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TECHNOLOGY****THE TOURISM CRISES: CAN TUNISIA RECOVER AFTER JASMINE
REVOLUTION?****Donia Damak *, Baha Wiem Agrebi**

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ABSTRACT

Tourism is considered as a vital sector having a lot of gains such as development in income, employment, foreign exchange, additional in growth. The United Nations world tourism organization had vision related with forecasting with annual tourism expenditure to shock US\$ 2 trillion and the number of foreign tourists to reach 1.5 billion by 2020. The tourism industry is one of the most important industries in the world since it employs "more than 250 million people worldwide" (Coshall, J. T. (2003)). This industry, which includes transport, lodging, and catering, is expected to generate \$12,119 billion of revenues and 279,346,000 jobs in 2018 (The Economist, 2011, January 20). The tourism industry worldwide is also expected to indirectly and directly contributes 10.9% to Gross Domestic Product [3]. However, the tourism industry is an extremely sensitive and vulnerable activity, which can be impacted significantly by important events such as terrorism, political insecurity, and natural disasters (Coshall, J. T. (2003)).

This is exactly what happened to Tunisia, a small country located in North Africa, which is a "strategically irrelevant country" with no oil or natural resources (Mihailovich, D., & Sommer, N. (2011)). However, Tunisia functions thanks to tourism, which is crucial to the economy. Consequently, in order to boost the economy of Tunisia, the government and tourism authorities should examine the impact of the Jasmine Revolution on the tourism industry in order to determine how the industry in Tunisia can recover from the revolution.

The purpose of this study is to develop recommendations on how the tourism industry in Tunisia can recover from the Jasmine Revolution after which it has experienced a severe decline of 40% in the number of visitors compared to the previous year (Reuters 2011, February 4). The recovery of Tunisia's economy depends heavily on how the government and tourism authorities will manage the tourism crisis.

So, what is the impact of an event such as the Jasmine Revolution on a country, which functions essentially thanks to tourism? How have other countries managed tourism crises and to what extent did they succeed? Finally, what should the Tunisian government and tourism authorities do to recover from the Jasmine Revolution?

Keywords: Tourism industry, tourism crisis, impact, recovering.**I. INTRODUCTION**

Tunisia "has for over 3000 years witnessed the passage of Phoenicians, Romans, Vandals, Byzantines, Turks, Spanish and French". Tunisia, compared to the other Arabic and Muslim countries, has relatively solid foundations (standards of health, education). The tourism industry in Tunisia offers many advantages to tourists such as: beautiful beaches, archeological sites, an excellent climate during the whole year, and proximity for Europeans (Oxford Business Group, Tunisia 2008).

However, Tunisia's political and economic weaknesses resulted in uprisings and political instability in the whole country. Consequently, the destination image of Tunisia, which is a vital component of the decision making of a potential tourist, was significantly damaged. The horrifying images of Tunisia's revolution broadcasted on television, in addition to the reports on newspapers and other mass media, have frightened potential tourists and significantly weakened the tourism industry (Kalboussi, R. (2011, August 29).

II. THE POLITICAL AND SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

After gaining independence in 1956, Tunisia was ruled by President Habib Bourguiba for 30 years. The Turkish



president Kamel Ataturk inspired him. Consequently, he promoted women rights, totally separated the religion from state, and ratified a modern personal status code [3]. He made Tunisia one of the most modern and socially advanced countries in the Muslim world [23]. In addition, Bourguiba was also uncompassionate to the religious veil that he named “an odious rag” [29].

He implemented an efficient educational system which was envied by all the Arabic and African countries. In fact, Tunisia’s population is more so educated than any other Arab country. Its middle class is considerable. Women are one of the most emancipated in the Arab world: they are not chattel, polygamy is strictly illegal, and marriage is conditioned on their consent, contrary to the other Arab countries. In addition, the law is not based on Sharia [23]. A Tunisian woman stated, “It’s no coincidence that the revolution first started in Tunisia, where we have a high level of education, a sizeable middle class, and a greater degree of gender equality. We have all the ingredients of democracy but not democracy itself” [5].

In 1987, President Ben Ali took power after a peaceful coup. He governed Tunisia in the same way as the other Arab leaders did in their respective countries. He exiled and jailed his political opponents and human rights activists. At the same time, he censored the media.

Under him, the country was “under one-party rule” [47]. Corruption flourished during his administration even as the population was significantly lacking employment opportunities [47].

During Ben Ali’s rule, the women’s condition was his protection against Islamist movements and an “alibi with Western governments inquiring about human right abuses” [5]. In fact, European leaders were approving his commitment to secularism and women’s rights [6]. Tunisia has a long history of women’s rights that became an example for the Arab world. Women were one of the first in the Muslim world to get the right to vote. They obtained the right to abortion the same time American women did. There is also the same ratio of Tunisian women in the Parliament than in France. The women’s literacy rate is superior to that of women in the other African countries [6].

III. THE ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

During the last 20 years, Tunisian economic growth was on average 5% [3]. The World Economic Forum has ranked Tunisia the 40th country in terms of global competitiveness, ahead of most African countries in 2011 [41]. The regime of the former President Ben Ali took steps to encourage privatization and boosted foreign investment by facilitating the transfer of funds and assets from the public to the private sector [37].

The geographical location of Tunisia, adjacent to many European cities, is considered an asset that is likely to enhance the tourism industry and improve the country’s infrastructure. Tunisia is lucky to have 800 miles of stunning white-sand beaches and famous historical sites. It is considered to be a great destination for European tourists who want to enjoy vacations at a relatively low cost [37]. For those who are interested in world history, there are numerous Roman Punic sites, temples, and museums. In addition, the town of Sousse possesses the largest and most comprehensive collection of ancient Roman mosaics in the world. Other historical sites include the internationally famous Coliseum of El Jem, the ruins of Carthage, and the mosque of Kairouan [17]. Over the last three decades, 80% of travelers to Tunisia have come from Europe [37].

The first hotels were built in the capital Tunis. In 1962, the Tunisian Government decided to make the tourism industry a priority for the long-term development strategy of the country. As a result, the capacity in the hotel industry more than tripled from 1970 to 1990.

During this period, Tunisia had become one of the leading tourism destinations in Africa.

Since the 1960’s, the industry has expanded to other towns such as Sousse, Djerba, Nabeul, and Hammamet. The government constructed a significant part of the facilities and infrastructure in the coastal areas. Then private investors took over the expansion and development of lodging establishments. The number of properties increased by 49% after the 1960’s [37].

Since tourism is a labor-intensive activity, this industry has played a significant role in reducing unemployment in Tunisia. In addition to the hotel industry’s employees, tourism benefits the retailers of souvenirs, restaurants, producers of crafts, and newspapers [37]. The industry is estimated to support 510,000 jobs by 2021, which is

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13.1% of the total jobs in Tunisia [55]. The tourism industry has occupied the first position for the export of services and products. In addition, the foreign receipts generated by tourism also amounted to 44% of the trade deficit [37]. The contribution of travel and tourism to total GDP was almost 9% in 2009 and is expected to be 14% in 2021. The destination is also expected to welcome 9,700,000 international tourists in 2021. The tourism industry contributes indirectly to the gross domestic product of the country since it provides a great deal of employment for the construction of hotels, tourism marketing, aviation, sanitation services, fuels, purchases of food, and cleaning products (WTTC, 2011).

The tourism industry in Tunisia has been historically dominated by European tour operators [46]. Considered as a mass sector, tourism in Tunisia has been marketed as an all-inclusive package including airfare and hotel. In the 1990's, 80% of the tourists came via a tour operator [37]. The dominant tour operators have been Tui, Thomson, and Nekerman. All of these key players have their own subsidiaries in the major European countries. The consolidation between wholesalers made them increasingly dominant as hotels in Tunisia were not able to coordinate their prices to gain influence [46]. Consequently, an unbalanced relationship has been established between tour operators and hoteliers. This has forced hoteliers to sell their properties at a low rate. In an effort to boost the tourism industry, Tunisia has started to negotiate with some European countries an opening sky agreement between both of them [48].

IV. THE JASMINE REVOLUTION

History

Tunisia has recently suffered from high unemployment, particularly among university graduates where there has been a 20% unemployment rate [30]. In addition, the corruption grew significantly within Ben Ali's administration. Investors had to bribe and partner with Ben Ali's family members in order to get business deals and authorizations. To demonstrate the growing corruption in Tunisia, Wiki leaks have exposed an American diplomatic cable describing the family members of Ben Ali as a mafia clan. The president's family succeeded to grasp a huge portion of the economy. They controlled banks, hotels, financial institutions, airlines, media, and telecommunication. The amount of money lost due to corruption amounted to \$1 billion dollars per year. The growing corruption drastically weakened Tunisia's economy since local and foreign investors were reluctant to invest in such economic situations. For a country, which is considered to be relatively poor, the fancy cars and residences owned by the president's family made the Tunisians more frustrated and desperate about their poor economic and social conditions. All of these causes resulted in social turmoil and frustration in Tunisia [3].

Then the Jasmine Revolution commenced with a slap. Yes a slap! A jobless teenager, used to sell fruits and other goods as the breadwinner of his family. One day, a policewoman took his cart, as he did not have a license to sell merchandise.

Then, he went to the municipality to complain about his situation but no one listened to him. After a few hours, he came back to the municipality, poured petrol over him in public and set himself on fire [1]. His self-immolation encouraged other desperate people and opposition groups to express their anger all over the country. All of them were asking for political rights, dignity, employment, and the end of the growing corruption [3]. In January, as protests spread all over the country, a significant number of deaths from police gunfire surged. The anger spread to all the cities in Tunisia as violent images and videos of massacres were relayed by cell phones and social media. This revolution could also be called the Facebook Revolution. Facebook helped the protestors coordinate the movement by indicating the place, date, and time of the demonstrations. During the protests, some social media users travelled all over Tunisia in order to record videos of people being massacred and uploaded them on YouTube or Facebook. Consequently, social media has become the central location for generating information and broadcasting it to Tunisians via international channels such as Al Jazeera. Facebook also kept Tunisians updated about the evolution of the situation in the country [43].

A few weeks later, thousands of lawyers, doctors, student groups, and trade unions joined the protest, bringing the president Ben Ali into exile on January 14th [3]. It is reported that his wife, withdrew over one ton of gold from the Tunisian Central Bank before fleeing the country [51]. In the summer of 2011, the president was tried by absentia within the court system and sentenced to 35 years of jail. Currently, the former president lives in Saudi Arabia with his wife and his two children. His other family members are now either in jail or in exile. Their valuable assets, which constituted approximately 60% of the whole economy of Tunisia, were frozen [51]. The Jasmine Revolution has ended one of the most oppressive and authoritarian regimes. Furthermore, it has put the other dictators in the Arab world on notice that they may face the same problems in the future. The self-



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immolation of the fruit vendor has created a domino effect in North Africa and the Middle East. The Jasmine Revolution has shown that the power of the people is able to bring down one of the strongest dictators the world has ever known [3]. Dar Al-Hayat, an Arab newspaper located in London, said the Jasmine Revolution “is a gift to the entire Arab world and is the best answer to those who do not believe in the possibility of change from the inside” [23].

As a result, other revolutions in the Arab World have occurred. The Jasmine Revolution is considered to be relatively successful, particularly compared to the revolutions in Egypt and Libya because of the limited number of lives lost in Tunisia (Blass, 2011).

V. THE IMPACT OF THE JASMINE REVOLUTION ON TUNISIA

According to the United Nations, the revolution resulted in more than 100 people killed by the security forces of Ben Ali. However, by the beginning of February, most businesses, factories, and schools reopened in normal conditions. A temporary new government was appointed a few days after the revolution. It put an end to the controls on the media, released opponents of Ben Ali, and acknowledged amnesty for the prisoners. It also allowed the previously prohibited Islamist parties to enter the political sphere in Tunisia [51].

More than 100 parties are taking part in elections for an assembly, which will rewrite the new constitution of the country, appoint a new government, and decide the character of the future elections [50]. Consequently, the future politics of Tunisia remains completely unknown leading to a certain political instability in the country. Specifically, the potential popularity of the Islamist movement Ennahdha remains unidentified [3]. In addition, the revolution resulted in significant strikes all over the country making the investors very anxious about the political situation in Tunisia [51].

A few days after January 14th, 2011, life returned to normal for most people. The cafes, streets, and bars were filled again with people [51].

However, the days following the revolution witnessed insecurity and violent acts in Tunisia.

In fact, Ben Ali’s snipers murdered some civilians. In addition, some shops and factories were burnt and destroyed [3]. This breakdown of order, which lasted only a few days, has led to the evacuation of thousands of tourists from Tunisia [47].

As a result, from January 2011 to the end of August 2011, the number of tourists dropped by 39% compared to the previous year [26]. Revenues declined by 952.5 million dinars during the same period compared to 2010 [18]. Average hotel occupancy also declined by 46.3% compared to the previous year. Twenty-four hotels stopped their activities, which contributed to a loss of more than 3,000 jobs [26]. Since the Jasmine Revolution, the whole industry has lost more than 22,000 jobs [26].

In the island of Djerba, which is a major destination for European tourists, half of the properties stopped activities a few days after the 14th of January [54]. The resorts of the touristic town Hammamet experienced the same situation. The shops, which sell handicrafts, souvenirs, and ceramic as well as the restaurants and bars, are empty [2].

Thomas Cook, a huge British tour operator, experienced a sharp decline in revenue because of the tourism crisis in Tunisia. Three years, before the revolution occurred, the company expected the Tunisian tourism industry to flourish significantly during summer 2011. Some Tunisian hotels that used to achieve 80% occupancy during spring have only reached a rate of 10%. TUI, a huge tour operator group composed of French, German, and English agencies is expecting a loss of 35 million Euros for the 2011 year [2].

Tour operators might play a significant role in restoring travelers’ confidence after the revolution because tourists trust them. It was reported that many tourists who came to Tunisia after the Jasmine Revolution indeed had a great experience. For instance, one tourist who came to Tunisia stated, “I was nervous. I kept phoning to see what the situation was, but I thought Thomas Cook wouldn’t let us go if it was dangerous” [53]. In addition, one Belgium tourist stated “A lot of people told me, ‘Oh don’t go to Tunisia, you are going to see a lot of people from the army with guns and you can’t leave the hotel. But there’s no problem here. The Tunisians are glad to see you, they’re happy there are tourists” (Watson, 2011). Another example of this is seen through a British tourist who stated: “We didn’t want to come because of the problems, but everything started to settle down so



the tour operator didn't stop us coming" [54].

According to GFK, a marketing research agency, only 50% of French travelers kept their reservations to Tunisia. They also stated that 41% of French tourists are adopting a "see and wait" strategy during the next few months [2]. In addition, at the end of the month of May, "The President of the German Travel Association DRV still expressed confidence in the long-term effect on travel. He says bookings are already significantly improving" [2].

The tour operators reacted differently toward the tourism crisis in Tunisia. For instance, Jet2.com, an English tour operator, cancelled all the flights to Tunisia in summer 2011, as he did not want to take any risk. Before the Jasmine Revolution, Jet2.com planned to establish numerous flights to Tunisia from Manchester, Leeds, New Castle, and many other cities in the United Kingdom [24]. However, other tour operators such as Thomson and Thomas Cook UK have cancelled their flights only until February. They adopted a "wait and see strategy" suggesting their customers reschedule their trip without paying any additional charge. Tunisia has depended in the last years on the Algerian market especially during crisis times in Europe. During the last years, the Algerian market (1 million tourists per year) generated from 400 to 600 million dollars per year. Although Tunisia has spent 300,000 Euros to promote Tunisian tourism in Algeria, the number of Algerian tourists declined by 90% during 2011. This decline in the number of Algerian tourists is due to the exaggerated rumors regarding the increasing instability and violence in Tunisia [28].

However, six months after the revolution, the number of British travelers to Tunisia increased significantly. Although the revolution has led to a major tourism crisis, Tunisia is still an important destination for British [36]. Flights from the United Kingdom to Tunisia resumed at the end of March. For instance, Thomas Cook restarted offering 16 flights per week during winter and spring. The tourism industry in Tunisia also suffered from the civil war in neighboring Libya. It has been reported that over 50,000 civilians have been killed by Gadhafi's armed forces since the beginning of the turmoil in the country. The massacre in Libya has frightened the potential tourists of Tunisia.

Consequently, many of them have canceled their trips [42].

VI. THE IMPACT OF TOURISM CRISES ON OTHER COUNTRIES

6-1 The Case of the Tiananmen Square Conflict in China

The Tiananmen Square Conflict in China, which led to thousands of deaths in 1989, affected the whole economy of the country with no exception of the tourism industry [19]. Hotel occupancy levels decreased sharply after the conflict. In addition, the destination image declined significantly. Gartner and Shen (1992) stated that the destination image could be improved via highly credible media. However, changing the negative image to a positive one requires a lot of time and efforts. The Tiananmen Square Conflict, for instance, was broadcasted to millions of people around the world. The international media carried news and reports that deteriorated China's touristic image and highlighted violence within the destination. However, the study conducted by Gartner and Shen (1992) reported that the recovery was quick but depended heavily on the efficiency of the media coverage. In addition,

China hired formation agents who had to promote the destination. However, the media experienced low credibility. The case of the Tiananmen Square Conflict demonstrated that changing a destination's image is a slow process. However, it can be accelerated by receiving efficient mass media coverage [19].

6-2 The Case of Bali

In 2002, the island of Bali suffered a severe downtown in tourist numbers and bookings due to a series of bombings. A year later, the number of international visitors increased significantly [38]. In early 2005, the number of tourist arrivals exceeded all the expectations of the government (Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation, 2006). Bali's authorities took steps to restore tourists' confidence by applying marketing strategies in order to improve the destination image [38]. The situation of Bali in 2002 was extremely challenging because the bombings targeted tourists specifically. Just after the bombings, the Minister of Tourism established media centers and platforms in Bali and Jakarta in order to cope with the tourism crisis by providing accurate information to the press and the public. During an "Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Meeting," Indonesia's President, asked other countries' leaders to remove travel prohibitions and advisories about Indonesia's destination. He stated that these bans only resulted in social panic as well as a sign of encouragement for the terrorists [52]. In addition, the Minister of Tourism organized a trip to get in touch with

the victims' families in order to share their pain. This visit was broadcasted to many households worldwide and had a positive effect on the image of the destination.

Furthermore, he held a prayer ceremony to share the sorrow of the victims' families. The quick capture of the terrorists helped the tourism recover quickly. The security norms implemented in the properties in Bali reassured tourists. In addition, the government tried to stimulate local touristic demand in order to show the whole media that everything had returned to normal [52]. The locals were offered discounts and special offers with national airlines [8]. Perhaps one of the most important achievements of the government was to organize conferences and meetings with different tour operators worldwide in order to demonstrate a return to stability [52].

Media is a key player if a destination is willing to recover from a tourism crisis.

However, it has to be managed efficiently because it is the main intermediate between the industry and the potential travelers. Although every destination has unique features, the ways destinations deal with tourism crises are similar [3].

Recent studies demonstrated that the rapidity of improvement of the image of the affected countries "not only depend on the time taken to repair the initial damage, but also on an effective marketing message announcing that the destination is open again" [8].

6-3 The Case of the Maldives

In the Maldives, the tourism industry contributes over 30% of the country's GDP. The foreign receipts generated by tourism increased by more than \$130 million from 1983 to 2003. In addition, the number of tourist arrivals increased from 42,000 in 1980 to 600,000 in 2004. However, the Maldives experienced a significant decline in arrivals and bookings following the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004. The capacity of hospitality establishments declined by approximately 22% from 2003 [8].

A month later, the Maldives developed a recovery strategy that aimed to put an end to the cancellations in the short term. However, the destination experienced negative media coverage that grouped the Maldives with other affected countries such as Thailand. This was due to a contagion effect. The Maldives experienced a negative image as a destination because of the devastations in Thailand, which were harsher. In order to correct some misperceptions about the destination, the tourism authorities had to communicate with tour operators and travel agencies in the different major markets such as Italy, the UK, and Germany [8].

The first step of the destination's recovery strategy was to communicate and cooperate directly with the key players of the industry such as tour operators and airlines in an effort to persuade tourists not to cancel reservations. For instance, the tour operators permitted tourists to change their reservations and even cancel at no cost. In order to reassure tourists, the communication campaign aimed to clearly state that lodging establishments in the Maldives were operational in 2005. Visiting the Maldives during that period would deliver a message of sympathy since travelers could assist in the recovery of the destination. The group of hotels Universal Resorts launched a marketing campaign for the British market. They invited more than 50 journalists and travel writers to stay at their resorts. They wanted their guests to see what was really happening in the Maldives after the Tsunami. They also communicated with travel agents and provided the destination after the Tsunami. By April 2005, the revenues of the group increased by 70%.

The marketing efforts proved to be efficient as the resorts succeeded to minimize the short-term cancellations. The journalists, travel writers, and tour operators' visits resulted in immediate and positive feedback and articles about the Maldives and revived trust in the destination. Furthermore, the group shifted a fraction of its promotion budget to new promising markets such as the Chinese market. In fact, the volume of the Chinese market has significantly increased in 2005. The Chinese market was one of only two markets to have increased in the Maldives. The number of tourist arrivals in the Maldives returned to normal within one year to 18 months after the tsunami [8].

6-4 The Case of Taiwan

A severe earthquake struck Taiwan in September 1999. Figures state that more than 2,400 people died. The tourism industry experienced a dramatic decline of 15% in the number with a great deal of information about of



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international tourist arrivals. In addition, some misleading reports from the media have weakened the tourism industry and scared potential travelers. The average room occupancy declined by 60% and 210,000 airline reservations were canceled during the three months following the earthquake. Since the tourism industry is a perishable activity, Taiwan experienced a significant loss in income. In addition, tourist facilities were damaged in different locations in Taiwan. As far as Taiwan is considered, the role of the media was crucial for directing tourists' attitudes toward the destination. The destination's image of Taiwan was obviously a key factor in the recovery of the destination. In addition, the government's efforts contributed significantly in the recovery process as it augmented awareness about the destination worldwide. It is also interesting to note that tourists had the perception that the earthquake had damaged the whole region while in reality it affected only a small portion of the destination [22].

6-5 The Case of Las Vegas after the September 11 Attacks

After the 9/11 attacks, the tourism industry plunged in the United States. In Chicago, restaurants experienced a significant decline of 45 to 60% of their revenues. In addition, the average hotel occupancy in San Francisco declined by 50% [15]. The 9/11 attacks cost the American private and public enterprises more than \$16.2 billion. Hoteliers anticipated a significant change in tourists' perception of the United States destination [15]. Las Vegas' tourism activity experienced a dramatic fall after the September 11 attacks.

In addition, the destination has been mentioned as a major terrorist target. Consequently, the impact of September 11 was rapidly felt in the city. Las Vegas' McCarran Airport Bellagio have respectively decreased their accommodation prices by 30 and 60%. In experienced a drop of more than 20% in the number of arrivals. The hotels in Las Vegas quickly reacted to the tourism crisis by lowering room rates. For instance, MGM Mirage and the Bellagio addition, more than 1,200 employees in Las Vegas' casinos have lost their jobs. However, the study conducted by Eisendrath *et al.* (2008) reported that the effects of September 11 lasted only four months. In addition, the study demonstrated that such events have an immediate and short-term effect on the industry [15]. However, the image of one particular destination can be damaged sometimes in the long term. As an example, the image of Vietnam is still affected by the war.

6-6 The Impact of 1986 Terrorist Attacks on Travels to Europe

Brady and Widdows (1988) conducted a study about the impact of terrorist attacks in 1986 on travel to Europe. In early 1986, the US-Libya war and some terrorist activities worldwide resulted in a sharp decline of the travels to Europe. The study demonstrated that events such as terrorist attacks or unexpected war clearly resulted in declines in the number of tourist arrivals. Brady and Widdows (1988) used tourist fare, accommodation price, and income as independent variables in order to estimate the number of arrivals from the U.S. to some European countries. The study conducted by Brady and Widdows (1998) also demonstrated that the variable price was significant at the t test level. This means that price discounts can influence the consumer's decision to go to a destination that experienced a tourism crisis. It also concluded that the recovery of the tourism industry was quick [7].

6-7 The Case of SARS in Malaysia

In 2003, the SARS virus resulted in a loss of activity in major Asian countries. Specifically, Hong Kong, China, and Singapore experienced a decline of 41%, 25%, and 43% of their revenues. Malaysia's tourism, an important hard currency earner, experienced a dramatic fall, too. The number of tourist arrivals declined by 30%. The average hotel occupancy dropped to 50% compared to last year. The Malaysian government implemented a development strategy composed of 13 measures, which assisted economic sectors such as the tourism industry. In addition, \$1.9 billion was allocated to manage the tourism crisis in Malaysia. Promotion targeted the markets, which were not affected by SARS such as the Middle East market. As a result, a tourism campaign was organized to attract potential tourists from Qatar, Kuwait and other Middle Eastern countries. After one year, the industry experienced a full recovery in Asia in terms of arrivals and revenues (153 million arrivals in 2004). This case study shows that cooperation between governments, agencies, and organizations has played a significant role to reinvigorate the tourism industry [3].

In order to restore tourists' confidence in the destination, a three-month project called the Project Phoenix was created. The Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) undertook a proactive public relations campaign in order to deliver positive messages and improve the image of the destination through TV, radio, and online media. This media campaign exceeded past expectations and improved the destination image in only a few months. In addition, PATA worked closely with international offices in America and Europe. It also printed ads in well-

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known magazines such as Fortune Magazine (Europe and Asia) and Time Magazine (The United States). In order to reduce the sense of panic among potential tourists, the Phoenix Project launched a “Welcome Back” campaign on CNN. The commercial was estimated to have been broadcasted to 130 million households in different continents. Other campaigns were launched in “BBC World” and “the National Geographic Channel”. In addition, a new website of PATA was created. This website aimed to provide tourists with reliable information about the Asia-Pacific destination. The website also gave travel offers to the members of PATA, tried to correct the misconceptions of potential travelers about the destination, and provided visitors with information concerning weather and maps [52].

6-8 The Indian Ocean Tsunami in Thailand

The Indian Ocean Tsunami also resulted in an important fall in tourist arrivals and resort occupancy in 2004 in Thailand. In addition, the average hotel occupancy was less than 10%. Even if they were not directly affected by the SARS virus and the 2004 Tsunami, some countries such as Indonesia, Japan, and Korea faced a drop of 10 to 50% in tourist arrivals.

These figures suggest that interdependency exists between these countries. In addition, the Tsunami resulted in significant damage for 20% of the properties and hospitality establishments. The international media broadcasted harsh images of the destination. The impression of a total devastation of the island was left to many households. Tourism leaders provided journalists, travel writers, and celebrities with trips to show the world that the destination was stable and safe [3].

6-9 The Japanese Case 2011

Before the recent disaster that occurred in Japan, the tourism industry was expected to contribute 2.2% of total the country's GDP in 2011. In June 2011, the number of international arrivals decreased by 40% compared to the previous year. But the booking levels return to normal by the end of 2011 [24]. Since the natural disaster, the number of international visitors in March dropped by more than 50% compared to the previous year. The Japanese government and tourism authorities launched an aggressive marketing campaign in order to recover from the earthquake. One travel agency, located in Hong Kong, made it possible for customers to get a total refund if they face an earthquake of over 6.0 on the Richter's Scale [24]. On the other hand, other travel agencies did not take the risk to send any travelers to Japan. Some of them have withdrawn their tours to Japan and cancelled future trips as well [24].

VII. CONCLUSION

The case studies have demonstrated that recovery has taken place rather quickly given the fact that no other damaging events have occurred [15]. Another study conducted by Coshall (2003) reported that after major terrorist or war acts, the number of travelers return rapidly to a normal level. In addition, all the case studies examined recognized the importance of communication and marketing in order to recover from a tourism crisis. All of the industry stakeholders should create strong alliances and cooperation with media in order to communicate positive news and alleviate the effect of unfavorable reports about the destination [52]. However, inefficient or hurriedly prepared communication strategies can prolong the unfavorable impacts on the destination [8]. Finally, “it could be argued that very few destinations are now safe from the threat of war or terrorism, as contagion effects reverberate around the globe and erode the confidence of international tourists” [8].

Governments deal with the tourism crises similarly even though each destination has unique features [3]. The case studies examined previously give some best practices in order to rejuvenate the tourism industry. These best practices can be applied to Tunisia in some aspects. However, the Tunisian situation is also different from the other cases examined. Nevertheless, the Tunisian authorities still have to promote the destination by launching aggressive marketing campaigns in order to restore confidence and improve the country's image. Tunisia may also find some opportunities in the Jasmine Revolution in order to create new niches, update its image, and boost the tourism industry.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

8-1 Increasing the Promotional Budget

The marketing budget is a key element in the recovery of the tourism industry. For instance, Alaska, which



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experienced a severe downturn from the September 11 attacks, had some difficulties recovering from the tourism crisis after the 9/11 attacks. Its marketing budget for tourism (\$7.8 million for the 2000-2001 periods) is insufficient to boost the industry compared to the marketing budget of Florida, which is \$68 million [9]. The Tunisian tourism authorities should look to raise their promotional budget to persuade travelers to come back and boost the activity [3]. Tunisia has to invest more in the tourism industry. For instance, its direct competitors Morocco, Turkey, and Egypt invest respectively three, nine, and five times more than it does [55].

8-2 Giving Financial and Tax Incentives

After a tourism crisis, the government should assist tourism leaders with fiscal and financial measures such as reducing airport taxes and giving tax incentives [3]. By doing so, the Tunisian government will lessen the damage of the Jasmine Revolution and limit the job losses. Shortly after the revolution, 24 hotels stopped their activities, which contributed to a loss of more than 3,000 jobs in Tunisia [26].

8-3 Creating Alliances with the Media

The role of advertising is vital for the image of a destination. The communication strategy should use a credible media partner to deliver accurate and efficient news. In order to rejuvenate the activity, the tourism authorities have to be able to persuade tourists regarding the safety and stability of the destination. The in-moment communication is very important, especially in the beginning of the crisis. Consequently, the destination should act as fast as possible [3]. As the destination is topping the news, the government and the different organizations have to cooperate and work together to attract investors and tourists again [14].

Croatia, for instance, has succeeded in recovering from the tourism crisis by working closely with CNN in order to promote the destination. Together, they launched a campaign called "A Journey into the Heart of Croatia" [14]. This cooperation turned out to be a real success. Croatia gained credibility and sympathy since CNN is considered to be a valid source of media. To further illustrate this point, CNN supported the tourism industry in the Asia-Pacific region and helped restore tourists' confidence in the destination. Together, they launched a marketing campaign that was broadcasted to 216 million households in 30 different countries. CNN proved to be a significant tool in boosting the tourism activity. This communication not only restored tourists' confidence in Croatia and Malaysia, but also rejuvenated both destinations [14]. The Tunisian authorities should provide the media with concrete facts, statistics, and figures in order to put the Jasmine Revolution in its context. In fact, the world has to know that no tourist has been injured and no hotel has been damaged during the revolution. The authorities have to continuously communicate with the media in order to maintain long-term relationships. Transparency, objectivity, and accuracy are extremely recommended [14]. Furthermore, the Maldives used other marketing outlets: international television, advertorials in over 30 international magazines, and billboards. Finally, they participated with the Maldives Tourism Promotion Board in 14 international tourism fairs in order to promote the destination [8].

8-4 Providing Added Value to Tourists

The tourism Crisis Recovery Guide recommends the destinations give an added value instead of offering significant discounts [44]. The added value may consist of benefits for dining and visits to attractions [3]. Hoteliers may provide special welcome events for the travelers coming after a crisis. They may offer them a gift for their visit and other kind gestures of hospitality [44].

Tunisia, for instance, should not engage in price-cutting. The destination suffers already from a low-cost image [21]. Rather, it should provide tourists with special short-term offers. Malaysia created special offers around holiday weekends. This promotion proved to be extremely successful [3]. In addition, the General Secretary of UNWTO advised the Tourism Minister not to lower the prices too much. He suggested that Tunisia should focus on long-term strategies [39].

8-5 Increasing Cooperation Internally and Internationally

The tourism authorities, the government, hoteliers, restaurants, tour operators, and all the tourism industry leaders have to form a strong alliance in order to restore travelers' confidence.

All the stakeholders can jointly arrange giving added value. Second, they have to give concrete and accurate facts about the destination such as "our destinations / hotel / tour / attraction / flight are operating" [44]. In order to recover from the crisis, tourism authorities should organize familiarization trips by inviting journalists, high profile celebrities, and tour operators to show them that the destination is safe. Consequently, they will observe



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what has been accomplished in order to return to stability [3]. Tunisia should focus on effective communication with the tour operators. It has been reported that 80% of European tourists have come to Tunisia via tour operators in the last years [37]. In addition, tourists generally trust tour operators in such situations [53]. A testimonial from a celebrity could also be very valuable. The Maldives' government in conjunction with the Maldives Tourism Promotion Board (MTPB) organized 350 familiarization trips. It would be valuable for the tourism leaders to obtain interviews and testimonials from tourists who express their satisfaction regarding their accommodation [3].

Tunisia has already started to cooperate with the UN World Tourism Organization, which is supporting the country's efforts to speed recovery from the tourism crisis after the revolution. The secretary general of UNWTO met with Tunisian authorities and discussed marketing strategies and partnerships between the two parties. The Secretary General said he was optimistic about the recovery of the tourism industry [39].

8-6 Upgrading Tunisia's Image

The Jasmine Revolution presents an opportunity to upgrade the image of Tunisia.

Consequently, the promotion and communication campaigns have to be re-adapted. In fact, in the last years, the boom of tourism supply at low prices coupled with an increasingly saturated demand from Europeans resulted in narrowing profit margins and increasing hotels' losses in Tunisia. Consequently, the service tended to be poorer because of "the growing habit of selling four star hotels for the price of two" [21]. As a result, Tunisia needs to get rid of its cheap and mass-tourism destination image. The prices are also kept low because the tour operators have become a dominant key player in the tourism industry. During the last years, tour operators have been forcing hoteliers to sell their property establishments at a low rate. In order to reduce dependence on tour operators, Tunisia also has to finalize the negotiations with European countries about the open sky agreement as soon as possible [48]. Working Closely with Government Agencies Government Travel Advisories is one of the major sources of information on risk assessment. The information covers natural disasters, security, and safety issues [3]. In Trip Advisor, for instance, it is stated, "The State Department alerts U.S. citizens to the potential for unrest in Tunisia. Spontaneous and unpredictable events, such as work stoppages and demonstrations still occur, a state of emergency remains in force, and curfews can be re-established on short notice. The U.S. Department of State continues to advise U.S. citizens currently in Tunisia to remain alert to local security developments and to be vigilant regarding their personal security. Travelers contemplating trips to the interior of the country should assess local conditions and routes when making travel plans, as conditions can quickly change" (Trip Advisor, 2011).

Tunisian authorities should contact the State Department and the other governments that have issued such alerts about Tunisia. Then, they can provide them with accurate and updated information about the current situation in Tunisia [3].

8-7 Targeting Growing Markets

Tunisia should also target the most promising markets in its recovery plan. For instance, the Russian market should be allocated a significant promotion budget since the number of Russians did not decrease sharply from last year. A hotel chain in the Maldives shifted a portion of its promotion budget to new markets such as the Chinese market.

Consequently, the volume of the Chinese market has significantly increased in 2005. In addition, the Chinese market was one of only two markets to have increased in the Maldives [8]. In Tunisia, the number of British travelers to Tunisia increased significantly during the summer. On the other hand, the number of German and French visitors dropped sharply [36]. Consequently, Tunisia should allocate a more important promotional budget to promising markets such as Britain and Russia as opposed to declining markets such as Germany and France.

8-8 Promoting Local Tourism Industry

Tourism authorities should also promote the local market. For instance, Bali's tourism industry has benefited from the increasing activity of the domestic market. By stimulating local touristic demand, the government has shown the media that the destination was safe and stable [52]. In Tunisia, the domestic touristic activity increased because of the decline in hotel room rates. Tourism revenues increased by 50% in July compared to June thanks to the local tourism activity. As Tunisians started spending some time in local resorts, the tourism



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activity has been significantly boosted (Ben Ghazi, 2011). In 2008, over 2 million of the local Tunisian population travelled outside the country. Consequently, there is potential for high demand for the local hospitality industry in Tunisia. The tourism authorities should boost local tourism by developing attractive offers for locals who often complained about the higher price they had to pay for accommodation compared to European tourists. Tunisian locals have been offered special promotions to boost the domestic activity the summer following the revolution. Efforts should be sustained to encourage locals to boost hotel demand in Tunisia [46].

8-9 Marketing Compassionate Events

The Tunisian government should have shown the media a more compassionate attitude in such events. Broadcasting compassionate scenes toward the 100 dead persons after the revolution would probably benefit the country's image. In Bali, the visit to the victims' families had a positive effect on the image of the destination demonstrating the human aspect of the tourism industry [52].

8-10 Monitoring the Media

Tunisia suffered from negative media coverage, sometimes considered exaggerated according to some. The media tends sometimes to exaggerate the situation therefore deteriorating the image of a destination in order to attract attention to its publications. In France, for instance, there was a lot of misinformation. For instance, the French media stated that Djerba's hospitality establishments were filled with Libyan refugees during the summer.

This kind of information clearly discouraged the French from taking their vacations in Tunisia last summer [32]. Consequently, the Tunisian government and tourism authorities should keep track of international medias' reports and monitor what is broadcasted in the different markets about Tunisia. Tourism authorities can write a report to the editors of the newspaper or TV channel and ask them to correct the information [3]. The authorities should also monitor the local media and journalists, which are a major source of international information, especially during crisis periods [44]. In addition, the government and tourism leaders have to understand the potential tourists' perception of the destination in order to persuade them to come back. For instance, in the Maldives, the tourism authorities used to interview international travelers to obtain their feedback and to reinforce sympathy and solidarity [8].

8-11 Promoting Cultural and Saharan Tourism

Destinations should also target new niche markets after such crises. For instance, Tunisia should target the "cultured citizens" who will support democracy. This new niche should go to Tunisia to discover the country that has changed the world. The slogan would be "Come and see the place where it all happened" [16]. The Tunisian prime minister and other specialists believe that the Jasmine Revolution will benefit the Tunisian tourism in the long term because Tunisia has become well known worldwide since the revolution [20]. A tourism specialist, added: "I am convinced that this peaceful revolution is a historic opportunity for a true breakthrough for the Tunisian tourism" [20]. The values of the revolution (freedom, dignity, and democracy) are those that Europeans cherish. The tourism industry in Tunisia never focused on the cultural part of the activity, although Tunisia has many historical monuments and sites.

One Tunisian café owner said, "Visitors come and maybe spend 30 minutes, they buy some trinket, learn nothing about the town, nothing of the culture. We want to change the mentality. Now maybe after the revolution, perhaps there is a chance" [39].

In addition, tourists are seeking new cultural experiences. Instead of spending the whole holiday tanning on the beach, they tend to live real experiences and engage in culture and history. This new trend resulted in the development of cultural and heritage tourism markets [21].

8-12 Promoting Positive Images

Tunisia should work with the media to highlight positive aspects of the revolution. In fact, the Jasmine Revolution has not only ended one of the most oppressive and authoritarian regimes. It has also put the other Arab world's dictators on notice that they may face the same North Africa and The Middle East resulting in wonderful opportunities for these countries to experience freedom and dignity [3]. Tunisia should focus on the implications of the revolution on human rights in the Arab World. In fact, this revolution has shown that the power of people is able to bring down one of the strongest dictators the world has ever known [3]. Dar Al-



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Hayat, an Arab newspaper located in London said the Jasmine Revolution "is a gift to the entire Arab world and is the best answer to those who do not believe in the possibility of change from the inside" [23]. Tunisia should also promote the modernity and courage of the youth during the revolution and the changes in all different life aspects (cultural, political, and social). It may show how people now enjoy political rights, freedom of expression, speech, and association. It may also show the world the impact the Jasmine Revolution had on the whole Arab World (the domino effect). Tunisia also launched a provocative communication campaign in France and Britain to recover from the crisis. The advertisements stated, "They say that in Tunisia some people receive heavy-handed treatment" or "They say Tunisia is nothing but ruins" [10]. Although using humor may seem valuable in certain situations, these messages may provide a negative image of Tunisia.

8-13 Promoting Openings and Events

The destination, which has faced a tourism crisis, should look for positive news to broadcast all over the world. Egypt has launched a promotion campaign about the reopening of archeological and historical sites to show the world that the destination is back to normal [3]. The news can consist of cultural and sport events, too. For instance, Japan organized the women's football world cup in summer 2011 and communicated continuously regarding this prominent event. One Japanese spokesman said, " With the Japan women's football team winning the world cup, a summer full of festivals and the autumn's leaf viewing season on the horizon, there is much to be positive about in Japan. Six months on from the biggest earthquake in its history, the sun is most definitely shining in the Land of the Rising Sun" [24].

8-14 Dissociating itself from the Arab World during Communication

Tunisia should also dissociate itself from other Arab countries that are experiencing uprising and turmoil. For instance, the Maldives case study demonstrated that the destination experienced a negative media exposure because it was associated with other countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand. These two countries sustained more severe harm than the Maldives [8]. Concerning Tunisia, the military and political unrest in Libya have damaged the tourism industry. The ruling council stated that Gadhafi's forces have massacred over 50,000 civilians. The United Nations also created a no-fly zone in an effort to protect civilians from the army of the President. The clash between the President's army and the civilians frightened tourists who canceled their trips to Tunisia [12]. In addition, Tunisia is still facing negative media coverage because of its association with other politically instable countries such as Syria, Libya, and Yemen. Syria, for instance, is experiencing a civil war opposing the army of Bashar El Asad and rebels. On October 6th, 2012, the United Nations' human rights office estimated the number of deaths to be over 2,900 [27].

When launching a marketing campaign, Tunisia has to isolate itself from the Arab World, which is experiencing uprisings and massacres since the Jasmine Revolution. Signs of turmoil and conflict have already emerged in Jordan, Sudan, and Algeria [3]. As another example of interdependency between countries, the tourism industry in Japan and Korea experienced a sharp fall although the two countries were not directly affected by SARS and the 2004 Tsunami [4].

IX. LIMITATIONS

This study has some constraints that must be considered. First, there is a limited amount of research and literature about the situation of Tunisia after the Jasmine Revolution.

In addition, the study may be affected by the current events in Tunisia that may change some aspects of the outcome of the paper. External events in neighbor countries may also have a significant impact on some aspects of the paper.

X. CONCLUSION

The tourism industry is a key factor in the economic stability of Tunisia. It is a major source of hard currency and a creator of employment (Hazbun, 2008). For the last years, Tunisia suffered from political and economic turmoil. Consequently, the Jasmine Revolution was simply a next step in the natural progression of events for Tunisia. The domino effect created by the revolution in Tunisia resulted in wonderful opportunities for some other oppressed countries such as Libya and Egypt to enjoy dignity and freedom. The Arabic spring has even spread to New York with the movement "Occupy Wall Street" [35]. The different case studies examined demonstrated that the number of tourists return to a pre-crisis level after major terrorist acts, wars or natural disasters, provided no other unexpected event occurs [11].



In addition, this paper can serve as a reference for other destinations in similar circumstances in the future. All the case studies examined have demonstrated the importance of media as well as durable and strong partnerships between all the tourism industry's stakeholders in order to recover from these crises. Tunisia may apply the same communication strategies although every destination has unique features. In addition, the revolution may be an opportunity for Tunisia to upgrade its image, attract new markets, and reinvigorate the tourism industry. In order to succeed, hoteliers should intensify cooperation with all tourism actors such as airlines, tour operators, travel agencies, journalists, and travel writers [8]. Finally, a multi-country promotion and communication is necessary to quick recovery of the tourism industry [3].

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