

Evaluating the preparedness of Rooms Division and Food and Beverage Division post COVID-19 pandemic in Hurghada Green Hotels

¹Hassan Sayed Abdallah and ²Gaber Gabry Ahmed Khalil

¹Hotel Management Department, Faculty of Tourism and Hotels, Helwan University, Egypt

²The Higher Institute for Hotel and Tourism Management, Hurghada City, Egypt

Abstract

The Egyptian hotel sector has been adversely affected by the unprecedented global outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. As the hotels sector is slowly moving towards a recovery stage, this study investigates to discover sustainable recovery paths and the real impact of the COVID-19 outbreak on green resorts management practices in Hurghada through in-depth interviews with twenty-five senior managers from ten resorts. Hotels strive to build a distinctive image post the outbreak; therefore, green hotels attempt to get this objective by adopting the green practices. The aim of this study is to offer a scope for understanding the key topics related to the recovery plans which include the environmental considerations and hygienic–epidemiological conditions directly related to COVID-19 in green hotels. The investigated hotels have successfully executed through senior managers their green practices, and the pandemic has not influenced green management practices to a great extent. The study provides general guidance for other hotels in Egypt in these challenging times to restore confidence through adopting stringent hygiene practices and science-based virus prevention measures and reducing the environmental impacts to assure the hotels preparedness to acclimate for the recovery.

Keywords: Hurghada Green Resorts, Green Practices, Sustainability, COVID-19, Crisis Management.

1. Introduction

1.1 The research problem

The hospitality industry has experienced substantial negative effects during the COVID-19 pandemic (Brizek et al., 2021). According to the lockdown challenges, this study explores the successful recovery efforts through Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) (Yin, 2017). Previous studies have not investigated the performance of green practices post COVID-19 pandemic in Hurghada green resorts, and this study in crisis management, particularly in the framework of COVID-19, to the best of our knowledge, a rather unprecedented one as it mainly centres on green practices in Hurghada resorts and that is less-researched in Egyptian hotels sector, and this makes theoretically valuable contributions to the literature. The academic research of emergent phenomena and trends in sustainable hotel business is not sufficient as it deserves (Ruhanen et al., 2015). Therefore, the observed gap in the literature will be addressed in this study, which contributes significantly to the literature on green resorts concept, in Hurghada resorts which has not been previously examined post the pandemic. The resilience literature focused on the recovery and survival of hotels and restaurants (Altin et al., 2020; Wilkesmann and Wilkesmann, 2020), as yet there are

insufficient studies that obviously explore the resilience programs of Hurghada green resorts related to the COVID-19 crisis.

1.2 The research objectives

The objective of this study is to evaluate the preparedness of rooms divisions and food and beverage departments post COVID-19 pandemic period to support the recovery and the revival of Hurghada green resorts. Another objective of this study is to provide data related to the success factors of sustainable business of hotels associated with how to implement the guidelines being recommended in the hygiene measures and the green practices for rooms and restaurants post COVID-19 pandemic. This was done because, in both four and five-star hotels and resorts, 90% of the total revenue is generated by rooms and food and beverage departments and the majority of employees were in the food service, housekeeping, and front desk (Powers and Barrows, 1999; Gross and Friedman, 2004). According to Nebel et al. (1994) full service luxurious hotels are often judged by the quality of their food and beverage operations, and according to (Tax & Brown, 1998), 65% of the customer complaints in service industries are initiated with frontline employees.

Another objective of this study is to provide a framework for risk management, business continuity plans, and environmental considerations directly related to the green initiatives and the strict hygiene measures during COVID-19 pandemic, and the management plans conducted to limit the risk of contamination on the resort areas. More specifically, this study aims to investigate the responsive measures and green practices that presented the resilience to the pandemic crisis. The existing crisis literature indicates that COVID-19 has severely influenced the business of hotels (Pillai et al., 2021), however, thereby, this study contributes to the understanding of how green resorts respond to the crisis, and it introduces important implications for the future outlook. In this study, the researchers focus on the ability of green resorts to respond to the shock absorption of the COVID-19 lockdown, and the coping responses to the restrictions. Particular focus was provided to identify the theoretical gaps in the field of COVID-19 risks perceptions, and the protective plans employed by resorts. This research further explains what activities or practices are executed as methods for crisis management at Hurghada green resorts during the pandemic. This study provides recommendations based on a qualitative approach data obtained from the resorts senior managers with the goal of comprehending and combating the phenomena (Anggito and Setiawan, 2018). Purposive sampling method was adopted, namely the technique of collecting samples by considering certain things (Guest et al., 2006). Using a phenomenological approach, because it is oriented to study complex, real-life phenomena, especially when the theoretical studies is limited, in-depth interviews with twenty five senior managers from ten reputable resorts were conducted to comprehend the resilient practices including following the strict hygiene measures, and the green practices. This crisis should be an opportunity to promote a more sustainable tourism framework and address the challenges that the hotels already had before the crisis and introduce relevant changes (Nepal, 2020; Prideaux et al., 2020; Romagosa, 2020).

2. Literature review

2.1 Green hotels and the concept of resilience for the recovery

Kourgiantakis et al. (2021) mentioned that guests are more interested in safe and healthy experiences supported by hotel hygiene standards. The hotels sector works towards developing a more sustainable model to ensure resilient and comprehensive recovery plans from the pandemic. Khan (2020) suggested the concept of “physical distance tourism” that could act as a solution to combat the crisis caused by COVID-19. Specifically, despite the impacts of the pandemic crisis, green hotels are dedicated to foster their green practices

(Ongan et al., 2020). Hotels platforms of social media have presented information in the crisis of the COVID-19 (Lin and Kishore, 2021) to support the revitalization and the recovery stage (Cuomo et al., 2021). An initial study on the influence of COVID-19 on restaurants in Germany was presented by Wilkesmann and Wilkesmann (2020), the results indicate that owner-managed restaurants are facing difficulties in responding to the crisis, and have insufficient coping capacities than corporate-based restaurants, who have distinctive abilities in fronting the challenge due to their effective organisational structures (Franz, 2020a). Chang et al. (2014) stated that health crisis can influence guests' behaviours where they seek destinations' safety and hygiene, and high-quality medical facilities. In the same vein, in terms of hygienic–epidemiological conditions, and according to the WHO recommendations, restaurants should have four guests for ten square meters and separating sitting areas with at least one meter, with the possibility of outdoor dining areas and online reservations. Restaurants should provide a disinfection of the buffet surfaces and service tools such as drink dispensers. Social distancing and face masks can assist in preventing the infection (Lee, 2020). Furthermore, the employees should attend the obligatory trainings to be capable of implementing the protective measures (Rosemberg, 2020; Hao et al., 2020; WHO, 2020).

2.2 Business continuity management and fostering the green practices

Business continuity management (BCM) at resorts is oriented to disasters recovery and emergency management through reactive plans (Faisal et al., 2020). The studies of crisis management in the hospitality sector recommends the usual reactive resilience practices which include enhanced marketing innovations through communication technologies, dedicated training, and strict hygiene measures (Garrido-Moreno et al., 2021). Resorts guests safety is centered on ensuring the physical distancing and the monitoring of the risks perceptions, this include closure or separation of the service facilities, offering service alternatives, adopting online reservation, ensuring strict carrying capacities, and offering sufficient information which will enhance the guests' confidence and intention to visit green resorts. To combat the pandemic, resorts are creating separate beach walking lanes, ensuring regular hand washing, social distancing, wearing masks, and ensuring frequent disinfection (Rosemberg, 2020), in addition to the closure of the public recreational facilities such as kids clubs, and gyms (Hao et al., 2020). Existing crisis management plans should include standard operating procedures (SOPs) to deal with epidemiological risks and to be implemented in accordance with the recommendations of the disinfection of rooms and restaurants (Rosemberg, 2020; WHO, 2020), with keeping a logbook of the taken actions and measures (Hao et al., 2020). Technology-mediated solutions can deal with the risks of the virus contagion through internet-based communication for interaction, kiosk check-in machines, voice control of room service, touchless elevators, digital menus, automatic dispensers, infrared scanners, app-based keyless doors, robot cleaning systems, electrostatic sprayers, and ultraviolet-light technology (Gursoy and Chi, 2020; Hao et al., 2020; Shin and Kang, 2020). Hotel guests really trust that these technologies can decrease human-to-human contact, and they agree to pay more for enhanced safety measures (Gursoy et al., 2020), since these technology-mediated solutions assure higher levels of health precautions (Shin and Kang, 2020). The guidelines of beach carrying capacity (BCC) concept at resort beaches recommends an area of 8 m² per guest for a safe experience based on the perceived risk and guests' psychological comfort (Serrano Gine et al., 2018). The recommended methods for beach green cleaning include the aeration of sands to make the ultraviolet light to act as a natural disinfectant, in addition to adding ozone to mechanical beach cleaners (Baker et al., 2020). However, there is a challenge of the excessive application of protective tools such as gloves and masks that are improperly disposed of (Zambrano-Monserrate et

al., 2020). Based on the theoretical findings, the study hypotheses have been formulated as follows.

Hypothesis 1: Rooms divisions of green resorts are likely to be more resilient during the COVID-19 crisis.

Hypothesis 2: Food and beverage departments of green resorts are likely to be more resilient during the COVID-19 crisis.

3. Methodology

This research is primarily descriptive and exploratory in nature, exploratory studies use an open, flexible, and inductive approach, as they attempt to investigate new insights of the phenomena (Blanche et al., 2006), and by means of qualitative research methodologies, this research is based on one-on-one interviews with senior managers (Bryman, 2012). The phenomenological approach is the most used in phenomenological qualitative studies on crises, as it explains the experience of the studied phenomenon (Doern, 2016). This is conducted through analysing comparative reviews of the phenomenological interviews which investigate the ‘experiential’ parts of the pandemic crisis as a phenomenon (Doern, 2016; Kirillova, 2018). To explore the multidimensional experience of green resorts during the COVID-19 crisis, the actions taken during the crisis, and the fostering of the green practices, semi-structured interviews with twenty-five senior managers from ten reputable resorts were conducted after the reopening during October 2021 to provide possible solutions to promote the sustainability through resorts. According to statistics from Egyptian Hotel Association (2016), there are 23 five-star and 46 four-star resorts and hotels in Hurghada. Using the purposive sampling (Guest et al., 2006), we selected ten reputable deluxe resorts that were influenced by the crisis but presented clear clues for recovery and effective BCM plans (Patton, 2014). The purposive sample interviews included twenty-five senior managers from ten luxury resorts (four resorts classified as 4-star resorts, and six resorts from 5-star resorts category) representing four hotels’ chains applying green strategies (two international hotels chains, and two locally managed hotels chains). In order to discover the investigated hotels plans, twenty-five senior managers were contacted and asked for personal interviews ranging from 35 minutes to 45 minutes in addition to filling out the checklist, with open-ended questions to obtain information about the extent of green practices implementation, hygienic measures, and the BCM application to serve the recovery stage. Different questions were included in the interviews linked to themes regarding the business recovery and the models of sustainability using a checklist of the main indicator areas and metrics developed by Wang et al. (2013), Green Hotel Association (2021), and Green Restaurant Association (2021) Indicators Model, in addition to the operational guidelines for COVID-19 management in the accommodation sector (WHO, 2020). The qualitative data was obtained through content analysis of the themes of the semi-structured interviews and answers of the open-ended questions as follows;

- Resilient procedures and recovery; “Please describe the resilient procedures and recovery practices post the COVID-19 crisis in general?”
- Fostering green practices; “What are your business continuity management (BCM) plans for fostering green practices post the COVID-19 outbreak?”

The interviewed senior managers reported their recovery plans in terms of hygienic conditions and green practices. The analysis formulated the clarifications from interviewees' responses into themes that are relevant to the recovery programs and BCM plans. This was considered as adequate and obvious conclusions after completing twenty-five interviews, due to the repetition of interviewees' responses (Creswell, 2014).

4. Results

The interview themes presented a number of key findings by using thematic analysis. The first of the two themes were the preparation for facing the crisis, whereas the second main theme was related to managing the green practices of resorts operations during the pandemic. The examined resorts have successfully achieved the goals of green resorts and hygienic measures to a large extent. Data collected from the twenty-five participants (four rooms division managers, five front office managers, two executive housekeepers, eight food and beverage managers, three executive chefs, two purchasing managers, and one maintenance manager) was based on the predetermined measures and indicators of the investigated themes; Resilient Procedures and Recovery and Fostering Green Practices.

4.1 Resilient procedures and recovery

During the mandatory lockdown in March 2020, the crisis was handled with serious action plans albeit still in variable degrees. A rooms division manager (RDM-1) mentioned that since there are hygiene-related concerns in this crisis, guests might hesitate to travel, and the fear of the hotels was about the possibility of COVID-19 to turn into a big crisis threatening the hotel business. When the lockdown was enforced, immediate responses were oriented to reduce the cost and expenses to ensure the business continuity. Most of the hotels immediately applied the operational expenses cutting plans and the reduced usage of energy. To deal with these influential circumstances, many hotels adopted resilient practices as 'reactive strategy' to ensure the business continuity (Linnenluecke, 2017). Five-star hotels managers were capable of bouncing back through their resilient practices, because big hotels chains adopt long-lived resilient contingency practices (Martinelli et al., 2018). On the contrary, a lack of planning to face the crisis was clear in four-star hotels which focus more on reducing costs and applying short term goals, this influenced their immediate responses negatively. A rooms division manager (RDM-2) from a 4-star hotel mentioned that they realized the severity of the crisis and started thinking of the crisis management, they thought of reducing the expenses and the costs, and so severe decisions were taken. The lack of anticipation results in insufficient and late responsive measures (Doern et al., 2016). Respondents showed different methods to deal with these aspects, a food and beverage manager (FBM-1) from a 4-star hotel commented that they have decided to wait the reopening after the lockdown, so they have halted the operations and postponed all business activities, and this has influenced all functions. While another rooms division manager (RDM-3) from a five-star resort declared that the communication channels and precautions helped them to make better responses toward the crises, and their hotel was able to handle this crisis efficiently through anticipating and preventing all the risks.

4.1.1 Food and beverage- hygiene measures:

The preventive actions related to developing SOPs of revised hygiene measures were crucial for the revival of sustainable hotel business during the pandemic. Food and beverage departments with an improved focus on such preventive measures were able to gain the confidence of guests and ensure the compliance with the regulations (Henderson, 2007). An executive chef (CHEF-1) commented that they are facing challenges in finding green suppliers because some existing suppliers failed to apply the green practices measures and the hygiene-related issues. The hotels had to be in compliance with the SOPs to prevent negative consequences such as penalties, and managers started oriented training plans to raise awareness about the hygiene measures such as social distancing, hand washing, and wearing masks. One food and beverage manager (FBM-2) mentioned that they realized

that the employees are at the heart of their compliance with the governmental regulations. The employees were trained extensively and created video contents to enhance the situational awareness. However, in some hotels, waiters and chefs sometimes do not apply SOPs totally, the frustration was declared by a food and beverage manager (FBM-1) from a 4-star hotel that they ensure that the employees take mandatory SOPs like wearing masks seriously. They impose fines on violations, despite it may affect the employee's morale. Another food and beverage manager (FBM-3) added that they trained the staff on the new SOPs, and they ensured that food handling certificates are up to date. All staff should be aware of COVID-19 symptoms and trained on basic infection prevention and control measures. They established an action plan in case of any infections or cases.

Another food and beverage manager (FBM-4) added that the department ensures that menus are laminated and sanitized, and they use general non-contact signage to display menus, they have single use paper menus, and they introduce electronic ordering wherever possible.

One food and beverage manager (FBM-5) from a reputable 5-star resort commented that the department inspected equipment and facilities and ensured that they are safe to function, and stored food and beverages have not been contaminated or expired, and they followed strict and appropriate cleaning and disinfection practices.

Most of the managers agreed on common reactive responses as follows:

- Preventing waiting queues, checking the social distancing rules, limiting seating numbers, and placing tables with a distance of at least 1.5 meters.
- Offering room-service as an alternative, and minimizing the use of cash, and providing contactless ordering and payments process such as online payments, and ordering apps.
- Employees who are unwell must remain in isolation and await a negative test result.

Hotels were applying interactive options to get their messages across as stated by a food and beverage manager (FBM-6) who mentioned that an important feature of developing the services was to communicate to guests that the hotel is following all mandatory governmental SOPs to make them confident of hygienic practices in hotel products and services.

4.1.2 Rooms division- hygiene measures:

A rooms division manager (RDM-4) commented that they worked on avoiding overcrowding and tried to keep the occupancy in line with social distancing recommendations. The hotel postponed or canceled unnecessary gatherings, meetings and trainings, and used video meetings and conferencing where practicable. Another front office manager (FOM-1) commented that they put up posters or use electronic devices to remind others of the risks of COVID and to take protective measures seriously, and they conduct regular temperature checks before every shift. A front office manager (FOM-2) commented that the hotel installed protective separators at the reception counters, they arranged separated and different sitting areas at the lobby. Signs at entry points were placed to request from guests to provide detailed contact information and not to enter if they are unwell or have COVID-19 symptoms. Most of the managers agreed on the common reactive responses as follows:

- Using electronic paperwork, encouraging the use of online or phone bookings to minimize contact, and implementing a guest-friendly cancellation and postponing policy.
- Making sure that pools contain properly treated water and proper chlorine level and making sure that regular microbiological quality tests for water are conducted.
- Closing the kids clubs, limiting the use of the sauna and gym with a social distance, and putting up posters to remind guests of disinfecting the machines after using it.

- Organizing the events in outside areas and adjusting the number of participants.
- Conducting regular reviews of work systems to ensure that they are consistent with the directions and advice of the health authorities.

A housekeeping manager (HKM-1) commented that they ensure the routine cleaning tasks of high trafficking and frequent touching surfaces (doorknobs, lobby, handrails, and restrooms) with bleach solutions, and that the maintenance department conducts regular cleaning of AC/ventilation fans. Another housekeeping manager (HKM-2) commented that housekeepers are instructed to have rooms windows open while cleaning to increase ventilation, to wear face masks and gloves when disposing of garbage bags, and to wash and sanitize hands afterwards. The interviewed housekeeping managers agreed on that:

- Every housekeeper is trained on strict cleaning and disinfecting measures.
- Putting up disinfectant stations supplied with Alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with alcohol content of 60-80% in high trafficking areas.
- Using hot water (at least 60° C), detergents, and bleach to launder the linen.
- Closing some rooms in rotation for deep cleaning, steaming mattresses and carpets, and considering leaving rooms vacant for 24 to 72 hours between occupancies.

4.2 Fostering green practices

4.2.1 Green food procurement for green dining:

Purchasing manager (PM-1) in a 5-star hotel mentioned that they buy beverages in concentrate or bulk form and serve fountain beverages, soft drinks, and draft beer to decrease cans and bottles waste. While another purchasing manager (PM-2) from a 4-star hotel added that their hotel cares about buying bulk concentrate forms of products to be diluted in order to save the cost and reduce the waste of throw-away containers. One study suggests that “consumption of organic goods is positively correlated with preferences for environmentally conscious food production” (Keoleian and Przybylo, 2010). The interviewees agreed on the benefits of organic and pesticide-free foods to build healthy eco-hotels. One five-star hotel initiated a plan for the herbs and spices to be harvested for use in the restaurants. A food and beverage manager (FBM-7) added that they ensure adjusting menus to use seasonal food products, “low fat,” “vegetarian,” “gluten-free,” “vegan,” with considering specific dietary needs, and food-allergies choices.

4.2.2 Sustainable waste management:

The interviewees agreed that their hotels are successful at ensuring green package use. One food and beverage manager (FBM-3) added that whenever possible, the hotel asks suppliers to reduce packaging, and to use recyclable materials, and store packaging in reusable containers. Another food and beverage manager (FBM-5) from a 5-star hotel added that they decrease the amounts of packaging needed for takeout items. The hotel chain group purchasing system buys food supplies in bulks to decrease the packaging waste. An executive chef (CHEF-2) commented on recycling that they reuse trimmings for stock, and pickles, the hotel encourages collecting and reselling used cooking fats, where used cooking oil is collected by cooking fats collector in a common slump and sent for pick-up by trusted oil recovery scavengers. The managers agreed on future green plans importance to support the use of biodegradable trash bags, and some resorts are moving toward using bio-plastics containers and utensils made of renewable resources. A food and beverage manager (FBM-8) from a domestically managed hotel chain added some green practices as follows:

- Printing daily specials on a chalkboard or dry-erase board instead of papers.
- Serving waste-free breakfast and initiating a plan for composting all wet food garbage.

4.2.3 Energy efficiency and water conservation:

The interviewed managers agreed on the importance of monitoring an efficient energy conservation program as follows:

- Starting and enforcing a startup and shutdown schedule for the kitchen equipment.
- Cleaning evaporators, filters, and condenser coils on refrigeration units and air conditioning units to ensure proper airflow, and installing plastic strip curtains, swing-doors, and efficient door seals to prevent warm air leaking into the walk-in units.
- The hotels replaced the old equipment with more efficient energy-saver equipment.
- Cooking with the oven fully loaded and keeping the lids closed on braising pans.
- Reducing broilers, fryers, and ranges pre-heating and idle time, and running the ventilation exhaust systems at lower fan speeds.

A food and beverage manager (FBM-4) added that they ensure turning lights down or off during non-operating hours. A front office manager (FOM-3) added that they started installing lower-wattage bulbs which use less than 25% of the energy for equivalent brightness, and last four times longer. According to the interviewees from chain hotels, when buying new equipment, the hotels calculate and compare energy and water use over the life period of the equipment. An executive chef (CHEF-3) added that they make sure that reach-in refrigerators and freezers are not pushed up tightly against the wall to prevent heat buildup, because if heat builds up near the coils, the refrigerators or freezers will need to work harder, and will consume more energy. An engineering and maintenance manager added that periodical cleaning of the coil fins is an important task of preventive maintenance programs. Over time dusting leads to refrigerators and freezers failure or more frequent maintenance service, and the departments implement a startup/shutdown plan so that appliances are only operating when needed. The hotels are developing water conservation plans and are purchasing water-efficient products. Most of the interviewed managers agreed that rooms and public areas are equipped according to the environmental considerations as follows:

- Setting the “energy saver” key card system, in addition to installing motion sensors and occupancy detectors which turn the lights on and off at public areas.
- Installing dual-flush toilets which use half of the water volume.
- Installing hands-free faucets operated by infrared sensors and reduce water use and the spread of germs.

4.2.4 Green cleaning and post-treatment:

The interviewed HK managers agreed on these environmental considerations.

- Some of the used detergents are biodegradable and are packed in bulks to limit packaging wastes through international brand eco-friendly detergents and cleaning materials suppliers.
- Old furniture and electrical appliances, and decorative ancillaries are re-sold or donated to local charities.
- Reusable containers are used to store and hold detergents and are recycled as garbage bins.
- Photocopying on both sides of the papers is encouraged at offices.

- Programming laundry machines to limit water usage, and fitting aerators to taps and shower heads to reduce water flow.

4.2.5 Green management policy and social corporate responsibility:

The interviewed managers agreed that waste separation and recycling programs are available for paper, PET (Polyethylene Terephthalate) and HDPE (High Density Polyethylene) plastic, cardboards, glass, kitchen oils, scrap metal, styrofoam and aluminum to be recycled in the recycling unit in EL Gouna resort, north of Hurghada. The Garbage containers are made of disposable biodegradable materials through the cooperation with the eco-friendly HEPCA group (Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association). Most of the hotels are certified from well-reputed international organizations specialized in HACCP, service quality, water quality, and food safety, in addition to the trainings on OHSAS 18001, ISO 14001, and ISO 22001 standards. Leftover food is managed through donating the leftover to food banks, one food and beverage manager (FBM-5) mentioned that their hotel donates unserved edible leftover food to local food banks, such as RESALA food bank or shelters (Special Needs Schools), and develops plans to compost the rest. A front office manager (FOM-4) from an international chain added that the hotel's environmental statements are displayed prominently at the hotel entrance and in the lobby. Feedback on the environmental programs is received regularly through the guest satisfaction survey system. Another front office manager (FOM-5) from a 5-star hotel added that the hotel formed a "green team" to share ideas and map out a plan, with organizing a Green day for cleaning the beaches and the biggest Red Sea island Giftun as well to be ready as a reproduction land for the Turtles.

5. Conclusions

Data collected showed that the score of adopting the green practices and hygienic measures, in general, perceived to be high, where the hygienic measures and green practices of the investigated hotels were perceived by the hotels senior managers and the researchers as positive. The results analysis followed the study patterns and it is consistent with the model checklist supporting the predicted hypotheses and proving that both of rooms divisions and food and beverage departments of green resorts are more resilient during the COVID-19 crisis (H1 & H2). The results assured the preparedness of rooms divisions and food and beverage departments post COVID-19 pandemic in Hurghada green hotels. The hotels followed the hygiene practices (WHO, 2020) for hotels which include disinfecting common touched surfaces such as handrails, elevators, handles, doorknobs, key cards, writing utensils, keyboards, toilets, and hand washing basins (Rosemberg, 2020).

Fostering green practices was sufficient to a great extent; including green food procurement for green dining, and following the guidelines of using organic and pesticide-free foods to build healthy eco-hotels. The hotels were successful at ensuring green package use in their sustainable waste management. The managers agreed on the importance of using biodegradable trash bags, and bio-plastics containers and utensils. The hotels were successful at following energy and water conservation plans, green cleaning, and post-treatment according to the environmental considerations. The green management policy and social corporate responsibility were ensured through the cooperation with the eco-friendly groups of environmental protection and conservation association in waste separation and recycling programs, through cooperation with food bank or shelters, and through organizing a Green day for cleaning through the beaches and Red Sea islands.

6. Recommendations

Considering the sustained effects of the pandemic and looming fears of the next waves, the study recommended that green resorts and researchers must develop the basic principles, and organizational situations related to research and practice frameworks through rebuilding and developing the sustainable practices of hotels sector. It is not expected that the pandemic is likely to recover fully, so hotels must provide effective sanitation measures, serve their restaurants guests in shifts to avoid overcrowding, and divide the beach areas into separated blocks to maintain social distance. The question of resilience in times of crisis has also become a cornerstone to the hotels sector, as customers became more interested in socially distanced services, so shifting to sustainable tourism will contribute to a faster recovery. Therefore, this study introduces a responsive framework highlighting the importance of business continuity plans of green resorts that make them more resilient. In terms of responsive measures, hotels can increase their compliance to hygienic measures as a method of promoting the guest confidence, and provide trainings about the SOPs, and ensure preventive measures including epidemic control guidelines, for example, physical greetings are strictly prohibited, and mandatory temperature checks should be implemented including the recordkeeping of contact information. Hotels should adopt revised SOPs in food service operations such as regular safety inspections, where guests will have to wear masks, with adopting an obligatory alternative chair seating in restaurants. All hotels should realize that the stability of their business depends on building the guests trust, and taking care of the SOPs as the cornerstone of the promotional plans amid the crisis. Ensuring customer education through brochures, video display screens, table tents, posters, and signs is requested. The management should provide training materials and sustainability tool kits, web-based presentations, information apps, and viral videos about sustainable practices. In the same vein, trainings for the staff play an important role in ensuring the application of SOPs, and most of hotels should extensively use social media and share videos that assure compliance with SOPs showing their employees wearing masks and gloves, and frequently sanitizing their hands. Front office agents should be provided with disinfectants and wipes, disposable gloves and masks, full-length long-sleeved gowns, and biohazard disposable waste bags (WHO, 2020), this is particularly valued by the hotel guests and proved to be a basic confidence-building method post the COVID-19 crisis.

The following recommendations are presented for the hotels sector in Egypt in order to enhance the quality of the green practices:

- Broadening the green practices including reducing the vehicles emissions, and green food procurement for green dining. The hotels philosophy should rest on sustainable food products including purchasing organic, local and seasonal, hormone free.
- Periodical evaluation for social corporate responsibility plans; including ensuring the cooperation with the eco-friendly associations in waste separation and recycling programs, supporting food banks or shelters, and organizing more Green days for cleaning the beaches and Red Sea islands.
- Using green packaging and biodegradable and renewable resources in a sustainable waste management. The purchasing of disposable products should be assessed for sustainable options. Egg cartons, banquet flowers, strawberry baskets, and tennis ball canisters should be recycled and sent to schools for use in arts and crafts activities. The hotels should increase its usage of biodegradable food containers, reusable coffee filters, compostable takeout boxes, and large bulk packs.
- The management should monitor recycling programs with an efficient recordkeeping, and assure regular control audits and cost analyses for waste management.

- Developing the green management policy after the pandemic outbreak by reevaluating energy and water conservation plans, green cleaning and post-treatment measures according to the environmental considerations. The hotels should implement a strategy for generating electricity from solar energy.
- Reducing lighting energy use through installing automatic light-sensitive dimmers.

In line with the findings of this study, hotels senior managers empathize that conveying the messages of the green practices to the customers would assist in generating favorable customers' perceptions and increase their confidence and intentions to visit green hotels. The results contribute to the literature theoretically on the green hotel practices and their responsive actions toward the COVID-19 crisis. In other words, the significant contribution to the literature calls for practitioners to develop green management operations with a sanitary strategy through avoiding crowds, lowering occupancies, and building on the non-overcrowding concept of sustainable destinations. Priority should be given to health and safety, through adopting globally recognized health standards to combat COVID-19, such as restrictions on meetings and social distancing measures (WHO, 2020), in addition to adopting the sustainable practices at destinations, and avoiding damages associated (Santana-Jiménez and Hernández, 2011). Generally, the hotels should monitor these measures and indicators:

- Ensuring the legal compliance with all relevant legislations and regulations (including health, safety, and reducing pollution and greenhouse gas emissions).
- Encouraging employees' training and participation in the environmental, sociocultural, health, and safety management activities.
- Developing energy and water conservation programs with encouraging the use of renewable energy.
- Implementing waste management plans through reducing, reusing and recycling potential waste streams.
- Monitoring harmful substances and pollutants; including pesticides, paints, swimming pool disinfectants, and cleaning materials, in addition to the treatment of wastewater.
- Reducing pollution from noise, light, runoff, erosion, ozone-depleting compounds, and air and soil contaminants.
- Monitoring programs for conserving biodiversity, ecosystems, landscapes, and wildlife species, and performing audits to identify the potential damages to Red Sea coral reefs.

This study contributes key insights to assist policymakers and practitioners to enhance green hotel guests' confidence after facing health risk crisis. More specifically, the study attempted to provide practical guidance and a benchmark for green resorts decision makers and crisis managers to consider the hotel business recovery. Lastly, this study presented contributions to future investigation of the pandemic's long-lasting effects on the green resorts business in a post COVID-19 framework which includes internal recovery practices.

7. Limitations of the study

The study has several limitations, because this study focuses only on rooms divisions and food and beverage departments in resorts through evaluating their green practices, its generalizability is limited to the green resorts operations. Other variables available in other

sustainability models not studied may be more important than the ones chosen for this study. The other limitation is the sample size and the qualitative research method, and a future study could take a larger sample and extend the sampling process beyond Hurghada resorts to include all deluxe hotels in Egypt in a quantitative study, where the data gathered from the qualitative interviews could develop and shape the direction of a future quantitative study. There may have been a self-selection bias among the interviewees who participated in this study since participation was voluntary. The senior managers' perceptions may also not be accurate, resulting in an additional limitation, and a social desirability bias in reporting the data. Lastly, some characteristics of the hotels may have affected the findings, such as their affiliation under international chains or local chains. However, these limitations could form a basis for future research topics to investigate the preparedness and resilience of green hotels during the crises.

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