

Studying Balloon Activity in Luxor

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Abstract

Balloon activity in Luxor is an important part of recreational tourism that tourists practice enjoying the charm of nature, warmth of winter, and observing the monuments of the ancient city from above. It is also an adventurous activity. Therefore, the current study attempts to investigate its recreational aspects and evaluate the satisfaction level of tourists and measures of security and safety.

It adopted the quantitative analysis through interviewing 30 tourists who took this trip. After analyzing the data, the study concluded that in spite of all factors of balloon activity success in Luxor, it does not hold an appropriate position. In addition, security and safety measures aren't good enough. Hence, the study recommended focusing on the diversity of recreational activities during this trip, resolving the frequent breakdowns, affording efficient staff, and no keeping prices reasonable among the competitive companies.

Keywords: Balloon activity, recreational, adventure, security and safety measures.

Introduction

Joseph-Michel and Jacques-Étienne Montgolfier did the most successful attempt in balloon activity (Tom and Crouch, 2009) as the balloon rose high for the first time in France in 1783 (Charles, 1983). Josef was the first one to think about the issue when he noticed that the washed clothes hung on fire had pockets full of hot air that began to rise. Therefore, they called people to gather in Annonay, France on June 4th, 1783 to watch a balloon of four pieces, i.e. a dome and three bonds on the sides connected to each other by buttons (Charles, 1983).

In the second trial, the King of France suggested putting two criminals in the balloon. However, they probably put a sheep, cock, and duck to fly high in a basket tied to the balloon. While the sheep was chosen because its anatomy resembled that of a human being, the duck was chosen to study the effects of the flying balloon and the cock was added as a control factor because it had never risen high before to such distances. The trip took 8 minutes and the balloon landed safely.

The first hydrogen balloon trip occurred when sulfuric acid was added to iron or Zink. The trip took 2 hours and 5 minutes over 36 km. As a result of the great success of this trip, many claims were raised to show that it was a stolen idea and the original idea was that of the Brazilian priest, Bartolomeo.

The first balloon trip in U.S.A started in front of Washington prison in 1793 in the presence of the American president George Washington.

Leisure, Recreation, and Tourism

First, it could be said that leisure time, recreation, and tourism are overlapping concepts. Tourism and recreation are part of a wide concept that is the leisure time (Hall and Page, 2007). Recreation relates to many complex meanings. It is generally defined as (free of restrictions, a chance of choice, or a time after work (Brouadhurst, 2008). Some people consider recreation as a way of life besides other duties. It also means to avoid meeting at times other than work times and what follows, e.g. character building and brain developing (Pigram and Jenkins, 2006).

Tourism and recreation have their own definitions. Although if they are investigated closely, they greatly overlap in meaning. That is, tourism is a recreational form that takes place outdoors.

Adventure Tourism

Adventure tourism became familiar in different times. It is defined as a trip including interesting activities such as mountain climbing, skating, water skiing, and flying with a balloon. In Luxor, it is an exciting activity. Additionally, many studies and researches tackled this issue (Buckley, 2004). However, only a few discussed its components. For example, Tabata (1992) discussed diving and Arnold (1993) discussed diving, seeking sharks and crocodiles.

Balloon Trips

Balloon activity is one of the most important recreational activities that attract tourists of different cultures, including persons with disabilities where there are special offers for them (Pigram and Jekens, 2006). In Luxor, balloon trips usually take place at sunrise over Karnack and Luxor temples and the Valley of Kings. Like in many other areas of the world, these trips are immensely popular among tourists in Luxor (Wilkes, 2012). They are an important form of adventure and entertainment in travel and tourism industry.

Balloon Accidents and Safety and Security Measures

The growth of balloon activity in Egypt is working to increase the employment opportunities and the multiplicity of tourism patterns in Egypt. Despite the importance of balloon activity there are many risks and accidents.

Entertainment tourism, especially adventure tourism, plays a significant role in the injuries of visitor around the world. For example, recreational activities and adventures in New Zealand caused 19% of the injuries (Mark and Fredric, 2009). Balloon activity, like recreation activities and other adventures, causes various forms of accidents and injuries. One of these accidents took place in Luxor on February 26th, 2013 when a balloon crashed causing 19 deaths and 2 serious injuries of the Egyptian pilot and a British tourist who could jump. The balloon crashed because it went up quickly and the gas cylinder exploded. Many discussions about the safety and security measures of this activity in Luxor were raised, especially after the crash of a tourism balloon in April 2009 that caused the injury of two British women. Two weeks earlier, seven tourists were injured three balloons crashed that were carrying 60 tourists as if people do not benefit from mistakes. Many factors cause such incidents including the wind, climate change, flying errors, equipment failure, and non-compliance with protocols of safety and security. For example, near one of the most important temples in Cambodia, a balloon crashed that held 9 tourists who were seriously injured in a windy weather. Additionally, many tourists did not wear life jackets and the balloon was not equipped with GPS system to be traced (Hesham et al., 2014).

Objectives of the study

This present study aims to evaluate balloon activity in Luxor highlighting its strengths, advantages, weakness, and disadvantages.

Significance of the study

Balloon activity in Luxor as a recreational activity has not received any research interest, considering both strengths and weakness. Thus, the present study highlights such points and evaluates its safety and security procedures.

The hypothesis of the study

High prices and the weak safety factors are Obstacles for balloon activity in Luxor

Methodology

The field study was conducted by interviewing 30 tourists who had balloon trips in Luxor from December 2015 to January 2016. They were asked about their impressions of their trip and their assessment of security and safety measures. The collected data were analyzed descriptively Depending on the frequency and percentages

Results and Discussion

This question aimed to measure the impression of tourists about balloon tourism in Luxor

Table 1: Impression of tourists about balloon tourism

Items	No.	Percentage
very good tourism pattern	2	6
good tourism pattern	5	17
The best recreational tourism	19	60
provides income for many members of the host community	3	11
bad tourism activity	1	4

The previous table indicated the impression of tourists about balloon tourism, it was found that (60%) of the participants thought that it is primarily a recreational tourism and culture in terms of enjoying landscapes and monuments and enjoying the adventure that characterizes Luxor more than other cities in the world especially. The climate allows going on daily trips. A tourist said that “tourism balloon is one of the most beautiful trips as people eagerly embark on them for fun and exciting”. While (17%) of the participants reported that it is a good tourism pattern, (6%) of them claimed that is very good and (11%) argued that it is a tourist activity that provides income for many members of the host community but it requires more activation and development.

Only (4%) of the participants believed that it is a bad tourism activity. One of them reported that balloon activity is very bad if compared to other countries, e.g. Turkey, the Netherlands, and England.

Table 2: advantages and strengths of balloon activity tourism in Luxor

Items	No.	Percentage
very good tourism pattern flying and watching archaeological monuments, sunrise, the Nile, rural villages, and green fields	17	56
the development of self-confidence pattern	5	17
the climatic factors	3	11
excellent service, reasonable cost, and the ability to attract	3	11
No advantages of this activity.	2	8

According to table (2) the advantages and strengths of balloon activity tourism in Luxor were investigated, it was found that (56%) of the participants believed that its recreational aspects are a strength as it has a special character in terms of flying and watching archaeological monuments, sunrise, the Nile, rural villages, and green fields leading to the Valley of the Kings. In other words, flying makes difference as such landscapes are clearer and more attractive. In addition, (17%) of the participants argued that the role of balloon activity in the development of self-confidence is an advantage as getting used to the high places consolidates self-confidence with a picturesque view of nature and enjoying the atmosphere. Tourists also worked as a group making use of culture and body language.

Only (11%) of them believed that the climatic factors are a strength where climate, nature, and civilization are in harmony, while (11%) of them reported that it is a distinctive activity and that Luxor is unique in this activity because of its competitive advantage in

terms of excellent service, reasonable cost, and the ability to attract. A few of them (4%) believed that tourism depression eradicates any strengths of any tourist activity including the balloon. Furthermore, a similar percentage (i.e. 4%) claimed that there are no strengths or advantages of this activity.

Table 3: disadvantages or weaknesses of balloon tourism in Luxor

Items	No.	Percentage
high prices	8	28
the weak safety factors	10	33
the lack of marketing and communication	5	15
no flights on many days	6	20
No advantages of this activity.	1	4

According to table (3) disadvantages or weaknesses of balloon tourism in Luxor were investigated, it was found out that more than (28%) of the respondents reported that high prices were a significant weakness, especially for local tourists. Additionally, the different companies offered varying price. According to (33%) of the respondents reported that the weak safety factors as well as frequent breakdowns, balloon sudden crash, lack of experience and affording competent staff, lack of interest in examining the balloon before launching, getting close to dangerous places, lack of interest in tourists' safety and security on the part of the governorate .this result coincided that the hypothesis of the study is valid.

In addition, (20%) of them argued that there are weaknesses that should be treated such as having no flights on many days because of bad weather are serious weaknesses. While (15%) of the respondents reported that the lack of marketing and communication and the ill-treatment of the balloon tourism staff were weaknesses, few of them claimed that depression of this activity is the most significant weakness.

Table 4: suggestions to improve balloon tourism in Luxor

Items	No.	Percentage
advertising and marketing	13	43
decreasing prices	6	19
the interest in safety factors, a good examination	5	17
increasing the number of balloons	5	17
Increasing balloon tourism awareness in the local community.	1	4

According to table (4) Participants were also asked for suggestions to improve balloon tourism in Luxor. It was found that (43%) of them suggested activating advertising and marketing and holding an international annual festival and bringing balloons from all over the world to fly over Luxor. Such events should be publicized nationally and internationally where the photos of the temples and tourist places are marketed online. Furthermore, conferences are organized to attract tourism, especially balloon activity. They also suggested strictly monitoring this service and establishing customer service centers for it. Additionally, (19%) of them suggested decreasing prices as an important improvement factor, comparing balloon prices to the international level, reaching an agreement between the existing tourism companies to fix the price of the service and good organization. A similar percentage (i.e. 17%) believed that the interest in safety factors, a good examination of the balloon before launch, and providing well-trained staff could help.

In addition, (17%) of them proposed increasing the number of balloons, increasing launching balloons till sunset, and providing more offers to attract larger numbers. Finally, a group of them suggested increasing balloon tourism awareness in the local community.

Table 5: evaluating the security and safety measures of balloon tourism

Items	No.	Percentage
require more improvement	16	52
measures were excellent	3	11
dissatisfaction with safety and security measures	11	37

The previous table indicated evaluating the security and safety measures of this activity was investigated. About (52%) of them said that these measures were but they require improvement. They also proposed having security preparations in case of balloon crash besides further following-up and insurance. Additionally, (11%) of them reported that these measures were excellent because of being supervised by the Ministry of Civil Aviation. For example, a participant reported that there was security staff who checked suspected people suspected and the regulatory instructions are followed to ensure customers' safety. Furthermore, (37%) of them expressed their dissatisfaction with safety and security measures describing them as false ones. They also claimed that first aids were not available and there was a lack of adequate experience. The last category argued that tourism balloon did not receive great attention by the local tourists, especially with irregular take-offs and ignorance of Egyptians of this activity. In addition, the low prices of flights caused the deterioration of tourism balloon because many tourists believed that when a service is shopped at a low price it is of low quality.

Table 6: suggestions for security and safety measures

Items	No.	Percentage
the interest in such measures, checking the balloon well, providing belts and other means of safety	20	68
providing adequate training to the staff	6	20
the procedures are sufficient	4	13

When they were asked about suggestions for security and safety measures, (68%) of the respondents proposed the interest in such measures, checking the balloon well before launch, periodically reviewing them, asking the official authorities for greater safety, investigating the identity of the staff, and providing belts and other means of safety inside the balloon. Furthermore, they proposed the development of suitable berths and setting strong programs to educate tourists, developing supervising them by the officials, and increasing the efficiency of balloon motor. A group (i.e. 20%) of them reported that suggested offering a parachute per passenger and providing adequate training to the staff. In addition, A few(13%) reported that the procedures are sufficient.

At the end of the interviews many tourists suggested the interest in balloon tourism in other governorates, increasing cooperation between the state and those working in the field, establishing festivals, pursuing innovation, identifying foreign experience, and supporting stability to motivate this activity.

Conclusion

Balloon activity is one of the most important recreational activities for the tourism industry in Luxor. It may also be categorized under adventure tourism where adventurers visit Luxor to experience balloon flights. However, Egypt, especially Luxor, has the elements of balloon activity, e.g. good climate, green environment green, and unique antiquities, it does not take its appropriate position if compared to that in Turkey, the Netherlands, and England. It was also found that among its great weaknesses were the repeated faults, sudden balloon crash, lack of experience, lack of interest in examining the balloon well before launch, and lack of interest by the governorate and official bodies in the safety and

security of tourists regarding berths. In addition, safety and security measures were fake and there were no first aids.

While some tourists believed that balloon activity is a recreational activity, others believed that it is one a major activity of cultural tourism, especially in Luxor where temples and antiquities exist. Many tourists believed that the climate is an important strength of this activity where there is a wonderful harmony among the climate, nature, and ancient civilization.

Although many of those who tried balloon activity in Luxor praises safety and security measures, some of them claimed that a weakness of this activity is ineffective marketing, negative publicity, and bad treatment with tourists by those working in the field. Although some tourists believed in the importance of reducing the price of balloon trips to promote them, others believed such action gives bad reputation that it is a quality and efficiency product.

Recommendations

1. Working on the diversity of recreational activity during balloon trip in order to enjoy tourists with warm winter, archaeological areas such as Luxor and Karnak temples, and green nature.
2. Having specialized balloon tourist companies to be more focused, not to disperse in other activities, and benefit from this activity as much as possible.
3. Endeavoring to fix the price of balloon activity where there are many competitive companies and getting prices reasonable for the local tourist.
4. Endeavoring to reduce frequent breakdowns, provide adequate and well-trained staff, and pay attention to examine the balloon before launch.
5. Working on establishing good communication and effective marketing by establishing an annual international festival and bringing balloons from around the world; this should be nationally and internationally publicized.
6. Interest in improving safety and security measures to improve its activity, provide adequate experience among those in charge of such measures, increasing the number of the balloons and time of the flight, and providing more offers to attract more national and international tourists.
7. Regular examination of balloon activity, asking local authorities to improve safety and security measures, disclosing the identity of the staff, and providing various safety means for tourists in the balloon to protect them.
8. Establishing good berths, increasing the efficiency of balloon engines, offering a parachute to each passenger, and providing adequate training to the staff.
9. Interest in the balloon in all governorates across Egypt, improving coordination between those in charge of balloon activity and official authorities, introducing innovative improvements, identifying foreign experience, and supporting those working in the field.

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