



GLOBAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT AND BUSINESS RESEARCH: F
REAL ESTATE, EVENT AND TOURISM MANAGEMENT
Volume 21 Issue 1 Version 1.0 Year 2021
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-4588 & Print ISSN: 0975-5853

Impact of Broadcast Media on Tourism during Lebanese Crisis

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GJMBR-F Classification: *JEL Code: L83*



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Impact of Broadcast Media on Tourism during Lebanese Crisis

Rasha Faraj ^α, Hussein Chible ^σ & Jad Abou Arrage ^ρ

Abstract Tourism has been affected terribly by several crises, especially when it comes to Lebanon. Tourists are always affected by what they see as this will develop into damaging the tourism sector at a country. This research aims on showing how broadcast media can affect the Lebanese tourism sector during political instability and terrorism crises. An analysis of the impact of the broadcast media on society is carried out. The research is directed through qualitative sources analyzed and results were observed and deducted. The study shows that broadcast media has a direct impact on people's decision-making when consider visiting any destination.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Vacationer explorers and travelers are being impacted by various kinds of appealing shows or reports through specific TV slots, magazines, newspapers and social media. Gradually, every one of these media types is making an image of a place and its travel industry in the tourist's perception and mind for choosing a destination. Lebanon has faced strikes, political and social instability, bad infrastructure, and security problems that led to a decrease in the number of tourists coming to Lebanon. These crises have affected tourism and damaged the positive image the country used to have before. The Lebanese media helped in devastating the image of the country and worked in an opposite direction on the development of tourism that led to tourist avoidance from coming to Lebanon. Moreover, the absence of the public sector's development and promotion strategies and their lack of cooperation with the Lebanese tourism stakeholders also worked on destroying the tourism industry since no

strategies or any plans were shaped in order to avoid the damage that faced the tourism sector.

As a result, Lebanon has to work on developing and promoting a better image for the country through the help of broadcast media and the participation of different tourism stakeholders, so the main aim of this paper is to see how broadcast media has impacted the tourism industry in Lebanon during political instability and how to find ways to better promote this sector through broadcast media in specific. So, this paper attempts to answer the following research questions:

- Is there an effect of media on tourist's perception during a destination selection?
- How do media deliver the news to its audience during political crises?

This work is part of a general work that focuses on media and marketing effect on tourism during Lebanese crises (Faraj, 2020). The effect of Social Media on Tourism during Lebanese Political Crisis is published in (Faraj and Chible, 2020), while this paper handles the impact of broadcast media. The figure below summarizes the general work, which is composed of three main points, which are tourism, crisis, and media, as they are dependent on one another. The media during a crisis can lead to tourism recession, where at this stage, some actions should be taken. These actions will be based on those steps: travel motivators (push/pull), marketing mix (8Ps), SWOT analysis, and then a marketing campaign. After applying these suggestions or strategies, we can set a plan to build new recommendations for avoiding future media crises.

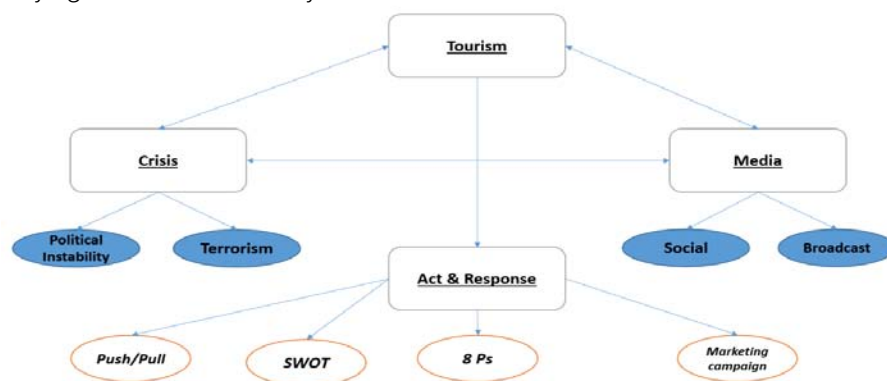


Figure 1: Conceptual framework illustrating the general work

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This paper is organized as follows: the literature review that is presented in section 2, methodology is explained in section 3, results and analysis illustrated in section 4, and the conclusion and recommendations represented in section 5.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature review, discussing about the media, its types, functions, and how it can affect tourists perception for visiting a country are considered in order to go into details on how to achieve and develop a better image.

a) Types of Media

It is important to focus on the major types of media, and in order to do that, four types were mentioned:

1. Printed media can include books, newspapers, magazines, journals, etc. (Borja, 2018). Some of these types of media can be printed daily, weekly or even monthly, not to mention that it is a major source of information as it offers detailed messages for its readers (BBAMANTRA, 2019).
2. Broadcast media and it can be illustrated and summarized into 2: radio and television. Broadcast media helps spreading the news faster than printed materials and reaches wider audience (Ross, 2020).
3. New Media which includes the internet, online shopping, e-book, etc. (Borja, 2018). This new type of media can be referred to as well as digital media, it is the future of media, easy and simple for the news to be spread, however, sometimes fake news can be misleading (Ross, 2020).

b) Importance of Media

Media can influence on people in different ways. Several tasks media can offer to its audience, of these are:

- ✓ Media can help in changing people's minds: By this it means that media can play a major role in giving more knowledge about an issue through multiple ways. This can be either through broadcast media, print-based media, or also through social and online media. Sometimes, change would be for the better when giving the essential information to the audience.
- ✓ Closer and smaller world: The internet has developed to reach the globe. The news has become available all over the world as the speed of delivering the information have promoted in bringing people together and closer.
- ✓ Mass media as a marketing tool: The media have been used by industries in order to market their products or goods, as this will help people know about the products and would let them get interested in trying and buying them. This led to making mass media as a whole a good marketing

tool to advertise consumer goods (Iblasi, Bader, & Al-Qreini, 2016).

- ✓ Link between people and government: Media is the main way to let people know about the country they are living in. The government gives all the information about the situation of the country to the community through the media, so that means illustrates all the issues about the government through broadcasting the news to the public (Goodluck, 2015).

c) Fake News and their Impact on the Tourism Industry

Fake news can be defined as the false information distributed as being part of news reporting (Fedeli, 2019). "Fake News" in tourism can be in several forms, whether in publishing false ones when a crisis hits a destination, or through exaggeration on social media platforms. Based on the ethical aspects of journalism, journalists work according to the code of ethics when publishing any news, yet when websites, blogs, and social media platforms started the work of announcing "fake" news, the ethical part has went down the road. Moreover, how would such news impact people's perceptions in relation to tourism? Most people believe the news they are watching or hearing as this might destroy the tourism sector easily. Adding to all of this, tourism organization (whether public or private) must take actions in facing the "fake news" problem by showing what real tourism exists at a country (Wingfield, Isaac, & Benner, 2016). So, in order to avoid any misleading information that could affect the tourism industry, it is highly recommended to :

1. Always make several reseraches before saying that the information is correct.
2. Report any fake news that is seen on social media, blogs, or websites.
3. Refer to the authentic media, which can researches to almost broadcast media.
4. Stop posting rumors (whether posted by viewers or business companies) (Singh, 2017).

Well, these steps can eliminate the Fake news crisis a little bit, however, for tourism organizations, travel companies, tour operators, hotel, and car rentals must work on gaining customers and turning them into becoming loyal, and to achieve this target, they have to:

5. Inform their customers about the company's culture on their website, Facebook, etc.
6. Always be accessible so that their customers can reach them easily and have fast contact.
7. Highly important to work on Fact Check, which means that anything they put should be real and correct so that their customers can trust them and ensure their loyalty in the future.
8. Be open to criticism, so that whenever a customer has a problem with the company, their reflection to criticism should be observed, and procedures to

avoid such problem must be considered in the future.

9. And finally try to gain some honest and real reviews so that these ones would help others to become your new customers (Kennett, 2019).

d) *Tourist Perception about Terrorism*

The tourist is the main target for either promoting or damaging tourism. His/her reaction creates a tourism crisis (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999). As an example, in the US in 1985, millions of Americans have gone abroad, and less than 200 have been killed by terrorist attacks. Despite this result, over 7% of them changed their touristic plans because of what happened in the previous year (Stohl, 1987). Tourism can inspire terrorism through religious, political, cultural, social, and economical resentment and can be a way to deliver a message about political opposition for not only the country or region but also to the world. Therefore, many factors are vital on affecting the image of the destination on travel decisions. Therefore, perception may be a handle that individuals make and construct an image around the goal by their own. Be that as it may, these perceptions cannot be made without at slightest highlight the tourist has been taking from a source. This source would come from either word of mouth than can be exceptionally successful in building or destroying a tourist image or through media by showing real info through social and broadcast media (Sonmez, Apostolopoulos, & Tarlow, 1999).

e) *Examples of Some Countries (Put all References from the Thesis to all of these Cases)*

Several case studies in different cities or countries had been considered for their relative problems faced just like Lebanon, and how they handled such crisis. These cases were taken in order to perceive what has and has not been researched. It is established to distinguish information sources that different analysts have utilized. Two cases about different countries have been chosen to add in this paper to see how media helped or destroyed their tourism sector when crisis have hit them. Summary for the cases:

- ✓ The 9/11 attacks in the US and how this has affected tourism globally and how the media reacted. It was announced that TV's coverage during the 9/11 attack had "Apocalyptic consequences" which means exaggerating the attack and its immense consequences (Kellner, 2007). As for the government, it took legislation and security procedures after the 9/11 attack to avoid as much as possible terrorism crisis. The US government established a new department DHS (Department of Homeland Security) in which its main role is to protect the country from any extremist attacks and to decrease US's vulnerability

during such crisis. The government also enhanced the visa entry procedures which expressively changed the entrance regulations measures (Hedrich, 2008).

- ✓ Greece and the economic crisis and how it affected their tourism sector. At the beginning of the Greece crisis, the media barely affected the country's image until the interference of the international channels by creating special talk shows about the financial crisis. This procedure helped to make the government act fast on better solving the problem by giving a vent to solve the conflicts surrounding the crisis (Papathanassopoulos, 2015). So Greece had to take some actions to solve its crisis. Regarding tourism, it was being advanced through participations in Worldwide Travel Fairs, which are coordinated to both exchange and public. Cooperation with tour operators and travel agencies offer Greece as a goal is another figure of advancing. The significance is based on great relations with the media and organizing press trips to different goals.

f) *Summary*

As a summary, Tourism and crisis always go in opposite direction whenever you think about them. Leisure, entertainment and fun are part of tourism, whereas fear, worry and stress belong to crisis. However, crisis can directly affect the tourism sector easily as the travel and tourism industry is highly vulnerable to any disaster or issue that might happen at a place. Nevertheless, travel and tourism are highly dependent on media broadcasting because the majority of travel decisions are made by people who have never seen the destination for themselves but listening about it through TV or newspapers or searching for it online. It is important to mention that an operative use of communication techniques can remove obstacles and stimulate better uses of sharing message design which combines both broadcast and social media. In other means, media can work in a positive way to promote the tourism sector. However, when a crisis hit, media will switch to become the main enemy for tourism through broadcasting the problems faced at the country and destroying its image in which shifting tourists to choose other destinations. In other means, media is directly related to a crisis. Whenever a crisis occur, media starts to broadcast news about it whether inside a country or even at a global level disregarding what might happen to the tourism sector leading sometimes to tourism crisis and losing tourists coming to the country.

III. METHODOLOGY

a) *Research Approach & Design*

To understand the conditions influencing broadcast media and the travel industry during crisis, the paper begins with a descriptive study has been held

in the literature review in order to show what has been studied in relation to the title of the thesis. Later on, talking about qualitative data information that are interrelated to this topic. Qualitative research had been applied since qualitative techniques help getting close to participants and understand how they view the world. Interviews with Press representatives have been applied. The interviews collected from a set of seven TV stations, one online newspaper, and one online website news agency. The participants were reporters, producers, editors, and press presenters. The interview was taken into consideration in order to see whether marketing tourism on media is noted, and if not how to change such an irony. The researcher's goal was to see if TV stations and online news agencies work on promoting tourism during a Lebanese crisis, and how to solve political crisis through the interviewer's opinions and ideas. The interview consisted of ten questions that focused mainly on four issues: how they transmit the news to the audience (in a subjective or an objective way), if they follow any regulations, if they have considered any programs or articles that talk about tourism, and what ideas they believe can be adapted to promote tourism in Lebanon. Nonetheless, some interview questions have been transferred into numbers through graphs in order to show their results better to the reader.

b) *Data Analysis*

The analysis was taken from the interviewee's given data. It was descriptive and all the data taken was transcribed with evidence, such that every written information has its own referral.

c) *Participants*

For the interview, it was defined to include nine different so the population are the media key person such as reporters, press, media representatives, and editors in Lebanese and Arab TV channels, and online news agencies and newspapers. The targeted interviewees were as such for they are the only ones who can help by getting information about how TVs work and act whenever a crisis occurs and if they consider tourism during any incident or not.

d) *Time Preparation and Collection*

The interview process, between acquiring the first interview to the final interview, began in January 2018 and ended in November 2018. The actual time for obtaining the interviews did not vary that much. Most of the interviews were to the point, taking around 20 minutes. Only one interview took more than 40 minutes due to some interruptions during the interview.

IV. RESULTS & ANALYSIS

Ten questions were proposed and asked to 9 interviewees:

1. What is the visual program you have that brings the highest number of audience?
2. Do you consider yourself as subjective or objective in transferring the news to the audience?
3. Do you make sure that you are publishing the information correctly? In addition, through what procedures?
4. What are the limits in giving info's to the audience?
5. Are there any regulations to be considered for broadcasting the news?
6. Are there any programs that show the importance of tourism in our country?
7. Why have we never seen a project on TV that shows the good image of Lebanon rather than terrorism and political instability?
8. When announcing about a crisis, do you take into consideration the foreign audience? Moreover, if yes, do you think about how it can affect the tourism industry in Lebanon or not?
9. Regarding terrorism that has faced Lebanon, why are not you announcing them internally rather than internationally?
10. Do you think that more events and activities related to tourism should be more highlighted and promoted on mass media more occasionally?

After making nine interviews with different TV stations and online websites, mostly Lebanese ones, each question has been analyzed and the results were summarized. However, more details have been noticed. At first, five Lebanese TV stations, one online Lebanese newspaper and one online Lebanese news website, and two Regional TV stations were taken and the results and their analysis were based on them. It has been evaluated that 77.7% of the answers focus on News as the most visual program on TV. From the seven interviewees who answered this, one of them also added Talk shows as a main target for viewers. Two of the interviewees said that programs which talk about the society are getting people's interest as well. Nevertheless, another two interviewees assured that people are getting bored from News and politics and they are transferring to some programs that will make them laugh and get entertained.

As for the information transferred to the audience whether being transferred in an objective or subjective way, 44.4% said that they deliver the news as it is without any change of its content, which means they deliver it in an objective way. However, 55.5% of them said that it is not easy to deliver the news as it is especially when something humanitarian is focused on, yet others said that they follow the policy of the TV station as most of the Lebanese TVs are owned by politicians and what their owners want to announce is the target they look for.

For the question whether there are limits in delivering the information to the audience, all Lebanese

TV stations agreed on that there are no limits eventually, however, ethics do exist, and most of the reporters and presenters believe that every announced news will create its own limit. As it was noticed, each Lebanese TV station follows a certain rule based on a policy created by the same station and limits only occur for preventing insults or abuse. It has been deducted that most of the regulations that would be measured by the online websites is the Publication law and should be adapted yet not truly applied. Moreover, any news published on the website is the responsibility of the owner not the publisher, so it will not be easy to control any news announced online. For the TV stations, it seems that all TVs have their own policies and rules. However, as per the Law 382, issued on 04/11/1994 (latest law update), under the General Provisions in chapter Two, for article number three, it is written that audio visual media is free. Therefore, by this, it has been concluded that there are truly no limits for media in Lebanon and all TV stations are working under the Lebanese Publication Law.

Regarding the information given to the audience, all the interviewees confirmed giving the right information to the audience. Their way for checking and receiving the information is through two-way communication. When someone informs about news, the reporters work on checking if that information is true or not either by asking other sides or by checking with the parts related to the information and when getting the final info, it will be announced to the public.

As for the question "Are there any programs that show the importance of tourism in our country?" most of the interviewees said that TV stations might show some reports from time to time about tourism in Lebanon, whether it was a touristic destination or marketing some tourism type. On the other side, one TV station appears to be the only regional TV station that has a specialized tourism program broadcasted every week and promotes tourism worldwide. Moreover, after checking the Lebanese publication law number 382, mentioned under article number 30 "TV and radio institutions must broadcast hourly programs each week of national guidance, education, health, cultural and tourism programs free of charge at the request of the Ministry of Information". Therefore, Lebanese TV institutions should promote tourism through broadcasting on a weekly basis and this is not what is in reality.

It has been concluded that most of the TV institutions concentrate on politics and prime news as their foremost programs for their viewers as they believe they are their main interest. Moreover, few institutions highlight on showing a good image of Lebanon rather than showing always the problems that Lebanon face since they think that creating tourism programs needs budget or sponsors. But in order to show the opposite, also, referring to law number 382 with article number 30, where at the end of the article it is said that the

programs whether about tourism, heritage, or anything educational, should be free of charge. This means it is the institution's job to create a program weekly, for an hour, in order to show the importance of good image of the country with no cost. This work should be reached with the help of the ministry of information, as its job is to assist the TV with the materials required to broadcast tourism in Lebanon. Therefore, we can create a program with less cost and less effort on the TV.

Based on the answers for question eight, we can say that most of the interviewees said that they consider foreign audience when announcing the news on TV, yet they all agree that it is not their authority to take actions for elimination of information delivered to them, as it is the institution's power. Moreover, they all agree that any negative news about the country will directly affect the tourism sector leading to a decrease in the number of foreign visitors. As for the question that talks about whether we can announce the news internally rather than internationally, all the interviewees said that it is not feasible. Moreover, for the regional TV stations, they are primarily not Lebanese stations, then we cannot control their broadcast, second they are also Satellite TVs and they cannot change their news for only one location, which is Lebanon.

In the end, several suggestions have been taken on how to market and promote tourism in the country. These suggestions combine work of the government and media to reach the final market who is the audience, in which will be later a tourist. These recommendations were taken from all the interviewees and listed as shown below:

- Local authorities

They must take actions for promoting tourism on televisions. For example, the government should make small sketches or Ads from time to time in order to promote tourism by reaching the public through television.

- Short programs

Creating half to one-hour tourism program on the television showing the beautiful attractions in the country and what ruins and religious sites Lebanon has. Moreover, most of the interviewees focused on promoting new types of tourism like eco-tourism and rural tourism.

- Reportage

Making small reportage about a destination in Lebanon, posted through Prime Time news.

- Promoting tourism on social media.

Reporters or media presenters can help market this sector through social media as they have many followers and can reach a huge number of people.

- Competitive Programs

Making programs not specific for tourism yet can be useful for marketing it like "competitive

programs" captured each time in a rural area and this can help market the region indirectly.

- Promoting tourism through movies and TV series

This is easy to apply since when making a movie or any Lebanese series, the filmmaker can show some of the attractions the country has with the least cost. This actually helped Turkey promotes tourism

since viewers get attracted to the locations where each series is captured at and started travelling more to Turkey and discovering the sites.

The following illustration was shown through graphs. Only five questions were drawn due to their most vital answers needed for this study.

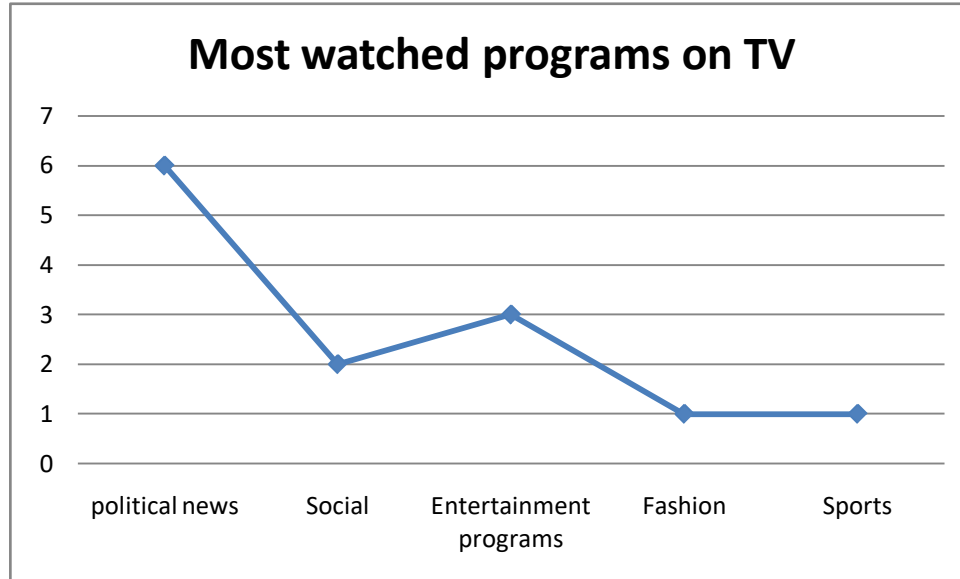


Figure 2: The Most Watched Programs on TV

As for the above figure, it was analysed that the most watched programs on Lebanese TV stations are the political news (6 answered out of 9), while entertainment programs took the second most interested programs (3 out of 9). On the other hand,

social news has some interest while fashion and sports took the least interest. It is important to add that the total number of answers are more than 9 since each one can choose more than one choice.

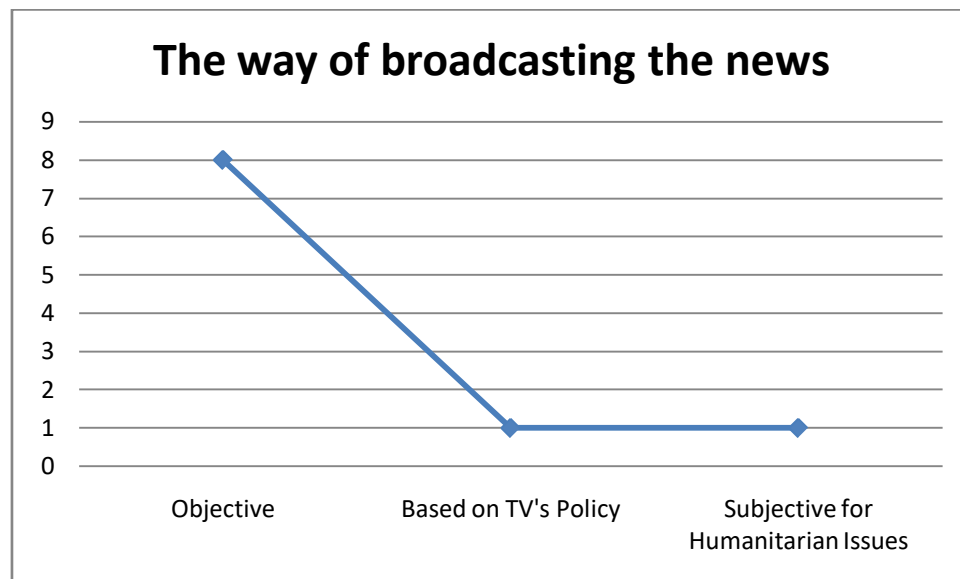


Figure 3: The Way of Broadcasting the News

Most of the TV interviewees agreed on their objective way in publishing the news, while one answered that their political news are published based

on the TV's policy, and one said that whenever humanitarian issues occur, their publishing method becomes subjective.

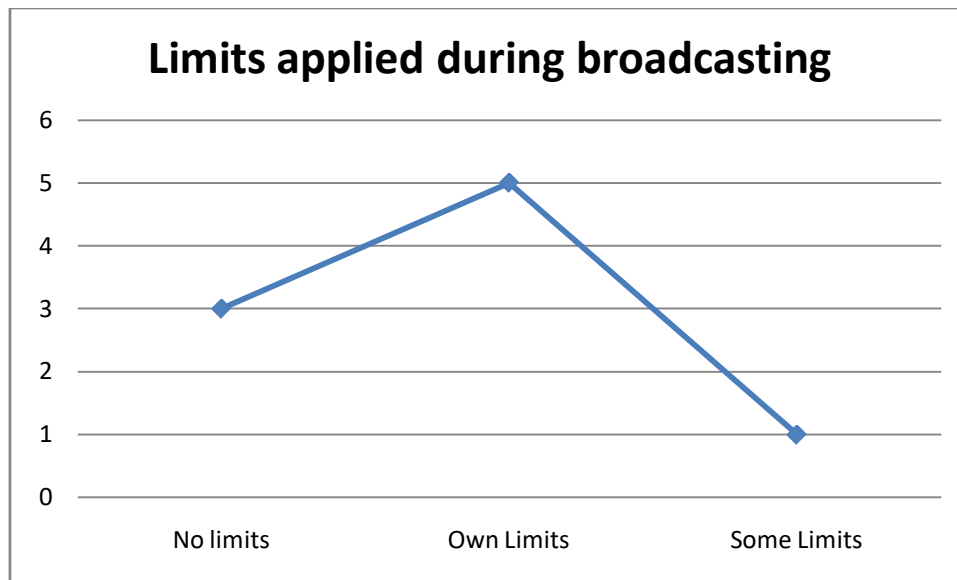


Figure 4: Limits Considered during Broadcasting

Based on the answers of the interviewees, it seems that the TV stations follow mostly their own limits, as it means what each station has a policy, their employees has to follow. On the other hand, three

interviewees said there are no limits when announcing the news, while one answered that there are some limits based on each case.

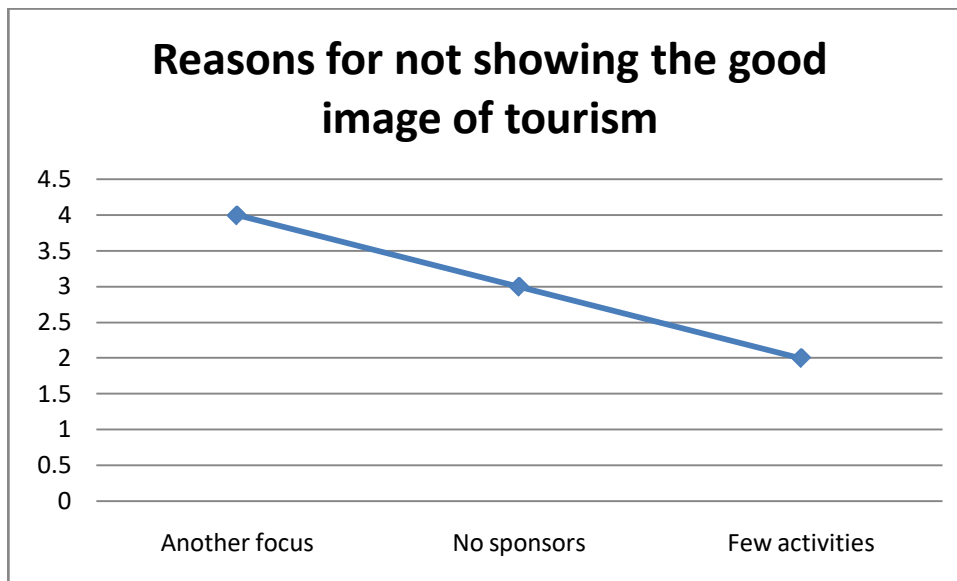


Figure 5: Reasons for not showing the good image of tourism in Lebanon.

It has been deducted that tourism isn't the TV's main concern, and their main focus is the political issues in the country. On the other hand, three interviewees said the reason for not promoting tourism is the lack of fund and sponsors, while only two interviewees said that their TV stations have made few activities regarding tourism from time to time.

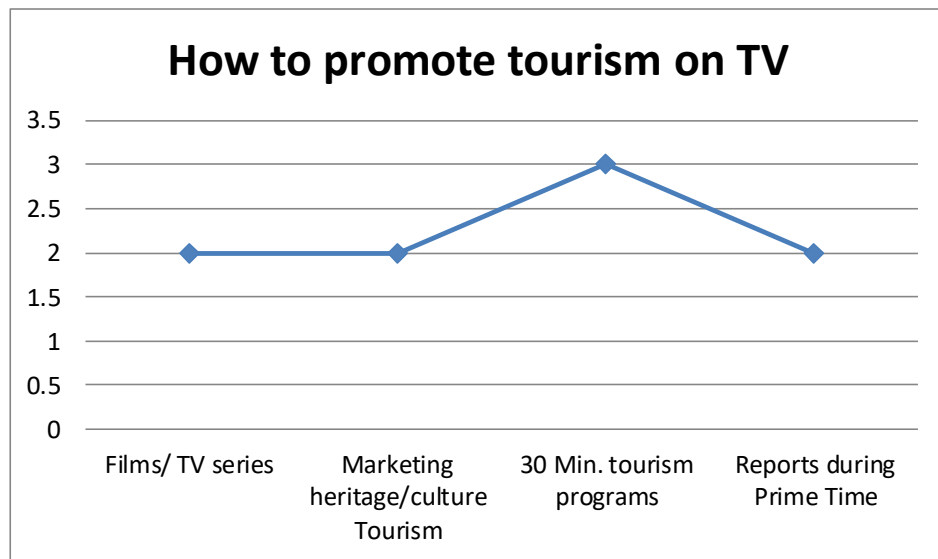


Figure 6: Ways for Promoting Tourism on TV.

One of the major suggestions for promoting the tourism sector in Lebanon is creating short programs for around 30 minutes to show the most attractive destinations in the country. However, three more suggestions were taken into account for building better tourism image are through creating TV series or films showing parts of beautiful Lebanon during the filming, or creating reports during prime time and marketing in focus the heritage and culture of Lebanon.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

After analyzing the results collected through interviews, several analyses were concluded. For broadcast media, it was confirmed after the interviews that all of the interviewees agreed that any negative news about the country will highly affect the tourism sector. Moreover, TV stations have the interest in promoting tourism in Lebanon, however, they need funding and that was not easy to get, as it turns out that Lebanese broadcast media stations are more interested in announcing about a crisis and being competitors with each other for whoever broadcast the news first, as this won't help in protecting the tourism industry from falling down during a crisis.

Most of the TV organizations focus on governmental issues and prime news as their premier projects for their audiences as they consider them their principle intrigue. That is why, promoting tourism on television is mandatory in order to shift from having a negative image into a better one. This can be done through creating a small reportage about tourism during prime time news, or through a TV show that is specific for marketing tourism destinations in Lebanon. It has been deducted that tourism isn't the TV's main concern, and their main focus is the political issues in the country. On the other hand, one of the reasons for not promoting

tourism is the lack of fund and sponsors, while the other is that TV stations have made few activities regarding tourism from time to time.

Some limitations during the study were observed during the interviews, in which not all TV channels accepted to make an interview with, as some of them kept pushing the author away from making the interview and avoided answering either the calls or the emails sent to them, while regional TV channels assumed that they are not a Lebanese TV channel and they believe they are not considered in such a study.

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