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## **EXPLORING THE ROLE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON ENHANCING TOUR GUIDING SECTOR IN EGYPT**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Despite the significant negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourism sector, causing disruption across various sub-sectors, including the tourist guidance sector, it has also yielded some positive impacts, particularly for that sector, which could enhance its sustainability. This study aims to identify these positive impacts and assess their contribution to improving the Tourism guidance sector's resilience and adaptability. Employing a quantitative methodology, data were gathered from 351 Egyptian tour guides via structured questionnaires. The study's findings revealed that while the pandemic has had a substantial negative impact on Tourist guidance sector in Egypt, with many facing unemployment and seeking alternative career paths, there have also been some positive impacts on the sector. The pandemic has forced tour guides to become more creative, adaptable, and innovative, resulting in the diversification of services and diversification of the target customers. By capitalizing on these opportunities and investing in their professional development and support, tour guides can become more resilient and adaptable professionals.*

**KEYWORDS:** COVID-19 - Tourist Guidance - Tourist Guides - Crisis Management- Opportunities.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The tourism sector is a crucial contributor to the Egyptian economy, providing employment opportunities and generating revenue. However, this sector has been adversely affected by various crises such as the January 2011 revolution which has had a major negative impact on the tourism sector in Egypt. The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the second half of 2019 has brought serious challenges not only to tourism industry in Egypt but also to the global tourism industry. The pandemic

caused a 98% decrease in global tourist arrivals, and the sector lost between USD 4.5 and 4.7 trillion, with a 49.1% decrease in its contribution to the global Gross Domestic Product (GDP), and 62 million jobs were lost. This has led to significant concerns over job losses in the tourism sector, with 100-120 million direct tourism jobs become at risk (Orîndaru et al. 2021; Chan, & Haines, 2021; Nientied, & Shutina, 2020; Ayad, et al. , 2020; Nair, & Sinha, 2020 ; Sultana, 2021; Shehawy, & Abouzied, 2022)

The Covid-19 outbreak has deeply impacted the tourist guidance sector, posing numerous challenges for tourist guides, due to the decrease in the number of tours that followed the implementation of very stringent health regulations . However, the changes that emerged because of the Covid-19 outbreak have also yielded some positive impacts for the tour guiding sector. Such positive impacts can contribute to the sustainability of this sector.

The main objective of this study is to identify these positive impacts that have emerged, and to assess their potential to enhance the resilience and adaptability of the tourist guiding sector in Egypt. The importance of this study lies in the fundamental role that the tour guiding sector plays in the tourism industry in Egypt, particularly as a country that is known for its rich cultural and historical sites. Proficient tour guiding and interpretation not only foster tourism promotion but also contribute to the preservation of tourism resources, thereby increasing the economic benefits. Additionally, tour guides serve as crucial contributors in shaping destination perceptions and fostering tourist revisit intentions. Hence, fortifying the sector's resilience, particularly during periods of crisis or ambiguity, becomes imperative to sustain its ongoing growth and development.

## **RESEARCH GAPS**

Although several studies have been conducted post-COVID-19 pandemic focusing on tourist guidance sector in Egypt (Kafy, 2021; Khalil, 2021; Kamel, 2021) and numerous others have explored the pandemic's impact on the broader tourism sector (Ayad. et al., 2020; Ahmed, et al. 2021; Abdelsalam, & Elbehehy, 2020; Breisinger, et al., 2020; Elsayed , et al., 2021; Elgammal & Refaat, 2021). None have specifically addressed the positive impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on the tour-guiding profession in Egypt. While the pandemic has undoubtedly had negative impacts on the tour-guiding sector, such as job losses and reduced income, there are some emerging positive impacts that have received limited attention. To address this gap in the literature, this study focuses on identifying the positive impacts generated in the wake of COVID-19 that could enhance the resilience of the tour guidance sector in Egypt.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **THE TOURIST GUIDE DEFINITION AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

Tourist guides play a crucial role in representing their country and creating a welcoming environment for tourists. As the initial point of contact, they are responsible for greeting and introducing visitors to the country's culture, history, and attractions. Similarly, they also bid farewell to tourists as they depart the country, leaving a lasting impression of their experience. Thus, tourist guides act as main ambassadors of their country, shaping tourists' perceptions and experiences during their visit (Rabotić, 2010). There are numerous definitions of a tour guide, according to Zhang and Chow (2004), the term "tourist guides" refers to individuals who accompany visitors on tours and facilitate communication and understanding between the visitors and the country they are visiting. The World Federation of Tourist Guide Association (WFTGA) defines the tour guide as "a person who guides visitors in the language of their choice and interprets the cultural and natural heritage of an area which person normally possesses an area-specific qualification usually issued and/or recognised by the appropriate authority". Moreover, The European Federation of Tourist Guide Association defines the tour guide as "a person who guides groups or individuals visitors from abroad or from the home country through specific historical sites or venues, and enthusiastically promotes the cultural and natural heritage of the tour destination in an entertaining manner, and the language of the visitor's choice" (EFTGA, 1998).

According to Lovrentjev (2015), the tourist guide is responsible for accompanying visitors throughout their stay in the country, making them representatives not only of the travel agent they work for but also of the country and its people. As such, tourist guides play a crucial role in shaping visitors' impressions of the country and its culture. At the Egyptian national level, different definitions of tour guides exist, for example, under the Egyptian Act on Tour Guiding No. 121 of 1983, a tour guide is described as an individual who leads tourists to archaeological sites or museums in exchange for payment (Law No. 121 of 1983). This definition is also supported by the Egyptian General Syndicate of Tourist Guides, the entity which is responsible for regulating and organizing the tour guide profession in Egypt. Tourist guides play a vital role in the tourism industry, as they possess the ability to communicate fluently with visitors in their native language and provide them with insightful information regarding the historical, geographical, cultural, and archaeological aspects of the region. Additionally, they undertake various tasks such as: Touring museums,

historical sites, monuments, natural and cultural environments, and introducing the heritage of the region; ensuring that visitors leave the country satisfied; helping visitors appreciate their trip; contributing to the touristic image of the region; fulfilling visitors' expectations; providing well-equipped guidance service; continuously improving his knowledge providing clear and concise information to the audience; establishing a connection between visitors and the people of the region (Ap, & Wong, 2001; Çetin, & Yarcan, Ş. 2017).

In order to be an effective communicator, the tour guide has to have some characteristics including: being proficient in foreign languages; having a high level of general culture; having an in-depth knowledge of various cultures; equipped with first-aid knowledge to be able to address health-related concerns; possessing strong expressive skills; possessing excellent communication and leadership abilities; quick in developing and implementing effective solutions to problems (Shabeb , et al., 2018 ; El-Sharkawy, 2007). Tour guides also contribute significantly to the promotion of tourist destinations, as they are considered essential for delivering exceptional experiences to visitors, making them indispensable for destination promotion (Alazaizeh et al., 2022). The quality of the tour guiding service has a significant impact on a tourist's perception of the destination. A positive image of a destination can attract more tourists, which in turn, benefits the local economy (Çetinkaya & Öter, 2016). Therefore, a successful tourist destination requires professional tour guides who can effectively communicate the cultural, historical, and natural heritage of the destination to visitors. It is the responsibility of the tour guide to provide accurate information, create a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere for tourists, and ensure that they have a memorable experience during their visit. The success of tour operators (TOs) and travel agencies (TAs) also depends on the quality of the tour guiding service they provide to their clients. Therefore, it is essential for DMOs, TOs, and TAs to work collaboratively with tour guides to ensure the success of tourist destinations (Abdelrahman, 2018; Pereira, 2015).

## **TOUR GUIDANCE WITHIN THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT**

Tourist guidance is one of the oldest professions in Egypt, as the country has been a popular destination for travellers since ancient times. The role of the guide in the past was mainly fulfilled by priests within temples and bilingual individuals in archaeological sites. Medieval travel writings made no mention of tourist guides, and it was not until the seventeenth century they began to appear in travellers' accounts. Dragomans were the main guides for tourists during the 19th century, but they were later replaced by

professional tour guides (Khalil, 2021). As the travel industry in Egypt began to organize and establish professional accreditation for its positions, the first official tour guides' association was established in 1965. Later, in 1983, the Egyptian Tourist Guides Syndicate (EGTGS) was established, which developed an advanced database of tour guides and their working conditions (Ezz El-Din, 2015).

Egypt's Tourist Guides Syndicate (EGTGS) is the largest in Africa, with over 17,000 members, as recorded in the syndicate's database. Additionally, EGTGS is a founding member of the Arab Tourist Guides Federation (WFTGA, 2015), and through EGTGS, Egypt is a member of the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA). The establishment of EGTGS is enshrined in the Egyptian constitution, with Law No. 121 of 1983 regulating the work of tour guides in Egypt. This law mandates that Egyptian tour guides obtain a license from the Ministry of Tourism and become a member of the Egyptian Guides Syndicate (Ezz El-Din, 2015; Ministry of Tourism, 1983; El-Sharkawy, 2007). In efforts to enhance professionalism within the field; Egypt has established academic programs and regulations for tourist guides. This has resulted in well-trained guides who can provide a comprehensive understanding of Egypt's rich cultural and historical heritage to tourists.

## **CHALLENGES THAT FACE EGYPTIAN TOUR GUIDES**

Although Egyptian tour guides play a significant role in shaping tourists' experience and enhancing their level of satisfaction. Kafy's (2021) article on tourism guidance in Egypt sheds light on several challenges faced by Egyptian tour guides. These challenges can be categorized into three main types as follows:

### **1- POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL CHALLENGES**

These challenges encompass issues such as the presence of unlicensed guides and foreign guides operating under temporary translation permits. Instability stemming from political and economic factors, including terrorism, and financial crises. Several notable events have had adverse impacts on the tour guidance sector in Egypt, including the January 25th revolution, the June 30 Revolution, the Russian plane crash, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **2- LEGISLATIVE, AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGES**

The legislative, and administrative challenges faced by tour guides include the lack of life insurance and insufficient medical coverage. Moreover, the fees received by tour guides from their profession are inadequate, and they

are prohibited from engaging in multiple occupations according to Law No. 121 of 1983.

### **3- TECHNOLOGICAL CHALLENGES**

The technological challenges arise from the high dependence on digital interpretation and modern applications by tourists, which can potentially replace the need for tour guides in some situations. The above-mentioned challenges create a challenging environment for tour guides in Egypt, resulting in a high turnover rate and a shortage of skilled and trained tour guides and a decline in service quality and professionalism in the sector (Ezz El-Din, 2015). Abdelrahman's (2018) research discloses that while thousands are registered as tour guides in the database of the General Syndicate of Tour Guides in Egypt; only 6,000 are actively engaged in the industry.

### **TOURIST GUIDANCE AND COVID-19**

The global COVID-19 crisis has had a devastating impact on the tourism sector worldwide, with certain segments, notably tour guiding, bearing the brunt of the damage (Espelt, 2022). With the sharp drop in Bookings, leaving many guides without work or income, prompting them to resort to various survival strategies. Some have sought temporary employment to supplement lost income, while others have resorted to selling personal assets acquired throughout their careers as tourist guides. Additionally, borrowing money from banks, family, and friends has become a common recourse, along with leveraging entrepreneurial skills to generate supplementary income. Amidst these challenges, tightening household expenditures and redirecting savings towards securing future stability have become essential measures for many in the profession (Mbatha et al., 2021). However The COVID-19 pandemic has brought to the forefront several fundamental problems within the tour guiding field, highlighting its vulnerability, lack of adequate legal safeguards, financial instability, and the susceptibility of guides to external threats., it also sparked positive outcomes, as the survival strategies embraced by tour guides have resulted in various outcomes that could enhance the resilience of the profession.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION**

To identify the positive impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the tourist guidance sector in Egypt and assess its potential contribution in enhancing the resilience and adaptability of the sector, the article is trying to seek an answer to the following research question:

What specific personal, social, and professional positive impacts have emerged within Egypt's tourism guidance sector as a direct consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and how do these identified positive impacts contribute to enhancing the resilience and adaptability of the sector?

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE**

To fulfill the study's objectives, a quantitative approach was utilized, focusing specifically on Egypt's tour guide community. A questionnaire was developed and distributed over a representative sample of the research population. According to the Egyptian Ministry of Tourism (2023), the total number of registered tour guides in Egypt is reported to be 11,889. Therefore, to determine the appropriate sample size of tour guides in the research population, the researchers used the Robert Mason formula (Mason, 1999) as follows:

$$n = \frac{M}{\left[ \left( S^2 \times (M - 1) \right) \div pq \right] + 1}$$

Where: n: appropriate sample size (372.165). M: population size (11889). S: The value of the standard score corresponding to the significance level is 0.95 that is dividing 1.96 by the error rate of 0.05 that equals (0.02551). P: sample proportion and neutral (0.50). q: complement of sample proportion (0.50). Likewise, applying the same previous equation to tour guides, the appropriate sample size of tour guides is (373). In this respect, researchers distributed 400 questionnaires to tour guides. Upon analysis, 49 questionnaires were found to be invalid for analysis, leaving 351 valid responses with a response rate of 94.35%.

### **SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

A 16-statement questionnaire, specifically tailored for tour guides, was designed to assess 3 major research variables: Personal Perspective, Social Perspective and Professional Perspective. Additionally, the five-point Likert scale was utilized to measure the sample opinions for each statement.

### **PRIMARY DATA ANALYSIS**

The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS version 25) was used to analyse the obtained data. Both descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used. There was a full description of the study sample, as well as scale reliability and validity tests.

**VALIDITY OF THE RESEARCH**

A panel of experts from the Tourism and Tour guidance sector was consulted to provide feedback and recommendations on the research tool. Face to face interviews were carried out to ensure the reliability of the data collection tool, aligning each research objective with its corresponding variable.

**RELIABILITY OF THE RESEARCH**

Before analysis, the reliability of the research survey was assessed using Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient, as shown in Table (1.1). The coefficient was found to exceed 0.7 for all variables, indicating high reliability of the survey statements. This suggests that the items demonstrate consistent measurement reliability. According to Hair et al. (2010), a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value greater than 0.7 is considered suitable for reliability.

**Table 1.1: Reliability**

The Axis	No. of Statements	Alpha Coefficient
Personal Prospective	7	0.855
Social Prospective	3	0.854
Professional Prospective	6	0.753
Total	16	0.826

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS:**

**RESEARCH VARIABLES ANALYSIS**

**PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The purpose of this variable was to measure the personal Perspective of tour guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Egypt.

**Table 1.2: Descriptive Statistics for the Personal Perspective of Tour Guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Axis	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
<b>COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to:</b>			
have a better work-life balance	4.541	0.635	3
spend more time with their families and engage in	4.592	0.601	2

personal activities			
explore new hobbies and interests outside of their profession	4.339	0.694	6
enhance their adaptability skills	4.276	0.774	7
enhanced their communication skills	4.524	0.653	4
improve their problem-solving skills	4.672	0.543	1
encourage them to adopt healthier and more hygienic practices	4.455	0.611	5
Total	4.486	0.474	

From the point of view of tour guides, Table No. 1.2 shows that the "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to improve their problem-solving skills" comes at first rank with a mean (4.672) and std. Deviation of (0.543). Furthermore, "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to spend more time with their families and engage in personal activities" comes at a second rank with a mean (4.592) and std. Deviation of (0.601). Moreover, "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to have a better work-life balance" comes at third rank with a mean (4.541) and std. Deviation of (0.635). However, the "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to enhance their communication skills" comes at a fourth rank with a mean (4.524) and std. Deviation of (0.653). Moreover, "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to encourage them to adopt healthier and more hygienic practices" comes at fifth rank with a mean (4.455) and std. Deviation of (0.611). Furthermore, "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to explore new hobbies and interests outside of their profession" comes at sixth rank with a mean (4.339) and std. Deviation of (0.694). Finally, the "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to enhance their adaptability skills" comes at the last rank with a mean (4.276) and std. Deviation of (0.774). Therefore, the total mean of the diversification of the personal perspective of tour Guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic was (4.486) with a standard deviation of (0.474), which indicated a high degree of agreement for all the personal perspective of tour guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic phrases. This means that this variable has a high level.

According to the findings presented above, the study has successfully addressed the first variable which is: the Personal Positive impacts that have been emerged in the tourism guidance sector in Egypt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic

As it is known, the nature of the tourist guiding profession typically requires tourist guides to spend a significant duration of time away from home, often traveling to different destinations for work. This can be challenging for maintaining a healthy work-life balance and can lead to feelings of isolation from loved ones. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided tourist guides with the opportunity to spend more time with their families and loved ones, which could be seen as a positive impact on their social lives. With fewer work-related responsibilities due to the decline in tourism, many tourist guides have had more free time to spend with their families and engage in activities that they may not have had the chance to do before.

**SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE**

The purpose of this variable was to measure the social perspective of tour guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Egypt.

**Table 1.3: Descriptive Statistics for the Social Perspective of Tour Guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Axis	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
The government has provided sufficient support to tour guides during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as financial assistance, subsidies, or other forms of aid	4.571	0.609	2
The pandemic has fostered a greater sense of collaboration and support among tour guides in Egypt	4.572	0.658	1
The pandemic has fostered social solidarity among tour guides, with them actively competing to donate and help those tour guides in need	4.316	0.792	3
Total	4.487	0.608	

From the point of view of tour guides, table No. 1.3 reveals that "The pandemic has fostered a greater sense of collaboration and support among tour guides in Egypt" ranks first, with a mean (4.572) and std. Deviation of (0.658). Additionally, "The government has provided sufficient support to tour guides during the COVID-19" ranks second, with a mean (4.571) and std. Deviation of (0.609). On the other hand, "The pandemic has fostered social solidarity among tour guides, with them actively competing to donate and help those tour guides in need" ranks last, with a mean (4.316) and std. Deviation of (0.792). Thus, the total mean of the social perspective of tour guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic was (4.487) with a standard

deviation of (0.608), indicating a high degree of agreement for all the social perspective statements among tour guides during the pandemic, signifying a high level of the agreement. Based on these results, the objective of the current research was achieved. According to the findings presented above, the study has successfully addressed the second variable which is: the Social Positive impacts that have been emerged in the tourism guidance sector in Egypt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. According to the aforementioned results, it is evident that the reduction of taxes in the tourism industry can be regarded as a positive impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on tourist guides. Governments have implemented tax reductions to support the struggling tourism sector, resulting in a direct benefit for tourist guides. This reduction in taxes alleviates their financial burden and facilitates the sustainability of their businesses during these challenging times.

Also based on the findings, it is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to a heightened level of collaboration and support among tour guides in Egypt. This emergence of increased cooperation can be viewed as a positive outcome resulting from the pandemic's impact on the tourism industry. Tour guides have been compelled to band together, facing shared challenges and uncertainties, leading to a stronger sense of unity within the profession. This newfound spirit of collaboration enables tour guides to assist one another, share resources, and navigate the complexities of the current situation more effectively. Ultimately, this enhanced sense of solidarity among tour guides enhances their resilience and ability to face the challenges posed by the pandemic. Moreover, it becomes apparent that the COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in a profound sense of social solidarity among tour guides. This phenomenon has manifested in tour guides actively engaging in acts of generosity and support. As some tour guides face tough times, others are reaching out to lend a helping hand, the matter with positively affect the tour guiding sector.

### **PROFESSIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

The purpose of this variable was to measure the professional perspective of tour guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic in Egypt.

**Table 1.4: Descriptive Statistics for the Professional Perspective of Tour Guides during the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Axis	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
<b>The COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to:</b>			
Enhance their knowledge and expertise through online training courses and professional development opportunities	4.380	0.809	6
Have the opportunity to create and develop new and innovative tour packages	4.487	0.716	3
Allow them to focus on providing high-quality, personalized experiences to tourists	4.723	0.540	1
Provide them an opportunity to diversify their tourism offerings by exploring and interpreting lesser-known destinations with unique cultural, historical, and natural features	4.555	0.615	2
Provide them an opportunity to diversify their target customers by catering to domestic and local tourists	4.467	0.731	4
Enhance their digital literacy skills in utilizing virtual communication platforms	4.398	0.771	5
Total	4.503	0.470	

From the perspective of tour guides, Table No. 1.4 illustrates the rankings of various aspects related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their professional roles. Notably, the statement "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to focus on providing high-quality, personalized experiences to tourists" emerges as the top-ranked factor with a mean score of 4.723 and a standard deviation of 0.540. Following closely is the statement "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to diversify their tourism offerings by exploring and interpreting lesser-known destinations with unique cultural, historical, and natural features," which achieved a mean score of 4.555 and a standard deviation of 0.615. Additionally, tour guides perceive the statement "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to have the opportunity to create and develop new and innovative tour packages" comes at a third rank with a mean (4.487) and std. Deviation of (0.716). However the statement "Provide them an opportunity to diversify their target customers by catering to domestic and local tourists" comes at a fourth rank with a mean (4.467) and std. Deviation of (0.731). Moreover, the statement "COVID-19 pandemic has

allowed tour guides to enhance their digital literacy skills in utilizing virtual communication platforms" comes at a fifth rank with a mean (4.398) and std. Deviation of (0.711). Finally, the statement "COVID-19 pandemic has allowed tour guides to enhance their knowledge and expertise through online training courses and professional development opportunities" comes at a sixth rank with a mean (4.339) and std. Deviation of (0.694). Overall, these findings indicate a high level of agreement among tour guides regarding the professional opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, with a total mean of 4.503 and a standard deviation of 0.470.

According to the findings presented above, the study has successfully addressed the third variable which is: the Professional Positive impacts that have been emerged in the tourism guidance sector in Egypt as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. From the above-mentioned results, it is clear that COVID-19 crisis created a gap that enabled tourist guides in Egypt to increase their information and knowledge. With reduced tourism activity and fewer visitors to guide and less demand for their services, tourist guides had more time to engage in professional development activities, such as attending online training courses, workshops, and seminars, or conducting research on new destinations and attractions, which helped them to improve their skills and knowledge, making them more competitive in the market and better equipped to offer high-quality services to future visitors. With travel restrictions and lockdowns in place, many tourist guides in Egypt have started offering virtual and online tours to showcase the country's attractions and history. This was regarded as an opportunity to reach new audiences and generate income during a period of reduced tourism activity. The COVID-19 pandemic has led to a significant decrease in international travel, which has had a direct impact on the tourism industry in Egypt. However, this crisis has also created new opportunities for tourist guides to diversify their customer base and showcase their local knowledge and expertise to new segments of customers.

Tourist guides made full use of this shift by developing tailored tours and experiences that cater to domestic tourists. By showcasing their expertise in local history, culture, and landmarks instead of simply following pre-organized fixed itineraries developed by tour operators, This approach has not only enhanced their creativity but also their adaptability. The COVID-19 pandemic has also prompted a shift in visitor behavior, with many seeking out less crowded and lesser-known destinations. This has created an opportunity for tour guides to expand their knowledge and expertise

beyond the well-known tourist hotspots, and to explore and interpret the unique cultural, historical, and natural features of these less visited areas. By diversifying tourism offerings in this way, tour guides started to provide visitors with a more diverse and enriching travel experience that goes beyond the typical tourist attractions. This can also help to alleviate pressure on overcrowded destinations and promote more sustainable tourism practices.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Despite the significant disruptions and hardships caused by COVID-19 on the tourism industry, especially the tourist guiding sector, it has also spurred positive transformations within the field. The research findings underscore a notable transformation among tour guides, who have evolved into innovative, resilient, and adaptable professionals in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. The pandemic provided tour guides with the opportunity to enhance their personal, professional, and social aspects. They seized the opportunity to refine their digital skills and knowledge, participating in online workshops and training sessions aimed at enhancing their guiding abilities. Additionally, they began offering alternative products and exploring lesser-known destinations to stimulate demand for their services. Moreover, they diversified their target audience by shifting their focus towards local tourists.

Furthermore, they found themselves with more time to spend with their families, develop problem-solving skills, and foster greater collaboration among peers. Capitalizing on and investing in the positive outcomes resulting from the pandemic has the potential to significantly enhance the long-term resilience and adaptability of the tourism guidance sector in Egypt. This entails prioritizing ongoing training and development programs tailored for tour guides. These programs should concentrate on bolstering essential skills such as digital literacy, problem-solving, and adaptability. By implementing these recommendations, tour guides can be further empowered to adapt, innovate, and thrive in the post-pandemic era, thereby contributing to the long-term resilience and adaptability of the tourism guidance sector in Egypt.

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