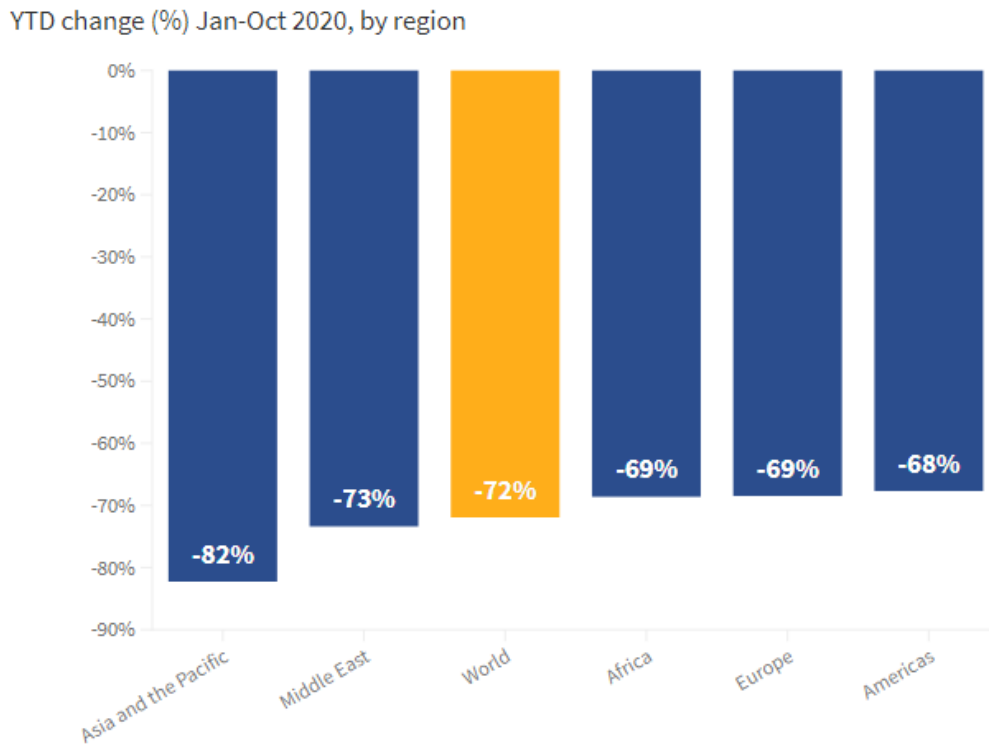


Figure 2.2: International arrivals statistics by region
 Source: World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), November, 2020. Published 17 December, 2020.

2.3.1 Impacts of COVID-19 on lives

The severity of the COVID -19 impact is clearly great, as evidenced by reports and statistics from several world organizations. For the first time in many years, world tourism came to a standstill, as it has in other areas. Lives, undoubtedly were affected, thousands of families lost their jobs and deaths were encountered. As a result of the impact of the novel coronavirus, the socio-economic life of the world population has been affected. As mentioned in the previous discussions, COVID -19 has set the global tourism industry back to the level of about 30 years ago when the sector was thriving. While the world has experienced some major crises, events and pandemics, none have been as impactful as COVID -19. Not even the global economic crisis of 2009 comes close to the impact that this pandemic had on national economies and indeed the global

economy. To gauge the severity of the impact and how ruthless this pandemic has been on the world economy and people's lives, the pandemic has spared no one. In fact, it was the most economically and technologically healthy regions; Europe and America) that were hit the worst and hardest by the virus, but in all their sophistication and apparent stability, lost many lives (Hall et.al., 2020). Even though the pandemic first hit Asia-China, Europe and the Americas stand out as the regions with the most deaths and hardest hit regions (WTO,2020). Of all the regions in the world, Africa was and is the least affected in terms of the number of deaths recorded. Figure three below summarizes the number of deaths in some European countries.

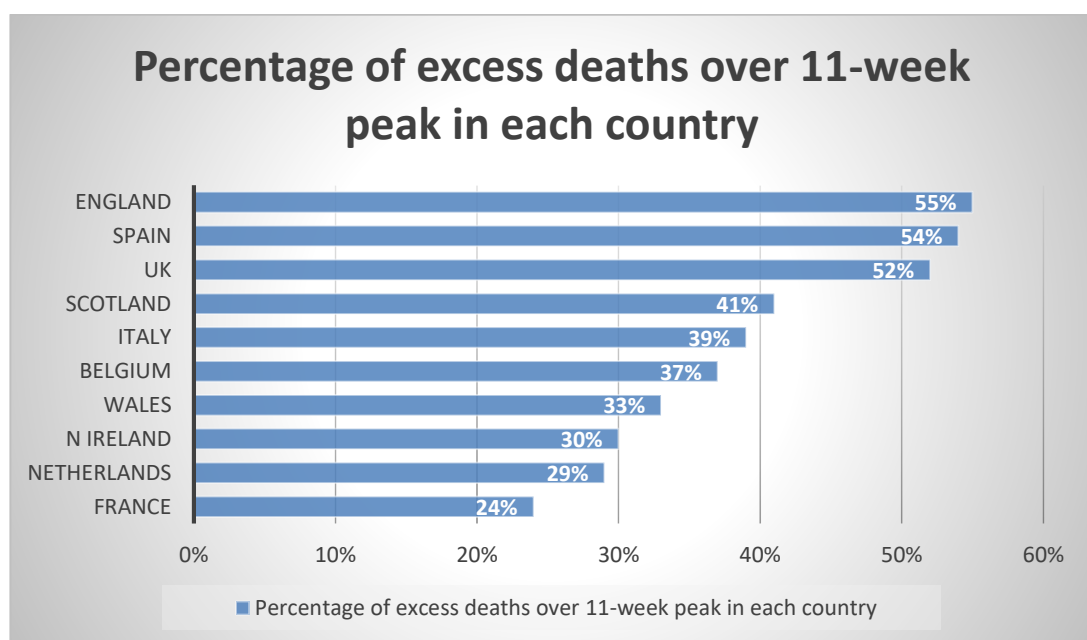


Figure 2.3: COVID-19 death rates in Europe as at 29 June 2020
Source: Oxford University's Institute for New Economic Thinking, BBC

In June 2020, midway through the year of the pandemic, Europe was still one of the hardest hit regions in terms of deaths. The chart above briefly shows some of the European countries in the statistics of deaths. While Italy initially emerged as one of the worst hit countries, recording a high number of deaths in the early days of the

pandemic, other countries such as the UK, Spain and England gradually overtook it and recorded the highest number of deaths.

Not only was there loss of life, but there were also closures of businesses around the world and a jump in unemployment due to some of the measures taken to contain the pandemic. Decisions were made around the world to temporarily put the world on hold, so total and partial lockdowns and curfews were imposed in most countries. Travel bans and restrictions were also imposed in many destinations, which meant less business due to low tourist arrivals. The end result of these measures was that many shops, offices and factories were closed, schools closed and borders were closed (Gossling et.al.,2020). Thus, many people lost their jobs and the unemployment rate in most parts of the world increased to some extent. While the negative impact of the pandemic generally affects the entire globe, the global tourism industry is naturally one of the most affected sectors (Ranasinghe et.al., 2020; Sigala, 2020; Ugur & Ayibik, 2020). Returning to the travel and tourism industry, Ozili and Arun (2020) concurred in describing that numerous employees were laid off and they also reported that the airline, hotel, and hospitality sectors ultimately lost revenues of nearly a million or more dollars. BBC News (2020) also reported high unemployment rates in America in the early months, with the U.S. at the top of the scale with an unprecedented 30 million.

2.3.2 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Travel Industry

Given the speed with which the virus spread around the world, it did not take long for the epidemic to become a global problem, eventually reaching and claiming the status of a global pandemic. The nature of tourism did not help the situation in any way, apart from allowing the virus and the pandemic to thrive and spread even further across the world. In Otsch's (2020) words, COVID -19 is a crisis of economized societies locked

into growth paradigms. Allen, Murray, Zambrana-Torrel, Morse, Rondini, Marco, and Daszak (2017) concluded that viruses like COVID -19 are the result of many connections or interrelationships of the many dimensions of urbanization, globalization, environmental change, contemporary capitalism, and agribusiness. Considering the above notions, Sigala, (2020) agrees and refers to the travel and tourism industry, its development and growth paradigms as a significant contributor to socio-economic systems that help to rapidly accelerate the spread of viruses. While the industry is also a tool for controlling and containing the virus, it is certainly a catalyst for the spread of infections of the virus. Sigala, (2020), further sees the travel and tourism industry as highly responsible for the interconnected and global world, waste, climate change, pollution, global, national and regional economic development. Thus, the pandemic is ultimately not due to travel but due to climate change (World Economic Forum (2019)). The travel sector has facilitated the spread of the virus. As the number of reported cases increased and destinations took measures to contain the virus, one of the means to contain and control the pandemic was to close the borders. Thus, travel bans and restrictions were imposed, reducing the number of air travel to the destination countries. In addition, many airlines ceased operations during this time, while the few that did operate, especially in the first quarter, flew almost empty. As the world gained more knowledge about the pandemic, travelers became more aware, so booking cancellations increased as passengers either postponed their trip to a future date or canceled it completely. In the case where travel bans were imposed on a particular destination, the resorts were inaccessible to customers, resulting in automatic cancellations. The report by Ozili & Arun (2020) sees the cancellations and losses in the airline business in the first months of the pandemic as a result of the travel restrictions imposed by several governments around the world. At the advent of the

pandemic, estimates of about USD 113 billion in losses in the airline industry were envisaged (Georgiva, 2020). IATA reports, on the other hand, recorded a loss of about USD 200 billion due to the restrictions on the aviation sector. To further gauge the extent of the damage caused to the travel sector by the pandemic, the travel industry in the Americas region suffered losses of about USD 820 billion. An amount of about USD 50 billion was spent on the operating costs of the US airlines (Horowitz, 2020). Although the tourism industry is essential in rebuilding or sustaining the economy, it was extremely important to close the travel sector in order to contain the virus as travel is a catalyst in spreading and reducing the impact of the virus.

2.3.3 Impacts of COVID-19 in the Hospitality Sector

As mentioned earlier, the tourism industry is very diverse and includes restaurants and cafes in addition to hotels and lodging. Due to restrictions imposed by governments in travel destinations around the world, the hospitality industry has also been affected resulting. Without a traveler or tourist in a destination, there is ultimately no business in the hotels, accommodations, and restaurants. Booking cancellations in the hospitality industry were once again the order of the day following global measures to contain the pandemic. As further stringent measures were affected at the destination level, with most establishments closed and, in some cases, where total lockdowns were enforced, there was no domestic tourism to help the hospitality industry to some extent at the local level. 'Stay-at-home' policies and social distancing policies were reinforced, which ultimately led to the closure of places and businesses. According to Elliot (2020), in response to the pandemic restrictions imposed, many cancellations were recorded in the hospitality industry and the industry as a whole. Hotel occupancy rates dropped drastically. For example, Italy, one of the first and worst affected countries,

recorded about 90% booking cancelations in Rome in the first days of the pandemic, and 80% in Sicily (Mensah, 2020).

Restaurants were also affected, so most of the employees in this sector were laid off, as shops were temporarily closed, while some were completely closed (Ozili & Arun, 2020). Supportively, Elliot (2020) reported about 24 million jobs lost worldwide. In monetary terms, losses of about USD 150 billion occurred globally due to the hotel industry outages. The pandemic did not leave us unscathed.

In summary, the literature describes travel as a modern form of transportation that allows people to travel the world in a luxurious manner, but with the possibility of increasing disease mobility (Tatem et.al., 2006). It is further argued that the travel sector has high chances of inviting suboptimal crisis situations due to its hypermobility and interconnectedness with the global economy (Hall, 2020). In other words, travel is highly responsible for the increase in pandemic cases. Gossling et. al. (2020) agree, identifying some of the practices that support the spread of the pandemic, including various transportation methods. The authors also point to other facilitating modes, such as human density, food consumption characteristics, and the rate at which the population is growing. Their conjecture may be correct, considering that one of the ways to control the spread of the virus is through social distancing and quarantine. Given previous reports and discussions, it is a proven fact that the novel coronavirus (COVID -19) has a high impact on H-H transmission and ultimately thrives in large populations. And because the virus is asymptomatic, it is a deadly catalyst when traveling because it takes a while for infected patients to show initial symptoms of illness. For these reasons, too, reports again show that the hospitality, travel and tourism industry is one of the most affected sectors worldwide.

2.3.4 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Ecosystem

COVID -19 also impacts the environment and the ecosystem at large. First, some scientists have observed that the ecosystem and some anthropogenic impacts on biodiversity increase the risk of infection and disease (Petersen et.al., 2016; Wu et al., 2017). When asked about the impacts COVID-19 on the ecosystem and its surroundings, some positive impacts were found. Due to the global lockdown, the world was in a calm state and so was the environment. Streets never seen were empty of the hustle and bustle of vehicles and people rushing through in their daily lives. Streets, parks, sidewalks, squares, gardens and famous cities were remarkably clean. The world was calm and seemingly at a stretch. The BBC News (2020) ; Crossly (2020) agree with the ideas as they also reported sightings of animals moving freely on the streets in the countries and even highlighted the calmness in the air that was visible and experienced at that time. It seemed to be a means for nature to heal itself and a supposed call to sustainable practices, as noted by some scholars (Brouder, 2020; Crossly, 2020)

2.3.5 Impacts of COVID-19 on International Business

Significantly, and importantly to note, the novel coronavirus has impacted not only the global tourism industry, but ultimately international business. The impact of COVID - 19 is significant to international business in that there have been restrictions on movement within countries. Before the pandemic swept through nations, free movement between countries allowed for quick business transactions. Some regional trade blocs that were necessitated by free movement between countries have been altered by the closing of borders (Ratten, 2020). While countries like Spain, which are members of European Union, have stopped travel between neighboring countries, they

have still maintained their membership in the EU. Scenarios like these are a perfect example of how trade is being restricted and affecting international business.

While concern was expressed and action was called for on a global level, some governments had to deal with the pandemic on a national level. Looking at the international business scenario, some international institutions have also dealt with the pandemic at different levels (e.g. national, regional and international). According to Ratten (2020), physical social interactions are of paramount importance in forming cohesive relationships. However, given the restrictions that have been enforced internationally and in some individual states, there have been remarkable effects on the economy. It goes without saying that many countries have de-internized, the aforementioned Spain being a case in point.

Bans on mass gatherings and calls for social distancing have been the order of the day to control the spread of the virus, yet some business transactions require some form of gathering. While many businesses have moved to the online market to comply with state-by-state conditions, business generally has not been the same, similar negative impacts have been notable (e.g., decline in profits). The pressure on governments and their handling of the crisis has been remarkable, ultimately leading to more tension in international trade.

Outside of the tourism industry, there are other sectors that have been affected by the pandemic. The sports industry, for example, has been massively affected. People used to gather to watch the Olympics, marathons, and car races, to name a few, but since the outbreak of the pandemic, that is no longer the case. In fact, all events have been canceled, some famous marathons around the world that people would normally travel

to attend have been canceled. In the one case noted, where a marathon was held in the US, people were forbidden to go out into the streets to watch and cheer on the athletes, as has been the case in previous years. The streets were empty with only the athletes running in them.

In summary, the impact of the novel coronavirus, COVID -19, on the international scene was remarkable. Due to the nature of the infectious disease, which is asymptomatic, there is a possibility that patients who carry it may unknowingly transmit it to others. The travel industry played a large part in the spread of the virus, which was initially a problem in only one state in China and was never thought to have had the impact it later did. Within a very short time, the virus had spread to other regions of the world and terrified the world. Strict measures were taken to contain the virus, such a global lockdown, curfews in countries, striving for social distancing at all times, protective measures (wearing masks and constant disinfecting) were affected. Travel restrictions were among the measures taken, which ultimately led to a decline in international arrivals in the tourism sector, while border closures affected some international trade activities between states. Lives were affected as COVID -19 many people lost their loved ones. The quality of life of some people was also affected after they lost their jobs as businesses closed due to low sales and of course as a result of the total closure of states. Although the situation seems to have eased a bit, with some countries halfway functioning but under strict control measures, it is not yet known if businesses will return to the old ways of operating or if they will have to adapt to the new normal or seek more sustainable ways of operating.

Chapter 3

THE CASE OF FAMAGUSTA

This chapter presents a detailed account of the case study and also brings in the city of Famagusta in North Cyprus. The first part of the chapter describes the destination in general, and second part followed by a brief description of the city study. The last part of the chapter gives an overview of the type of tourism in the city of Famagusta.

3.1 Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Cyprus is the third largest island in the Mediterranean (Arici, Erturk, & Orcan, 2014; Mallinson, 2006), after Sicily and Sardinia. According to Mallinson, (2006) the island Eastern Mediterranean is located at GPS coordinates of 350 N and 33 E0. The island is divided into two, i.e. the North and South Cyprus, where the north of Cyprus, covers about 3335km² total area and occupies about 9251km² of land, with about 5916km² belonging to the southern part of the island (Oezverel, 2014). The neighboring countries of Cyprus include Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt and Greece.

Going back in history, the island attracted some very powerful empires including the Venetians, Arabs, Romans, Byzantines and the Ottomans (Mallinson, 2006). In the early 20th century, in 1960 to be exact, a few years after the First World War, Cyprus gained sovereignty. The island included the Greek and Turkish nationalities, which in the long run faced some challenges that led to serious conflicts, which eventually led to the division of the island into two parts, namely the north and South Cyprus. The southern side of the island is recognized as republic of Cyprus while the northern is

recognized as Turkish republic of Northern Cyprus, hence the name Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). Despite the conflicts and the division of the island (as of 2004), the republic of Cyprus island is recognized by the European Union (EU). Northern Cyprus, as an individual state, is not recognized to other states in the world except Turkey, which recognized it (Mahrum & Jones, 2009).

Below in figure 1 and 2 is a map of Cyprus. Figure 1 shows generally where Cyprus is located on the Mediterranean Sea next to its neighboring countries. Figure 2, on the other hand, shows the political map of Cyprus, given the existing division as a result of the conflicts of the two nationalities.



Figure 3.1: Cyprus Location on the Globe

The above map, which is hereby entitled, Figure 1 is a map showing where Cyprus lies. And it also shows the surrounding countries.

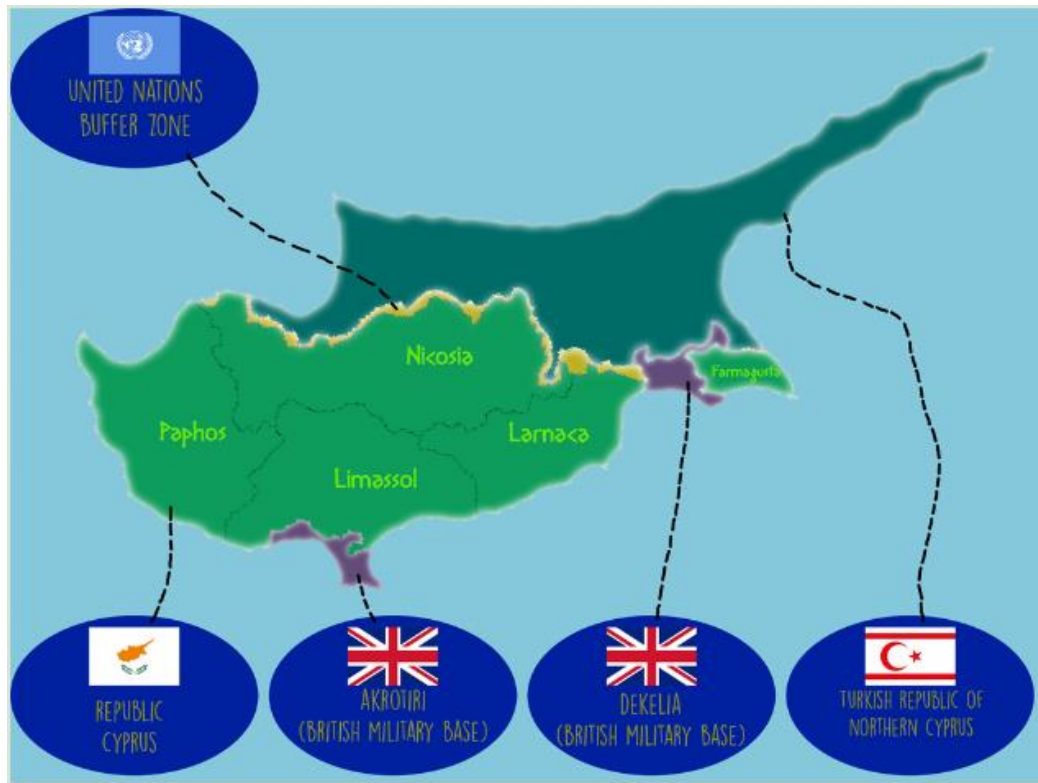


Figure 3.2: Political Map of Cyprus

Source: <https://www.deviantart.com/iasonkeltenkreuzler/art/Political-DeFacto-Map-of-Cyprus-664526652>

The above map, Figure 2, is a political map of Cyprus showing the two main divisions of the island. The area with the dark shade of green is the northern side of the island, recognize by Turkey, hence the name TRNC. The lighter shade of green on the map represents the Republic of Cyprus of the island, which is the located in southern part. Due to the conflict that surrounds the island to this day, the United Nations has taken control to enforce peace between the nations, hence the map above also shows the UN intervention buffer zone in yellow.

The TRNC, operates with a free market economy. The economy of the Northern Cyprus consists of the public sector, trade, education and tourism. Climatically, the days are sunny with some rainfall in the winter months. The weather is generally warm and the summer predominantly lasts much longer (6 months maximum, May to

October), while the winter months are between November and March. It is almost certain that the predominant seasons on the island are summer and winter, with brief experiences of the autumn and spring seasons. Due to the fact that it is an island surrounded by water, and due to the long summer periods, the main things enjoyed on the island are sun, sea and sand. In fact, it is the 3 that make the island a desirable holiday destination.

As for the population, the northern side of the island is home to about 300,000 people (World Population Review, 2020). The country is thriving and generating revenue from agriculture, export trade, education and tourism. As far as tourism on the island is concerned, it is characterized by two forms of tourism, namely mass tourism and educational tourism. Although there are other forms of tourism such as gambling tourism, but the above two surpass all other forms. In view of the fact that tourism is a notable sector in North Cyprus, and tourists actually visit the island for one reason or the other, researching on the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism at the city destination was found suitable for the study. However, the study would be limited to one city, Famagusta, one of the places visited by tourists and also hosting educational tourists. Famagusta, is the second largest city in North Cyprus, it is also one of the sought-after tourists' resorts, hosting some of the most beautiful beaches hence its ability to offer sun, sea and sand experiences. The city also has a beautiful historical artefact, an interesting factor to the tourists as well. The city also boasts one of the first and biggest universities on the island drawing in a sizeable number of international students. Eastern Mediterranean University is the largest university on the island, a highly sought-after educational facility from all over the globe. From the early 80s, the university opened its doors to foreign students, with its source mainly being from Turkey, the Middle East and Africa

Literature indicates that tourism on the island of Cyprus dates back to the 1930s when British colonialists took leave from their operations in Egypt during the height of summer (Warner, 1999). Warner further confirms that tourism on the island developed after the island's independence in the 1960s, due to the growing rate of cheap, reliable air travel, along with the rising incomes of citizens in colder countries. Thus, they sought warmer destinations and visited Cyprus, which is located on the Mediterranean Sea and is characterized by a warmer climate.

In the 1980s, the TRNCs' economy moved from manufacturing to services, with particular attention paid to tourism and higher education (Katirciouglu, 2010). Various activities have been undertaken to promote tourism in the TRNC, including gambling tourism. Although gambling is not legalized in either part of the island, many casinos have been opened on North Cyprus to promote tourist arrivals from South Cyprus and Turkey, as Katirciouglu (2010) further stated. In other words, while other forms of tourism exist today, the increase of tourism on the island develops from gambling tourism.

Also, very notable on the island and a major contributor to the economy is the rise of higher education. In the early 80's, more colleges were built, initially attracting students from South Cyprus and Turkey, eventually attracting more interest from Africa, Europe and the Middle East. As a result, thousands of international student's flocks to the island every year in search of education. According to Katirciouglu (2010), travel to higher educational institutions can be referred to as student tourism. Tourism in Northern Cyprus as such is characterized by international and educational tourism. International tourism is when tourists travel to the island to enjoy the sun, sea and sand among many other historical attractions with which the island is embedded. While

educational tourism is characterized by the annual arrival of students for educational purposes.

In conclusion, tourism is thriving in the northern part of the island. The summer months are basically the best months for the country as it hosts masses of tourists on its land. Famagusta is the second largest city on the northern side with some historical attractions along with long beautiful beaches, so it is a well sought-after recreational city and usually full of tourists in good seasons.

3.2 Famagusta

Famagusta is a small town on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea on the East side of the island, TRNC. It is located on the east coast of Cyprus and has a population of about 42 500 people (as of July 2020) (UN, World Population Review). It is one of the largest and most populous cities in the TRNC and belies the nation's capital, Nicosia or Lefkosa. Famagusta as a city is a very beautiful and quite attractive destination as it is embedded with rich history, beautiful architecture, crystal clear sea water, golden sand and social cultural life (Cyprus, 2018). Before tourism, the city was based on agriculture which is still practiced but in moderation as tourism has taken over. As the country has basically invested in education, educational tourism has risen as one of the activities taking place in the country. And because the city is located on the coastline of the Mediterranean Sea, it is generally littered with some pristine beaches coupled with the good weather that prevails in the country as well as the historical sites in the city. These circumstances make Famagusta as an international tourist destination.

Chapter 4

METHODOLOGY

Chapter four (4) is the research methodology. The chapter explains the methodology that was used to conduct the research. A detailed account of the research instruments that were used to collect data is explained. More specifically, the following sections explain the research design, sampling strategies and research instruments.

4.1 Research design

The research follows qualitative descriptive research methods. A qualitative descriptive research study, seeks to understand and discover the phenomenon or perspectives of the sample or individuals involved (Caelli, Ray, & Mill, 2003). A qualitative research method is mostly used by researchers to gain deeper insights into the problem or subject matter. According to Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, (2006), it helps to define a problem. In other words, and in support of the terms, Trochin and Williams (2006) state that qualitative research methods help researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the issues of interest while they can also be used to explore nuances that relate to the problem at hand. Qualitative research methods help to explain a phenomenon, they involve the use of qualitative data such as documents, observations and interviews. According to Bryman and Bell (2007) qualitative data collection methods involve collecting data through the use of focus groups, triads, dyads, in-depth interviews, continuous observation, bulletin boards and ethnographic participation. Neergaard, Oleson, Anderson, and Sondergaard (2009) could not put it better as they agree that the use of a qualitative descriptive approach is relevant in

research when information is needed from those who experience the phenomenon being studied. Furthermore, as the authors acknowledge that, qualitative research methods are more relevant when the researcher has time and resource constraints or when mixed-method research is being conducted.

Compared to alternative research methods, such as the quantitative research approach, which is rigid and static because it quantifies the problem by generating numerical data that is then converted into useful statistics and qualitative research approaches, as mentioned in the paragraph above, are more concerned with gathering more insight and understanding of the problem. And this is achieved through probing, another way of obtaining information from respondents. For example, a researcher can gain more information by asking more questions about a particular topic depending on the information he/she gets from the respondents. Also, if a researcher does not understand an answer during the research, he/she has the opportunity to ask further, whereas this is very unlikely to happen in a quantitative research method as this form of research is more structured. In other words, qualitative research methods are more flexible compared to the quantitative approach and allow the researcher to explore the matter more deeply based on the target samples.

Considering the given comparisons that show the strengths and weaknesses of the research methods, this study has chosen to use the qualitative research approach because it is a flexible method that allows the researcher to be fully involved in the process. It differs from the quantitative research approach in that the researcher has no contact or involvement with the subject or sample. For example, in a quantitative research design, the researcher may use postal questionnaires (Bryman & Bell, 2007) as such, in this case the researcher has no contact with the subject and cannot develop

a relationship in any way. The qualitative research approach on the other hand allows the researcher to further explore a phenomenon. In the event that the researcher and the interviewee do not understand each other in any way, this method gives both parties room to ask questions and seek understanding.

The researcher found the qualitative research approach more appropriate as it is an unstructured way of collecting data (Bryman & Bell, 2007, Trochim & William, 2006 & Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 2006). In addition, the researcher found the exploratory approach most suitable for the research as it observes the research sample more than the quantitative ways where the researcher takes the lead instead (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In addition, a qualitative research design collects rich data compared to its counterpart called "hard data" because it is robust and ambiguous (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Trochim & William, 2006).

It is imperative to note that the qualitative research methods also have its weaknesses, even though it were considered suitable for the current research study. For example, the qualitative data exhibits weaknesses in its inability to capture data from, and failure to extrapolate data to the whole nation, it is also time consuming (Mweshi, 2020). Furthermore, the interviews, even though they ably target the area of research to gather full insights into the subject matter, they tend to show and carry some form of prejudice in the event the interview fails to articulate questions (Saunders, et al., 2009).

In summary, the researcher found the qualitative research approach more conducive to the study because of its flexibility in collecting data. It allowed the respondents to be studied in their natural environment. In addition, the exploratory research method was most suitable for the study because it involves small sample studies that allow for

quality data collection. It also allows the researcher to gain further insight into a phenomenon (Barret & Kirwan, 2009). The literature supports this, the qualitative research method gives deep meanings of a situation and it helps to hypothesize what is going on in a situation (Barret & Kirwan, 2009; Hall, 2008).

4.2 The case study technique and the study setting

In the exploratory research designs, a case study of Famagusta, North Cyprus is used to examine the impact of COVID -19 on tourism in the country. A case study involves an in-depth investigation of a single or specific subject (Pearson & Bacon, 2007) (such as a group, a person or place) and it seeks to understand the underlying principles of a phenomenon. It is associated with theory building and testing (Bryman & Bell, 2007) and is therefore most appropriate for the present study. As the above authors note, a case study involves obtaining detailed and intensive data from a single case and they are used to assess whether theories and models apply to a phenomenon, especially when little or no information is known about the topic at hand (Pearson & Bacon, 2007).

4.3 Sampling strategy

The target population of the current study includes some tourism stakeholders in the city of Famagusta, North Cyprus. More specifically, the respondents included academics from the Faculty of Tourism in eastern Mediterranean university, a travel agency, supermarket, taxi operators, hotel and restaurant managers. A target population can be defined as the total number of people or elements that can be drawn from a sample to be studied. Thus, the sample constitutes the group of elements or entities that participate in the study. Accordingly, the target population defines the elements that a research seeks to generalize (Cox, 2008). Defining a target population in research is important because it helps determine whether or not the samples are

appropriate for analysis. As mentioned above, the sample forms a part of the population under study. Thus, the sample of the present work consists of 11 participants from different organizations within and or related to tourism in the city of Famagusta in North Cyprus. Detailed demographic information of the participants was excluded from the study, although respondents gave a brief introduction on themselves (names, profession and duration of their careers).

Considering the importance of data in research and how it helps to establish the meaning of a theoretical framework, data collection is very crucial in research (Bernard, 2017). Accordingly, the manner in which data is collected must be done with sound judgment (Tongco, 2007). With this in mind, a purposive sampling strategy was used, which in some cases is also referred to as judgmental sampling. Purposive or judgmental sampling strategy can be used when there are few items that are able to provide information about the subject (Lavrakas, 2008). According to Etikan (2016), purposive sampling technique involves the researcher selecting participants purposively based on the characteristics that the respondents have about the subject matter. In other words, purposive sampling method focuses on certain characteristics of the population of interest and those who are able to answer the research question. In other views, it is a non-random sampling method that does not require underlying theories or a specific number of respondents (Etikan, 2016). According to Bernard's (2017) observations, it involves the researcher locating individuals who have knowledge on the topic and are also willing to share the information.

Purposive or judgmental sampling is used in qualitative research studies as it helps to select and categorize items with rich data in a particular unit or sample (Patton, 2002). It practically involves the selection of elements, groups or individuals with sound or

competent knowledge about the subject matter (Creswell, 2011). Additionally, its sampling strategy involves the availability of participants, their willingness to participate, and their ability to express and communicate their experiences in a reflective manner, in addition to knowledge and experience (Bernard, 2017) (Etikan, 2016).

In simpler terms and in summary, the purposive sampling method means focusing on specific characteristics of the population of interest that are likely to answer the research question. In the case of the current study, which aims to evaluate the impact of COVID -19 on tourism in the case of Famagusta, North Cyprus, the best people to answer the research question were those who are involved in tourism to some extent. In this case, the researcher turned to people who could give him adequate information about the subject. The technique of purposive sampling also known as selective or subjective sampling strategy was adopted in this Thesis to identify, categorize and interview eleven (11) direct and indirect tourism stakeholders (summarized in the following table).

Table 4.1: Interviewees names, affiliation and job titles

Participant Name	Affiliation	Job Titles
Respondent 11	Eastern Mediterranean University	Academician
Respondent 10	Eastern Mediterranean University	Academician
Respondent 9	Pars Tourism	Travel Agent
Respondent 8	Eastern Mediterranean University	Academician
Respondent 7	Transport	Taxi Operator
Respondent 6	Transport	Taxi Operator
Respondent 5	Food & Beverage	Branch Manager
Respondent 4	Supply Market	Supermarket owner
Respondent 3	Hotelier	Hotel Owner
Respondent 2	Hotelier	Front office manager
Respondent 1	Food & Beverage	Restaurant manager

4.4 Data collection Instruments

Data were collected primarily through in-depth personal interviews. In face-to-face interviews, also known as in-person interviews, the researcher seeks information and discuss feedback with participants. Depending on the interviewee's feedback, an interviewer may ask for more information and have an unclear phenomenon clarified. In the event that respondents do not understand a question asked by the interviewer, they may ask for clarification. In-depth interviews create complex power shifts between researcher and interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). Therefore, in-depth interviews were deemed appropriate for this study as they allowed the researcher to ask respondents for further information on topics, they found interesting and that contributed to answering the research question.

4.5 Data Collection Procedure

Over a period of three weeks in the month of December 2020, data was collected from 11 different individuals directly involved in tourism. Specifically, selected hotels, restaurants, travel agencies and transportation companies in the city of Famagusta (North Cyprus) were interviewed. Participants were interviewed in their work environment and each interview lasted approximately 25 to 30 minutes. Prior to the research, the researcher prepared about nine (9) open-ended questions that served as an interview guide. However, the researcher was not limited to these questions as secondary questions were also asked that arose from the discussions to gain deeper insights into the subject matter.

Prior to the research, a pilot survey was run on the structured interview questions prepared by the researcher. The researcher ran a pilot study on three respondents separate from the research respondents. This was done to gauge if respondents would

understand the questions with ease and or if there was need to adjust any questions. Pilot studies are most important to research as they help increase the possibility of research success. They help create a good study design and they help reduce unnecessary errors.

The researcher used both English and Turkish during the interviews. However, the interviews conducted in Turkish were translated in English to allow for data analysis and reporting. Prior to the research and interviews, the researcher obtained permission from the participants to collect data. The researcher also took it upon himself to explain the objectives of the study to the interviewees. Confidentiality of the information and its exclusive use for study purposes were assured to the participants before the study. Participants were also informed that their responses would be recorded to allow for later analysis and reporting, therefore no recordings were made without the respondent's knowledge. The audio files of the responses were later transcribed and coded using Microsoft Word.

4.6 Data Collection

Data were collected from various tourism stakeholders, i.e. hoteliers, restaurant managers, academics, travel agents, super marketer and local taxi operators from the city of Famagusta, North Cyprus. Although personal information was obtained about the respondents by asking them to describe themselves, no specific demographic details were included. For the most part, data was collected face-to-face, while some respondents chose to respond via email. Thus, a total of eleven (11) interviews were conducted, the information from which was later transcribed during analysis. Transcribing the data is an important step and action during the analysis as it enables the researcher to analyse the data accurately and it also helps to notice unanticipated

phenomena (Bailey, 2008). Despite the challenges in data collection, there was a 100% response rate as the researcher initially aimed to interview 11 interviewees and this was achieved.

4.7 Study Sample

As highlighted earlier, the sample of the study included tourism stakeholders in Famagusta, North Cyprus. Below is a small table of respondents included in the study sample.

Business Sector	Hotelier	Academician	Supermarket	Transport Taxis	Travel Agents	Restaurant/ cafe	Total
# Interviewed	2	3	1	2	1	2	<u>11</u>

In summary, among the respondents were at least three (3) academics, considering that the country as a whole thrives on educational tourism, while Famagusta as a city hosts one of the largest and most attractive universities. Two (2) restaurant managers, two (2) hoteliers, one (1) super marketer, two (2) taxi drivers and one (1) travel agent were interviewed. While the demographics in terms of age, gender and education level are not very clear, it was very clear that all participants were residents of Famagusta and they were tourism personnel and or very well connected to the tourism sector.

Chapter 5

DATA ANALYSIS & FINDINGS

The chapter provides a detailed account of the data analysis and findings of the study, in relation to the findings in the literature review of the study.

5.1 Research Findings

Approximately nine (9) questions were asked to collect data on the research, the following paragraphs will therefore report on the participants' findings. The first part of the research findings is given in context with the findings in literature review, while the second and final part of the study gives a descriptive report and summary on the additional questions asked to gather data.

5.2 Impacts of COVID-19 On the Various Business Sector

All respondents were asked to answer how each of the sectors is affected by COVID - 19. Based on the responses of all respondents, it is undeniable that COVID -19 has left and is still leaving its mark on the various sectors represented in the sample. Like the rest of the world, Famagusta, North Cyprus, was not spared when the world went into a global lockdown after the first signs of high human-to-human transmission of the virus. North Cyprus also followed suit, closing all entrances and exits. All interviewees confirmed at least the shock of businesses having to close for at least 1.5 to 2 months while the world digested what had happened and searched for solutions to combat and revive the global economy. It can be inferred that all respondents in their various sectors heeded the global call to shut down the entire world so that businesses were temporarily closed, curfew and total lockdowns were imposed and all had to comply

until a certain time when the curfew and lockdown rules were lifted so that business could continue to some extent but with some precautionary measures. In short, North Cyprus and Famagusta literally followed the trends and rules imposed by the global bodies to contain and control the spread of the virus.

The literature confirms that the travel and tourism industry is one of the most affected sectors by the pandemic, which ultimately affects travel supply and demand (Nicola, et al., 2020). The respondents in the current study could not agree less with these terms as they expressed the same sentiments in their responses. The results clearly show that the tourism sector in Famagusta, North Cyprus, has suffered from the effects of COVID -19 and although the world is again working with precautionary measures to contain and control the virus, the effects are still very visible and it will most likely take a while for the sector to return to normal. Respondent nine (9), a senior executive in the travel agency sector, noted that the impact of COVID -19 on the tourism industry was remarkable and rated it 100%, although other sectors were also affected. Precisely, they had the following to say:

“I think all sectors have suffered from COVID-19, but the tourism sector has suffered one hundred percent from COVID-19, not North Cypress I do not know We are just talking about North Cyprus all over the world we have suffered a lot from COVID-19, both mentally and financially, and it was a really difficult time, now it is getting better, but we will deal with In the beginning the number of victims was very small, then it started to spread and all the flights were canceled, one by one, the borders and airports were closed, we had a lot of passengers who had one ticket, the last 30 cats, trying to book another one, they could not get to the other one, they tried a few times, they asked for return flights and the airlines collapsed.”

Respondent one (1), a restaurant manager who has been in the industry for over 20 years, could not agree less with the findings as he also pointed out the significant impact of the pandemic on tourism in general and on Cyprus. They had this to say,

“We had a massive blow as a tourism sector, all sectors were affected except producers, we are now affected as a tourism sector, the circulation of people in the world has stopped.”

An experienced academic within the travel and tourism sector (respondent, 11) who teaches at one of the largest state universities in North Cyprus also confirmed the impact of COVID-19 on all forms of tourism, although some sectors such as internet services, the technology industry and the serviced home industry have instead seen a boost as evidenced by the high turnover in these sectors.

“Of course, all sectors that have gone for technology have suffered during COVID-19, and higher education has suffered because we have had to move to online education... In fact COVID -19 has affected all industries except very few like market industry, serving house and technology industry, internet industry these all have naturally increase their business: Laptops, iPad, phones have been sold much more than before because the house has been closed and this is the only tool to communicate globally, but the rest of the businesses in the service industry have all closed down....”

As already seen in the literature (Elliot, 2020; Ozili & Arun, 2020; Ugur & Akbiyi, 2020, to mention a few) and from the few responses highlighted in the paragraphs above, the tourism sector has been greatly affected by the pandemic. However, the impact has been significant not only in the industry but also in other sectors both negatively and positively. While some businesses were forced to close down and suffer revenue losses, the reports also revealed that some sectors, such as internet services, fared better and saw revenue increases as shuttered people took advantage of their services. In addition, while education tourism as part of the tourism industry has been

affected as fewer international students are coming to the country, there have been no significant losses in the education sector as students have continued to register online. In other words, other sectors that normally benefit from educational tourism were affected, which was noted in the responses of the super marketer and local taxi operators. Below is feedback given by respondent four (4), the super marketer;

“My customer is afraid of being transmitted because of not coming, that people are very afraid. There are many people who order their food from take-away restaurant at home, in this case, our work is reduced, even wearing a mask is not enough to comfort. My student customers are not on the island at the moment, they are almost unable to come, and I have no tourist customers because it is closed on flights. COVID-19 because our number of tourists has decreased. No tourists come; locals do not go out.”

A significant number of local taxi operators rely on business from international students, but due to the lockdown and closure of entry and exit points into the country, students who had travelled home were unable to return to the country, and also due to the current online courses, students preferred to stay with their families and study from home. Cognitive of the above, herewith sentiments by one taxi driver relying on educational tourists for business:

“Like the whole world, our industry has also affected. We saw the bottom in terms of business. No tourists, my student customers, which consist of a small portion, start distance education. I see the industry as dead because the military's permits are lifted and the local people have their own cars”.

Respondent seven (7), on the same matter had the following to say:

“The school has switched to distance learning. Most students have gone to live with their families.”

Evidently business operators indirectly linked to tourism have suffered as a result of the novel corona virus.

5.2.1 Impacts of COVID-19, Famagusta: A Tourism Stakeholders' perspective

As highlighted in the literature, the travel and tourism sector are a highly interconnected system (Ugur & Akbiyi, 2020) on which various other sectors depend, so disruptions in this sector ultimately have an impact on the other sectors. In the case of tourism in Famagusta, the country thrives on international and educational tourism. While it relies on its pristine beaches to experience sun, sea and sand, educational tourism has greatly boosted the country's economy. In addition, there are other sectors indirectly related to tourism that benefit from the two main forms of tourism, namely the hospitality industry, supermarket and local transportation (e.g. local taxi drivers). While the world has experienced a number of epidemics and pandemics, none have been as severe as the novel coronavirus pandemic that paralyzed the world for a while.

As a result of closing borders, enforcing travel restrictions and travel bans on both inbound and outbound travel (Ozili & Arun, 2020), North Cyprus did not sit idle, especially in the early months of the COVID -19 scare. As the world went into a global lockdown, North Cyprus was also closed during the months of March to May. For a good two months, entry and exit points to Cyprus were closed in the first months of 2020, there were some strict rules on who was allowed to enter the country. Tourists were not allowed in; even more so, new international students were not allowed into the country, as would be the case for some nationalities if they were only staying temporarily. As with the curfews imposed in most cities around the world (Ranasinghe et.al. 2020), there were also some curfews in the country. In the early months of 2020, as COVID-19 spread across the world, North Cyprus imposed a total lockdown with very strict curfews that all residents had to abide by, with hefty fines for non-compliance. For at least 2 months the streets of Famagusta were quiet with little to no

movement. Shops were temporarily closed, and some eventually closed after the economy reopened.

Analysis of responses from participants in the current study revealed that almost all respondents noted temporary closure of shops in all areas. All shops, restaurants, cafes and some hotels were closed. The only hotels that were operating were those that had quarantined tourists and staff after the first cases of COVID -19 were recorded in North Cyprus. Respondent number four (4), a local supermarket whose business came from both locals and international visitors, reported a loss of customers as a result of the restrictions. Although the respondent is not necessarily involved in tourism, he is an indirect beneficiary of tourism as his customers are made up of the international students in the country, tourists and of course the locals. However, due to the total lockdown in the first few months of the pandemic surge, some supermarkets had to be closed to both the locals and the international students. In the local transport sector, not necessarily related to tourism but very much related to tourism networks, business for all local taxis collapsed in the first few months, and with air travel suspended for over a year after the pandemic began, business has not returned to normal. The following are the statements of a local taxi driver, respondent seven (7);

“We were quite affected by COVID-19. Whereas before we did not have time to sit down, now we are thinking where to sit down and spend time as the hotels are closed. There is no such thing as tourists here. Because of the virus, no one can come here because it's not safe, and you can tell because everything is closed. The airports are closed, there is no transportation.”

From the above, it is evident that although the restrictions have been lifted and some precautionary measures have been taken to ensure business operations, the economy is still affected today. Where business used to boom, there is hardly any business today as a result of the loss of international arrivals. Another taxi driver noted that some

passengers now prefer to walk because they are afraid of contracting the virus, even though taxi drivers clean their vehicles to ensure the safety of their customers.

In the case of the higher education sector, this has helped the economy to some extent. While there has been no impact in financial terms because students have managed to register online. Other ancillary beneficiaries of this have instead suffered the loss. The dormitories that have benefited from housing international students in the country have lost business due to the absence of new students or those who have left the country to return to their home countries. The local transport sector, as well as the food and beverage sector that once catered for students, have been badly affected. Where business once boomed, it is now almost non-existent due to the elimination of international arrivals. Another taxi driver noted that some passengers now prefer to walk because they are afraid of contracting the virus, even though taxi drivers disinfect their vehicles to ensure the safety of their customers.

In the case of the higher education sector, this has helped the economy to some extent. While there has been no impact in financial terms because students have managed to register online. Other ancillary beneficiaries of this have instead suffered the loss. The dormitories that have benefited from housing international students in the country have lost business due to the absence of new students or those who have left the country to return to their home countries. The local transportation sector, as well as the food and beverage sector that once served students, have been hit hard. The researcher particularly observed some restaurants and cafes unable to open their doors after the global lockdown. Some businesses opened but struggled to survive in the second quarter of the year, eventually closing altogether.

In conclusion, the impact of the novel coronavirus is very significant not only in the tourism sector but also in all other business sectors within the city of Famagusta, North Cyprus. As in the rest of the world during the first months when the virus hit the world and became a global pandemic, all businesses in Famagusta were closed for at least three months, after which some strict curfews and precautionary measures were imposed, which are still effective today to maintain business operations.

5.2.2 Impacts of COVID-19 on Lives

Obviously, the impact of the coronavirus declared a global pandemic was and is a horror to the world. While the world and industry are not immune to crises and events, what COVID -19 has wrought has been by far the worst on record. As noted in the WHO reports, its impact has shrunk the industry relatively, bringing it back to where it was almost 30 years ago, when the industry was struggling and saw very little in the way of international arrivals, revenue and taxes. While epidemics such as SARS and avian flu hit the world and had an impact on the global economy, the main impact was mostly suffered from a regional perspective (Blake, et.al., 2003; Kuo, et.al., 2008). It is known that the SARS outbreak in 2003 had an impact on the industry even in the 21st century, however, it was short-lived and the impact was mainly felt in China (De Lacy, 2005). However, this was not the case with the novel coronavirus COVID -19, another pandemic that hit the world in the 21st century. The impact on people's lives is obviously considerable from a global perspective. Several deaths were recorded in the most affected countries (Spain, Italy and United Kingdom) (Hall et.al, 2020). North Cyprus was one of the few countries with few coronavirus cases and fewer deaths. By May 2020, a total of four deaths were recorded in Northern Cyprus, while thousands of people were dying every day in the highly developed and healthy economy at that time (Sultanoglu, Baddal, Suer and Sanildag, 2020, Vois Cyprus, 2020).

The virus did not spare anyone, no matter how stable some economies are. As a result of the measures taken to contain the virus, the literature states that offices, factories, schools and shops were closed (Gossling et.al, 2020), including in the case of Famagusta, North Cyprus, where schools and all forms of shops were closed, as evidenced by the respondents' feedback. The tenth respondent (10), an academic at a local university in Famagusta, had this to say.

“...other private businesses in Famagusta have suffered a lot from the COVID-19, they lost many businesses that closed, many employees that became unemployed, and the situation of the city of Famagusta is very difficult because many business owners had to close the restaurants, boutiques, shops and everything, and the investments are postponed and the homeowners could not rent their house anymore.”

From a global perspective, many employees were laid off (Ozili & Arun, 2020). In contrast, given the respondents' feedback on the business sector that has suffered COVID - 19 and when asked how many employees have businesses lost as a result of the pandemic? Of the 11 respondents, only two respondents reported staff losses. More specifically, respondent four (4) reported about 20 - 25% in staff losses. On the other hand, respondent five (5) reported that he had to lay off about 20% of his staff, while about 15% were transferred to other companies and another 40% chose to leave their jobs and return to Turkey to be with their families. In some cases, such as the higher education sector, there was no experience of staff losses and some business operators considered it highly unethical to dismiss staff because of an unexpected event. Instead, alternatives were resorted to where staff worked part-time for half pay.

In some cases, employers even supported their employees by providing food during the pandemic because they could afford to pay salaries. In short, although the impact of COVID -19 on the economy was significant, it appears that most employees kept

their jobs. Faced with difficult conditions for all, some employers instead retained their staff. Nine of the eleven participants reported that they did not lose their staff, with at least two of them developing sustainable coping strategies for both the employer and the employee.

5.2.3 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Travel Industry

The travel industry was literally blamed for the spread of the virus throughout the world, leading to the first measure to contain the pandemic being to restrict or close all forms of travel throughout the world. Passingly, respondent seven (7) highlighted that there were no tourist arrivals as a result of the pandemic and due to the fact that borders have been closed hence as well as travel. Precisely, the respondent said the following

“There is no such thing as a tourist here. Because of the virus, no one can come here because it is not safe and that is evident by the fact that everything is closed. The airports are closed, there is no transportation”

Losses in the airline industry were noted (Georgiva, 2020; Ozili & Arun, 2020). As mentioned earlier, IATA is said to have recorded about \$200 billion in losses, so in some cases, such as American airlines, financial aid was sought to cover operating costs (Horowitz, 2020). Based on the responses of the participants, it is clear that the travel sector in North Cyprus was also affected. All respondents reported the closure of borders, airports and all entry and exit points in the country. Not only was international travel prohibited, but amid the full and partial closures, travel between cities and or near borders was restricted to not allowed at all. One travel agent reported that the travel industry experienced several booking cancellations where customers had to be given refunds. As a result of the lack of international flights into the country and the reduction of flights into the country, the local transport sector, such as taxis, has suffered immensely, losing revenue and profit. The number of working hours has

also been reduced due to some curfews imposed, affecting the overall sales. While turnover has not been good, drivers have benefited to some extent from the extra time to rest between business hours and also from the curfews imposed.

5.2.4 Impacts of COVID-19 on the Hospitality Sector

As a result of the imposed restrictions, hotels and restaurants around the world were closed. Hotels reported significantly low occupancy rates and room rates (Mensah, 2020). This was no different in the case of North Cyprus, especially for hotels in Famagusta. In the first months after the COVID -19 attacks, all hotel establishments closed restaurants, holiday homes and cafes. The only exception was for the hotels that brought the first cases of COVID -19 into the country. As the restrictions eased, more hotels were opened to cater for the returning residents and any visitors who came into quarantine. However, this did not make the situation any better for the hospitality industry, as the government instead subsidised the establishments instead of fully covering the required costs.

One hotelier, when asked how his business suffered as a result of COVID -19, had this to say:

“When Covid-19 first came out, it was with a German tourist. One of the people who was on the same plane stayed at our hotel. In the broadcasts of TV, we are mentioned as the first quarantine hotel. This caused a great depression in our hotel. The decision of the Ministry of Health that our staff in quarantine should stay indoors and not communicate with the outside world caused a loss of motivation. This brought uncertainty and fear. During the 15-day quarantine, we had a lot of contact with the Covid-19 patient. Later, when the 72-hour quarantine was over, we were quarantined again when we encountered a new case. After that, guests could no longer stay at the hotel. Flights were stopped. We were given many habits, such as being banned from going out and wearing masks. Because of the government decision, we were closed for a long time. We did not work for 4 months. When we started working again in August, we had no customers. Since the reservations we did not have changed with the government decision, when the flights stopped, it exploded all over the world at the same time”

This shows that while the COVID cases in Northern Cyprus were minimal, the hotels, restaurants and some accommodation businesses were affected to some extent. Indeed, one respondent highlighted that some holiday homes became redundant as a result. The responses also revealed that restaurants temporarily ceased operations, with some closing completely as soon as the closure was lifted. And although restaurants are still operating today, sales have dropped drastically as hours have been reduced due to the curfews. However, it is imperative to note that during the earlier period of the pandemic surge, there were significant, huge losses.

5.3 General Respondents' feedback on the Impacts of COVID-19

The following paragraphs show additional feedback from the interviews in relation to their experiences of the impact of COVID-19, in the case of Famagusta, Northern Cyprus.

5.3.1 Feedback on Customers and Income Losses incurred

When asked, what percentage of customers and revenue did you lose compared to the period before COVID-19? The general sample population was not specific in providing comparative figures. Three respondents reported no loss of customers and/or finances during the period, while the rest of the participants took some form of loss. On the customer side, for example, the higher education sector did not lose students per se, in fact it was reported that there were higher admissions figures in 2020/2021 compared to the previous year. In their precise words, one academician said the following:

“I do not know exactly why but we did not lose anything,”

However, this was in contrast to the taxi industry where there was a 100% loss of customers and finances and a significant drop in profits. An operator added that the few customers available prefer to walk rather than use the taxis for fear of transmitting

the virus as it is rarely known who was in the car and whether they had the virus or not. These fears come despite all the efforts and measures taken to contain the virus (e.g. sensitization, wearing masks, etc.).

Respondent 7 a taxi driver had the following to say: -

“We are almost 70% affected, now we are just trying to turn the wheel, but the house is advancing even though it is impassable, it is falling into the negative. Before we did not have time to sit down, we tried to finish the work, we could not reach the phones, unfortunately that is not the case now. The locals do not use taxis that much because almost everyone has a car, and of course there are students with cars.

In general, 60% of my customers were students and the remaining 40% were tourists. The 60% was made up of foreign students. I had two cars. My friend worked in one. But because of COVID-19, we had to part ways because the jobs went away because their earnings were also affected and I had to take them out. Right now, only me and my father are working”

While respondent 6 noted the following losses:

“We lost 100%. We are not doing business right now. Since my wife is a local Cypriot, I was one of the few taxis that could pass to Greek. Larnaca, Ayia Napa, etc. I was working hard on the Greek side. Therefore, my client was mostly tourists. The closing of the doors completely finished me for me.”

5.3.2 Feedback on Staff Losses due to the pandemic or other issues

When asked if there had been any staff absences due to the pandemic and or lack of motivation. At least two respondents reported staff losses. The first respondent (No. 4) reported that his company experienced a staff loss of 20-25% because the employees who had come from Turkey to work preferred to return during the pandemic and were family members. In the other case of staff loss, they had to lay off about 20% of their staff because the business suffered. Below is what a respondent had to say in this regard:

“. other staff members left because they were afraid, they were living in Turkey and went away when the pandemic does not want to return the moment was gone so I staff by 20-25%.”

The rest of the respondents retained their staff although all of them suffered from the normal effects of the pandemic such as closure of shops and no work in the country for almost two months.

“We did not lose anyone during the pandemic period, I work with 7 personnel, we provide boutique service and our cafe consists of 25 personnel.”

Respondent nine said the following on retaining their staff back after easing off the lockdown: -

“We did not lose anything for the first three months because of course our shop was closed and no one was working, but after that they came back. It was not ethical to ask them to leave, and we have to show each other both sides and be understanding of each other, so we asked them to work part time so they could get paid half as well.”

During the pandemic, some business owners parted with their business to run it alone to minimise operating costs, as reported by a taxi driver. No records were kept of employees who left work due to demotivation. In some cases, as mentioned in the discussion on impact on lives, some employers eventually took the urge to take care of their employees instead by offering them free accommodation and some food parcels for living expenses.

5.3.3 Feedback on precautions effects on business

The researcher asked whether participants experienced any impact on their business as a result of the precautions taken to contain the virus. Undoubtedly, as the world seemingly opened the doors for business, with some individual destinations implementing their own control measures. The most common precautions include social distancing, wearing masks, disinfection and quarantine when travelling. In the case of Famagusta, Northern Cyprus, it is mandatory for everyone to wear masks and

maintain social distance at all times. There are some regulations on gatherings where a certain number of people are expected to gather depending on the size of the halls. In responding to the questions, service operators remarkably reported a loss of customers as some people refused to comply with the measures. Three respondents reported that some clients refused to wear their masks when asked to do so; hence they did not use the service. The fourth respondent (4) noted the following: -

“It is boring for the client to stay with a mask and there are too many people who do not want to stay with the mask. As a result, we have lost customers and the number of people taking the paint off the mask and painting it themselves has increased.”

In other cases where customers have approached a shop without a mask, the operators have taken it upon themselves to get the customers one and in the event that the customers refuse and still insist on using the services, other measures have been taken such as fines. In this regard, Respondent 5, a restaurant manager, said the following:

“There are too many people who do not want to have a mask. Let's say we solve this problem slowly. The customer comes, we already give the mask by ourselves, we explain that there is a judgement rule who does not want to wear it, and if they do not want to wear it again, suddenly a controller can come and a fine can be written instead. For example, I myself feel incomplete if I do not have a mask for 5 minutes. Despite what we said, there are people who refuse the mask and leave, so there is a loss of customers.”

In other cases, most businesses were affected by the social distancing measures. One participant reported that his restaurant lost up to 40% of its tables due to the social distancing rules. In another case, it was noted that despite the precautions, there was a concern that staff could catch the virus from customers because the restaurants had customers enter wearing masks but eat without masks, so infection from symptomatic customers was possible.

5.3.4 Feedback on Government Support to Businesses

One of the questions aimed to find out whether the government provided assistance during the pandemic. Apparently, according to the participants' answers, there were some government assistance programs for businesses. However, not all businesses took advantage of these funds. A significant number of businesses were offered assistance of up to 1,500tl for their staff, while some businesses received profit-free loans and a small number did not take up the funds at all.

In light of the above views, a respondent said the following

“The state applied for 1500 TL support, but we could not benefit. Because the taxi is in private.”

Respondent 10 had the following to say about government support:

“Yes, certain regulations and rules and instructions that support institutions and organizations EMU was also supported, for example Social Security was supported by the government for certain. And etc. but of course the rest detailed numerical support gained by rector towards office adopted numerically he knew numerically of course all the regulations and decisions as taken by the government applies to EMU, because mainly EMU is a state university precautions.”

Part of the help some business got was via a non-profit loan. Business were offered interest free loans. One respondent (9) commented on it as following:

“...This kind of last-minute politics that the government is doing, opening and closing the airport and stopping other airlines from operating, is a big problem for us, especially the refund of the money and the government. They are starting to give a no-profit loan, and we have been using it, so it is very useful for the other agency.”

While some considered the interest free loan a means of help, others had mixed feelings about it. Respondent 3 had the following to say:

“The state has in no way helped the Famagusta's tourism, now or before. Until the government was of no use. We did not receive any loans during the pandemic period. We didn't get anything under the name of support. They are all lies. We started with our own effort. Even though the conditions in the state aid were me, it was really ridiculous that I needed money. I myself told this to the minister. This cannot be called a loan support program”

5.3.5 Feedback on Policy suggestions to minimise effects of COVID-19

One of the goals of the study is to learn the suggestions of those affected to minimise the effects of COVID-19. Obviously, the virus is going to be around for a while, as can already be seen by the ongoing disruptions around the globe. Vaccines are being talked about and are working in some countries, but not everywhere in the world, and there are no reports yet on the effectiveness of vaccines. In responding to the question, over half of the respondents emphasised the effectiveness of quarantines, testing and re-testing for COVID-19. Respondents pointed to the need for the government to implement strict quarantine procedures and ensure that visitors or travellers in quarantine are re-tested. A significant number of respondents maintained the need to block unnecessary entries into the country, more specifically suggestions were made to block educational travellers and gamblers. Respondent 4 had the following to say in this regard:

“The state had closed its doors but opened it in a short time. Thus, the virus spread again. People coming from abroad can be infected, so three-day gamblers should stop. Quarantine should be mandatory. The end of the virus will keep our country alive and make it safe for tourists to come. The quarantine period should be long and mandatory, after the virus is completely over, I think the student, tourist, and student will enter here.”

There were also calls for the search for and introduction of vaccines that fight the virus into the country, while an urgent need for concerted efforts by all concerned

stakeholders to minimise the impact of COVID-19 were raised. Below herewith a few of the respondents' sentiments; -

“I hope we will have the vaccination soon, that is another precaution that will help, everything will OK and we do not have a very well prepared Meadow Lake medical and the treatment structure, so if it spreads everywhere we will have a big serious problem, hopefully in the summer, maybe we will be open for the rotation...”

“The current quarantine policy should continue just fine. This is most important for our health. No matter how bad it is for the economy.”

5.3.6 Feedback on how to improve tourism in Famagusta

The researcher endeavoured to find out how tourism in Famagusta could be improved during and after COVID -19. It is without doubt that tourism sustains the economy, this was discussed in the literature and proved here in the above discussions. In this sense, participants re-emphasised the use of vaccines to combat the virus, while some called for investment in the construction of five-star hotels in the city to make the most of the pristine beaches for sun, sea and sand. Interestingly, a significant number of respondents noted the need for development and investment in Varosha, a once attractive tourist destination before its misfortune. Some respondents commented on this idea as follows.

“I believe in something about Varosha. I have been thinking for years that it will be a war museum, and the place we are coming to shows it. I think too many people will come to see an oasis; we will not have such numbers yet.” (Interviewee 3)

“The island should be open to innovation Varosha will become a very popular place if it is in settlements with interests and investments.” (Respondent 7)

"Hotels need to be opened. Tourist flow should be provided. Development is a must for Varosha. It is not something that will happen immediately, I see it for at least 5 years.” (Respondent 6)

Accordingly, there is still hope for the tourism sector, with mixed feelings between further development and control of the virus.

Chapter 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The study aimed to investigate the impacts of COVID-19 on tourism in Famagusta, North Cyprus. The chapters before showed insights and presented some facts pertaining impacts of the novel global pandemic in tourism, particularly in Famagusta, North Cyprus. This chapter therefore presents discussions of the findings of the study in comparison to the information noted in literature review. Furthermore, the chapter presents the limitations of the study and recommendations for future studies.

6.1 Discussion

The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is undoubtedly a tourist destination, with a history of tourist arrivals dating back to the early 1930s when British colonialists took time off work in Egypt during the peak summer months (Warner, 1999). Despite being a seasonal destination as tourists are mainly seen in the summer months of the country, tourism still thrives in the country. The country is endowed with a wealth of history that is evident in the castles that are scattered around the country despite the pristine sandy beaches. The climate is suitable for most travelers, hence it is able to offer sun, sea and sand to its visitors. Famagusta, the second largest city of North Cyprus, a sought after tourist town and frequently visited by tourists. It is, therefore, one of the must-visit cities for tourists. Despite other activities that take place in the city and the country, international and educational tourism are among the main activities that take place in the city. In fact, the city hosts the most beautiful beaches on the island and the largest university with a high international student draw.

Obviously, Famagusta thrives on tourism. The aim of the current study was to assess the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in Famagusta, with a particular focus on Famagusta City as a case study. The results of the study show that the novel Corona virus left no stone unturned as its effects have been felt also in business operations within the city and country.

As in the rest of the world, during the first months of the pandemic and the first wave, the borders, all points of entry and exit in the country were closed at a certain time. The borders were open only to returning residents of the country and nothing else. For almost three months, the country experienced a total lockdown with total curfews, from then on, all business establishments except necessary shops like pharmacies, hospitals and markets were open only at a certain hour. During this time, people were told to stay indoors as much as possible and only go out when necessary. As in the rest of the world, the streets of Famagusta and all of North Cyprus were empty at one time to give nature a breather.

The effect of the severe measure was that many businesses temporarily ceased operations and some were unable to resume operations after the measures were lifted. The effects of the COVID-19 were widespread throughout the tourism industry, as seen in Famagusta. While Famagusta not many deaths were recorded, people's lives were affected. This was highlighted by an employee of a travel agency. While they have not terminated employee contracts, they have instead cut staff salaries, as well as reduced working hours. In some cases, some establishments have had to make some of their staff redundant to meet the requirements of reduced working hours. In other cases, as was also noted in the feedback of the study, some employees left work of their own accord, choosing to be with family during this trial period.

The impact of the pandemic was also felt in businesses, as many operators today, although the lockdown measures have been lifted, the level of operations is obviously different and is reflected in sales and daily business results. As in the rest of the world, hotels at Famagusta were also closed for a period of time, affecting revenues across the board. While no firm figures were given to assess the loss in room rates or occupancy, hotels in North Cyprus closed and losses were incurred due to many cancellations and no-shows. The research findings are in line with those of Elliot, (2020). In addition, some losses were noted due to the travel sector, especially with the suspension of all air services (Ozili & Arun, 2020) in North Cyprus, which was evident in a report by a travel agency that had to make some refunds to customers on booking cancellations as a result of the pandemic.

While some significant negative impacts of the pandemic were found in the findings of the study, some positive impacts were of course also found, mainly in some businesses indirectly linked to tourism. University operations, which are responsible for educational tourism, were not as badly affected as full-time tourism operators. Judging from the reports, business was normal as students successfully enrolled for online studies. Other technical service providers also benefited from the impact of the virus (e.g., Internet service operators sold more equipment and Internet providers served more customers during the lockdown). In summary, the impact of the novel Corona virus was felt in Famagusta as it was around the world.

6.2 Conclusion

In some ways, the results of the current study are consistent with what is known in the literature about the effects of COVID-19. The effects of the novel coronavirus are clearly being felt around the globe. The same ideas about how it has disrupted business

in the Famagusta have been expressed by a global viewpoint and several other nations. As a result of the global lockdown imposed in the first few months of COVID-19, many companies in Famagusta closed their operations. Business declined dramatically for many operators. This was evident in most of the participants' responses. Some businesses directly or indirectly involved in tourism noted that the number of customers in their establishments dropped drastically. One taxi driver in particular noted that customers nowadays prefer to walk rather than use a taxi, despite all efforts to ensure passenger safety. Another operator highlighted that some customers are adamant about following the guidelines, making it very difficult for service providers to turn away customers in some cases, given the low turnover last year. . In addition, some once booming restaurants have closed as a result of the pandemic in Famagusta, while some, although still in operation, claim to do so with minimal profits. One restaurant manager mentioned that although restrictions on operations had been relaxed, the hours of operation were no longer the same. Due to curfew restructuring, restaurants now have shorter hours than before, resulting in a decrease in sales and customers.

Not all cases were negative, as the results of the study in Famagusta also found that some operators benefited commercially. The higher education sector, a case of Eastern Mediterranean University, reported that they had more enrollments during the pandemic period. The novel Corona virus had no impact on student enrolments as the university continued to offer online classes. Although a significant number of students returned to their home countries, they did not default on their fees as business was normal. The accommodation sector within the University, which has relied mainly on international students borrowing, has been badly affected as it has lost some monies from rental fees as students have returned home. On a positive note, however, some

service providers, such as those responsible for internet services, have instead made profits as operations continued during the pandemic and lockdown. With the hype of online education now the order of the day in the city's colleges, at least every homestead needs internet services, which increases revenue in this line of business.

Due to the closure, Famagusta can now take the opportunity to develop in the tourism industry by renovating and repairing the infrastructure of roads, hotels and beaches to provide better services in the new season. In addition, Famagusta can use Varosha, part of the city, as a new tourist attraction to compensate for the economic damage of Covid-19 by developing opportunities for tourists in the future season. Nevertheless, compared to other countries, there are very few cases of Covid-19 in Northern Cyprus and especially in Famagusta some places are Covid-free, we can use this fact to promote tourism sales and evaluate for future tourism.

As in the rest of the world, the borders were closed, which led to a decrease in tourist arrivals in the country. Although no meaningful figures were given in the research, business people obviously noticed a drop in business as most hotels were closed and accommodated quarantined guests rather than travellers. One tour operator pointed out the problems in processing refunds as a result of the cancellations of reservations. While the higher education system was not necessarily affected as students continued to enrol for online studies, other dependent businesses such as supermarkets and taxi companies that benefited from educational tourists suffered greatly from the impact of the pandemic. It was noted that most students decided to return home to be with their families due to the pandemic. And although there were new arrivals, not many students made it to Famagusta as a significant number chose to stay in their home countries and study online.

6.3 Implications

Practical implications are derived from this research study. From a practical point of view, it is quite noteworthy that the pandemic fear is real and has serious implications for national economies. Therefore, new measures should be taken to survive the impact of the pandemic. While the global industry has done its best to contain the spread of the virus, it is also up to national authorities to put in place strict measures and control systems to protect their environment. Local authorities, as well as all tourism stakeholders, must take the initiative in this case to protect themselves and those around them from contracting the virus. For example, all stakeholders must strictly follow the safety measures recommended by the authorities. From the responses given in the survey, it was found that in some cases customers have refused to wear masks before entering restaurants or shops. In the event that a customer refuses to wear a mask or disinfect their hands, there should be strict guidelines on how to deal with such customers. In the past, if customers were allowed to enter because the business required it, perhaps the health of the staff and other customers in the vicinity may come first, as such customers who refuse to enter the business should leave or not enter. The researcher has generally observed that people take matters into their own hands and sort out some problems. In the case of COVID-19 and what it has brought to the world public, this cannot be the case. Managers and all professionals in the industry are strongly advised to take strict precautions. Recommendations for continuous periodical testing were derived from the survey, so employers are encouraged to ensure that their employees are regularly tested, and they are also encouraged to ensure that all necessary precautions are taken. For example, instead of using towels and restaurants to dry hands, other devices such as disposable papers and or hand dryers can be used. The issue of hand sanitization and disinfection of vehicles or offices could not be

emphasised more. It is very important that this is promoted in all establishments and businesses.

Although the pandemic has caused a worldwide stir, the impact of the virus on people's lives in the Famagusta has not been as severe as in other European countries. Therefore, it is important to create additional awareness for the local people to take precautionary measures seriously in all aspects to maintain the number of cases and infected people. Just as the government orders measures, all stakeholders should adhere to it to keep the cities safe and keep the number of cases of the virus low in the city of Famagusta.

6.4 Limitations

Some limitations emerged during the course of the study. For example, some of the respondents did not understand English, so the research had to convert the interview questions and answers into Turkish, which may be a cause of bias in the interpretation of the data. It is quite possible that meanings were lost in the process.

It was also quite a time consuming process to collect the data as the researcher intended to have collected the data by November 2020, however this was not the case as most participants were not available until December in most cases. Another hindering factor for the researcher was the movements from one place to another to collect data as the respondents were far from each other. In addition, due to blocking and COVID -19 restrictions in the country, it was virtually impossible to collect data from a larger sample. As a result, accessibility to participants was limited, and some respondents who refused to participate cited concerns about meeting during the restrictions and feared possible contagion with the virus. Largely due to government restrictions on

COVID -19 and the complete lockdown, it was impossible to collect data from many more participants .Although other methods of data collection may be useful, this study opted for qualitative means only. Future studies could use other research methods, such as the mixed method.

6.5 Recommendation

Data collection in the current study was limited to city of Famagusta, so the results cannot be generalised. Future studies could look at investigating the impact of COVID-19 on tourism in other city in the country such as Kyrenia and Dipkarpaz. In addition, future studies could focus on similar studies in other islands with tourist recreation areas. For future studies, it is recommended to collect data on this topic from residents and tourists to measure the impact of COVID-19 in all parameters.

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