

# The Impact of Coronavirus Pandemic on Accommodations' Tourist Demand in Syria (Analytical Study of Lattakia accommodations)

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**Abstract**— The study has focused on the following problem: the impact of coronavirus pandemic on total tourist demand in Lattakia accommodations in 2020. It also has the following aims: The study of tourist demand distribution on accommodations in Lattakia between 2010-2019. Defining coronavirus pandemic impact on tourist demand change of Lattakia accommodations in 2020. However, the descriptive analytical method has been used. The study has resulted in a set of outcomes; the most important ones are: Covid-19 has a great impact on total tourist demand of Lattakia accommodations in February and March accompanied with infection spread in Syria and neighborhood countries. Lack of total tourist demand on accommodations in April because of wide spread of the pandemic worldwide and in Syria. It's impossible to predict total tourist demand on accommodations unless an effective vaccine is invented.

**Keywords**— Tourist demand, Tourist sides, Tourist supply. Accommodations'

## I. INTRODUCTION

Tourist sector is considered a very important one which most countries pay a special and growing attention to, since it's one of the most important economic activities that makes a lot of money and returns. There is a competition among nations to present the best tourist offers and show their tourist potentials and abilities in the field of archaeology, services, heritage, markets, coasts ...etc since they are tourist-attraction components.

WHO represents that tourism as an organized system is an industry that still has great prosperities as a result of positive economic, social, educative and technical developments. In 2019, the statistics of International Council for Tourism and Travel refer to the fact that tourism industry contribution in the international gross domestic product surpasses 11.8% (WTO,2019). [1] Safety is the most important factor that affects the tourist demand. So, if safety is dropping in a country, tourist demand will be negatively influenced, and that was evident during the war that started in 2011 and lasted till now in Syria.[2]

**Study Problem:** The study has been arisen out of a main problem that can be formed from the following question: What is the impact of coronavirus pandemic on total tourist demand in Lattakia accommodations in 2020.

**Study Purposes:** The study aims to: Studying the distribution of the tourist demand on Lattakia accommodations between 2010-2019. Identifying the

impact of coronavirus pandemic on tourist demand change of Lattakia accommodations in 2020.

### Study hypotheses:

- There is a negative impact of the Corona pandemic on the tourist demand related to the place of residence (hotels, chalets and furnished apartments, family visits) in the first quarter in Lattakia Governorate in 2020.
- There is a negative impact of the Corona pandemic on the future tourism demand in the year 2020 in Lattakia Governorate.

**Study importance:** The importance of the study comes from discussing the impact of coronavirus pandemic on tourist demand in Lattakia accommodations, through spreading horror among people all over the world and protective measures and lockdown imposed by most countries, including Syria. Descriptive analytical method has been used. Time: the first quarter of 2020. Place: Syrian Arab Republic (Lattakia).

## II. RELATED WORK

Reference[3]The study focused on health services economies. The demand of health was a part of the study. There was a difference between Tourist on health and demand on health services. Reference[2]The study focused on Tourism and crises, and the influences of war and crises on tourism sector and demand of Tourist. Reference[5]The study focused on the crises in services sector and the relation between crises and demand.

### III. METHODOLOGY

**Tourist demand concept:** Demand generally means customer's desire in getting goods and services and paying for them in certain a place and time. So, demand must be related to purchasing ability in order to be a real demand. There are three main differences between general demand and tourist demand:

- Tourist demand is connected with a certain sort of services, called tourist services (tourist product), that satisfy customers' needs.
- It's practiced by a specific sort of customers called tourists.
- It's practiced in a specific time of the year during tourist trips. It's often happened in the season of tourist climax, in occasions and in free time. Thus, tourist demand is connected with free time.[4] [5]

So, tourist demand is defined as: *"tourist's desire in getting tourist services and paying for them during the tourist trip of selected destination."* [6]

#### Parts of tourist demand:

The following segmentation is the most important one:

- Domestic or internal tourist demand: These tourists are the nationals who travel from one place to another inside the country.
- International or external tourist demand: they are the non-national tourists.[7]

#### Tourist demand classification:

- **Common or particular tourist demand:** Common tourist demand means the demand related to many services and products at the same time, such as travelling to a country in order to get all services and destinations simultaneously. While the particular demand focuses on a certain tourist service demand, as safari tourism in Africa forests, in specific time and place.
- **Possible tourist demand (hidden):** It comprises people who have the main rules of travelling and tourism; namely, they have time, money and ability to travel.
- **Real (actual) tourist demand:** They are tourists who go on tourist journeys.
- **Non-existent tourist demand:** When people are unable to travel, or when a destination has incidental events that affect on demand, so it becomes inexistent.[8] [9]

#### The most important factors affected on tourist demand:

- Safety of the target tourist destination.
- Income level.
- Efficient tourist marketing and promotion inside and outside the destination.
- Competition among tourist sides.
- Tourist services and available facilities in tourist destinations.
- Costs of travelling and tourism of the destination.
- Kind of the available tourism in destinations.
- Tourist's thinking, behavior, impressions and needs and how available they are.[10]

#### Accommodations' crises and tourist demand in Lattakia:

The Syrian war, generally, threatens tourism sector's work and continuity as well as affects directly the tourist demand in many governorates, to the extent of destruction such as in Idleb. While the war effects are less in Lattakia in comparison with other cities, because there weren't martial operations except in a small part of the north countryside. However, coronavirus pandemic has a great impact on tourism sector all over the world as well as in Syria, especially in Lattakia since it's the first tourist destination of the country.

**Tourist Crisis** is defined as "an accidental situation or a sudden occasion leads to disorder of the destination's tourist system, this makes its competitive position weak and affects the components of its tourist industry partly or wholly.[11] Thus, any event can be classified as a crisis that affects largely the tourist sector, depending on the extent of defect (disorder) in the work and components of the tourist sector.[12]

#### The most important kinds of crises affected on the tourist sector:

- **Natural crises:** They are related to natural events such as earthquakes, hurricanes, floods ...etc that have effects on the tourist sector and structure relying on the crisis' strength. It may last for one year or more or destroy totally the sector's structure.
- **Health crises (such as coronavirus pandemic):** Health situation and epidemic and disease infection has an impact on the country's tourist demand. The degree of its influence is variant according to the degree of the infection in the country, region or world.
- **Financial and economic crises:** These crises affect people's purchasing power. Thus, it affects on internal or external tourist demand partly or totally.
- **Political crises:** Political relations represent a stimulating factor for tourism in many countries. Moreover, the deteriorated political relations between two nations could have bad impacts on the tourist demand.
- **Security and terrorist crises:** Terrorist doings have direct influences on tourist demand which may last for a limited period or many years according to the crisis' strength and time needed to be controlled.

**WWar crises ( of international and national conflict):** Wars and domestic conflicts destroy the main structure of the tourist sector in the country that have wars for a long time; this effect that may last long after finishing the war.[13]

#### The impact of crises on the tourism sector:

- The great dropping of the tourist demand to the extent of absence. This demand is greatly influenced by different kinds of crises.
- Tourist offers are extremely influenced by the sort of the crisis and its strength. This effect could abolish the whole tourist structure of a country.
- The touristic investments of the crisis country are influenced. So, The stronger the crisis is the more

negative the impact on tourist investments is, to the extent they will be absent.

- The low tourist returns of the crisis country. These returns may stop according to the crisis' strength and length.
- The reduction of the tourist sector contribution in the crisis country's economic indexes (the contribution in the national income, balance of payments ...etc). This impact is related to the crisis strength.
- The loss of many workers' jobs due to the tourist demand run down.
- The depression of tourism contribution in foreign currencies to the extent of absence[14]

**IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Syrian Arab Republic is located in the middle east. It consists of 14 governorates; Lattakia is one of them which is placed on the Mediterranean sea. Syria has suffered from a war since 2011 hit all governorates. Nevertheless, Lattakia is one of the cities that has a little impact of the war, especially in a part of the countryside. The safe situation leads to a big emigration from other cities into Lattakia. However, Lattakia had a population of 1054000 in 2010, distributed equally between city and countryside. From 2013 to 2020, it had a population of 2.5 million. Lattakia is categorized into four administrative areas (Lattakia, Jableh, AlHafeh and AlKurdaha).

**Accommodations' tourist Supply in Lattakia:**

Table (1) shows accommodations' tourist Supply in Lattakia

Table 1 number of hotels and furnished flats in Lattakia between 2010-2020

Chalets and Furnished flats			Hotels			
Beds number	Rooms number	No	Bed number	Room number	No	
228000	114000	38000	6985	2945	67	2010
90000	45000	18000	5330	2179	48	2020
138000	69000	20000	1655	766	19	Damaged and Ceased

Source: ministry of tourism, statistics and planning Department, Syrian Statistics Groups 2020.

According to the table (1), we notice the following: Total close of many first and second-class hotels due to demand drop and inability to afford working expenses between 2010-2020. The hotel rooms' and beds' number aren't greatly affected, since 4-5 stars hotels, which have the largest number of rooms and beds, keep working during the war. Syrian war has a great impact on many destinations' chalets and furnished flats in Lattakia. However, most of them were closed till now, while others were monthly-rented by expatriates; it means working out of tourism sector. The tourist offer of accommodations comprises three kinds: tourist hotels, furnished chalets and flats and sleeping in relatives' homes (visitors' tourism), with no other kinds.

**Tourist demand of Lattakia accommodations:**

**The distribution of the total tourist demand according to accommodations during the Syrian war:**

The equation of the total demand on accommodations are formalized as following:

$$TD = HD + FD + VD$$

- Total tourist demand on Lattakia accommodations (TD)
- tourist demand on hotels (HD)
- tourist demand on furnished flats (FD)
- tourist demand of visitors (VD)

Table (2) shows the distribution of the total tourist demand on Lattakia accommodations between 2010-2019 as following:

Table 2 total tourist demand in Lattakia according to years and accommodating way:

Lattakia Governorate				
Total demand on accommodations	visitors	flats	hotels	
789373	78937	473624	236812	2010
233273	23327	139964	69982	2011
298746	29874	179248	89624	2012
289193	28919	173516	86758	2013
265676	26567	159406	79703	2014
397823	39782	238694	119347	2015
404320	40432	242592	121296	2016
538740	53874	323244	161622	2017
501633	50163	300980	150490	2018
554053	50905	350432	152716	2019
<b>4272830</b>	<b>422780</b>	<b>2581700</b>	<b>1268350</b>	<b>Sum</b>
<b>100%</b>	<b>10%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>Percentage</b>

Source: Prepared by researcher depending on Tourism Ministry's data, Department of planning and statistics, 2020.

According to table (2) we can see:

- Since its inception in 2011, the Syrian war affected on total tourist demand in Lattakia accommodations. In 2011 the demand dropped to 70%, where dropping continued till 2019 to reach 30%.
- The largest slump in demand was in 2011-2012-2013-2014 due to road brigandage among cities. So, it was so hard to travel to Lattakia. Tourist demand was improved between 2014-2015 in Lattakia because roads became safer and traveling was possible. Moreover, many tourist destinations became out of work, this made Lattakia the first desirable place that has good tourist services.
- The growing demand on chalets and furnished flats is because their cost (service purchasing price) was lower than hotels', and the number of rooms was suitable to number of Syrian family members.

**The impact of covid-19 on total tourist demand of Lattakia accommodations:** Coronavirus pandemic has an effect on accommodations' tourist demand in Lattakia as clarified in table(3,4):

Table 3 total tourist demand in accommodations 2019

Total tourist demand 2019				
Sum	Visitors	Flats	Hotels	
11373	1137	6824	3412	Jan
12900	1290	7740	3870	Feb
18537	1854	11122	5561	March
38070	3807	22842	11421	April
46887	4689	28132	14066	May

41113	4111	24668	12334	<b>June</b>
73010	7301	43806	21903	<b>July</b>
91036	9103	54622	27311	<b>Aug</b>
84020	8402	50412	25206	<b>Sep</b>
58177	5818	34906	17453	<b>Oct</b>
18270	1827	10962	5481	<b>Nov</b>
15660	1566	9396	4698	<b>Dec</b>
<b>509053</b>	<b>50905</b>	<b>350432</b>	<b>152716</b>	<b>Sum</b>

Source: Tourism Centre in Lattakia, Department of planning and statistics, 2020

Table 4 total tourist demand in accommodations -2020

Total tourist demand 2020				
Sum	Visitors	Flats	Hotels	
13691	1784	7234	4673	<b>Jan</b>
5262	688	2430	2144	<b>Feb</b>
937	44	113	780	<b>March</b>
210	0	0	210	<b>April</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>May</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>June</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>July</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Aug</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Sep</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Oct</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Nov</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Dec</b>
-	-	-	-	<b>Sum</b>

Source: Tourism Centre in Lattakia, Department of planning and statistics, 2020

According to table (3,4), we can notice the following:

- For Tourism Ministry experts, it's expected "2019 tourist demand" to be improved in 2020 in Lattakia. This was noticed in January, 2020, where an increasing in total tourist demand reached to 17% was recorded, in comparison with 2019.
- Tourist demand on Lattakia accommodations is extremely seasonal. Thus, Tourist demand rises from May to September every year. Nevertheless, this extreme seasonality is the result of the current war, where foreigners' tourist demand was absent during the war. Foreigners' tourist demand have happened out of tourist season in November, December and January in Lattakia. Furthermore, tourism of Arabs stopped in Lattakia during the war.
- In May 2020: There was a slump in total tourist demand reached to 59.21% of 2019, as a result of spreading covid-19 widely in Europe and other parts of the world. A state of horror controlled people with the result that bookings were cancelled and travelling was lessened, especially the second half of May, 2020. That period, the Syrian government didn't take any protective measures, lockdown or home confinement, since no case was recorded in Syria.
- In March 2020: There was a great slump in total tourist demand reached to 95% of 2019, as a result of wide spreading of covid-19 worldwide and in the neighborhood such as Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey and Palestine. It was accompanied with the beginning of governmental measures including the lockdown, travelling stop among cities and closing schools, universities, public institutions, restaurants and cafes as well as announcing the first two cases.

- In April 2020: The absence of total tourist demand on hotels, furnished flats, visits and hotel guests was noticed, due to governmental committee follow-up specialized in applying these measures as well as those of international organizations. However, this was accompanied by the announcement of 38 cases, with 2 deaths and 4 recoveries; with taking into consideration that no cases is recorded in Lattakia till now.

## Discussion

### Anticipation (Forecasting) of total tourist demand in 2020, under coronavirus pandemic effect:

It's impossible to predict total tourist demand on tourist establishments by using any statistical program as SPSS, artificial intelligence, artificial neuronal networks or logical programs. Because the end time of tourist demand absence is unknown, since it's correlated with safety and finding an effective vaccine or medicine, that is currently ambiguous and unpredictable despite the made efforts all over the world; as well as people's economic status, due to the pandemic, as a result of faltering many companies and increasing unemployment or job loss if it lasts for a long time. According to crisis classification, coronavirus pandemic is a healthy crisis affects the tourist sector. However, Transportation stopped in the middle of February, 2020 as well as bookings were cancelled and tourist demand of many destinations was absent all over the world. Anyway, it's expected the current tourist season to be greatly influenced by covid-19, whereas tourism is unlikely to return to its previous state. Hence, a set of possible scenarios, concerning Lattakia or all the world, can be noticed:

**First scenario:** The highly constant spreading of coronavirus worldwide, and non-inventing an effective vaccine or therapy. In that case, the tourist demand may be wholly absent in the world and in Lattakia accommodations.

**Second scenario:** The reduction of coronavirus cases and controlling its spread with inability to invent an effective vaccine or therapy. So, countries will keep applying No-transportation measures. Tourist demand could return limitedly with the result that it will be internal inside the country and local inside its governorates. The demand will be accompanied by a decline of communal services such as hotels and visits and preferring accommodation's distinct services like chalets and furnished flats. Furthermore, food services will be greatly affected and tourists will tend to prepare food by themselves, keep clean and apply personal confinement.

**Third scenario:** The reduction of coronavirus cases and controlling its wide spread with inventing a good therapy, accompanied by a significant drop in deaths. So, tourist demand could rise again reasonably, but cases and infection won't definitely stop. Horror resulting from the pandemic is playing a big role in this case. Nevertheless, tourist demand may be significant internally and locally and acceptable (not bad) externally limited to specific

kinds of close tourism, as tourism inside the European Union.

**Fourth scenario:** Inventing an 100%-effective therapy or vaccine with death cases vanishing. So, an explosion of demand on different kinds of tourism will occur despite the accompanied economic state. In that case, people will go out for entertainment. So that, internal and external tourist demand is likely to be active for specific kinds of tourism, such as short and inexpensive visits, as well as domestic tourism will be significantly activated.

## V. CONCLUSION AND FUTURE SCOPE

Coronavirus pandemic has a great impact on accommodations' total tourist demand in Lattakia in February and March, accompanying by infection spread in Syria and its neighborhood.

The absence of total tourist demand on accommodations in April due to wide infection spread around the world and its inception in Syria.

Adopted governmental measures, such as the lockdown, no-transportation among cities and closing restaurants ...etc, have an impact on total tourist demand on Lattakia accommodations.

It's unlikely predicting this demand unless an effective vaccine or therapy has been invented.

It's unexpected that universal tourist demand returns to its previous state predicted by World Tourism Organization. Also, this demand could be affected for many years after inventing an effective therapy or vaccine due to the big economic crisis of the pandemic that accompanied by low income, workers lay off, fear and tourists' behavior change. Moreover, tourist destinations, like China and many Asian countries, will be significantly influenced because of scare of emerging diseases similar to coronavirus, since there are still land-animal-meat markets in many nations. Thus, these nations should take real procedures by locking these markets and start a tourist marketing campaign in order to regain tourists' confidence all over the world.

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