

ENHANCED HYGIENE PROTOCOLS IMPLEMENTED IN TOURIST SERVICES POST-COVID-19 – SAL, CAPE VERDE

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Abstract

This research study offers an overview of the impact of COVID-19, the incidence of coronavirus cases reported in the island of Sal, Cape Verde and explores the implementation of enhanced hygiene protocols, safety and sanitation measures in tourist services, in the post-COVID-19 era. The research encompasses three key components. Firstly, it offers a comprehensive theoretical understanding of COVID-19. Secondly, it examines the prevalence of the coronavirus at both the national level in the Republic of Cape Verde and the local level, with a specific emphasis on the island of Sal, which serves as the primary focus of this study. Lastly, it sheds light on the regulations and protocols implemented by national authorities pertaining to food hygiene measures and the overall health security related to COVID-19 within the tourist service industry.

The study aims to assess the effectiveness of these protocols in ensuring the safety and well-being of tourists and employees, as well as promoting Sal as a secure destination in terms of preventing the spread of the virus. The research examines the specific hygiene measures and regulations implemented in various tourist services, such as accommodations, restaurants, and recreational activities, and evaluates their impact on restoring trust and confidence among travelers. The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing efforts to adapt tourism practices to the new health and safety requirements imposed by the pandemic and provide valuable insights for the tourism industry.

Keywords: (max. 5) hygiene protocols, food safety, COVID-19 pandemic, tourist service, Cape Verde.

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INTRODUCTION

In the wake of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the tourism industry has faced unprecedented challenges. However, as the world gradually emerges from the crisis, destinations like Sal in Cape Verde have recognized the need to prioritize the health and safety of their visitors. To ensure the well-being of tourists and instill confidence in travel, enhanced hygiene protocols have been diligently implemented across various tourist services on the island.

Sal, known for its pristine beaches, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality, understands the importance of adapting to the "new normal" in a responsible manner. The implementation of rigorous hygiene measures underscores the commitment of the local tourism industry to safeguard both visitors and the local community. Cape Verde is a country with a moderate level of development, characterized by a youthful population where more than half of the residents are between the ages of 20 and 40. The country experiences

significant population mobility due to its geographical and climatic conditions. Its economy heavily relies on tourism and its connection with the widespread Cape Verdean diaspora.

The COVID-19 pandemic was challenging the country's resilience and healthcare system, presenting serious obstacles to effectively control and respond to emerging infectious diseases. Therefore, it is crucial to conduct population studies that provide substantial evidence regarding the scope and inherent characteristics of the pandemic in Cape Verde.

The purpose of the research is to analyze the enhanced hygiene protocols implemented in tourist services post-COVID-19 pandemic in the island of Sal, Cape Verde.

As the world transitions to a post-pandemic era, Sal in Cape Verde stands ready to welcome travelers, ensuring their safety without compromising the unique experiences and vibrant culture that make it an extraordinary destination.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The research is based on three main aspects. Firstly, it provides a theoretical definition of COVID-19. Secondly, it analyzes the incidence of the coronavirus at the national level in the Cape Verde Republic and the local incidence specifically focused on the island of Sal, which represents the main area of interest in this study. Lastly, it highlights the protocols imposed by national authorities regarding food hygiene measures and COVID-19 health security in the tourist service industry.

The research is based on a theoretical foundation formed by specialized medical literature on the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The study collects secondary data and highlights the approaches and implementation methods of the measures adopted by competent authorities in the Cape Verde Republic in a crisis and high-risk situation, aimed at combating and preventing the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus.

The objective of this research is to investigate proper hygiene and food safety practices for human consumption, the use of appropriate equipment, and the analysis of risks at critical control points. It aims to assess the extent to which these practices have been adopted and genuinely followed.

The following theoretical data collection tools have been used: Google Scholar, Medscape, Covid Observer and Covid19.cv, websites and official documents published by the World Health Organization, National Institute of Health, Public Health Directorate, and the official information platform about the SARS-CoV-2 virus by the Cape Verde Government.

The result of the secondary research is the creation of a theoretical framework consisting of concepts, studies, research, and laws presented by relevant authors and organizations related to the topic addressed in this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

On February 11, 2020, ICTV announced that the new virus responsible for Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) would be named as such due to its genetic relationship with the virus responsible for the SARS outbreak in 2003, although they are two different viruses. Additionally, the World Health Organization (WHO) announced the official name of the disease as "COVID-19", following the guidelines previously developed with the World Organization for Animal Health

and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (WHO, 2020).

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that causes fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. It is caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2). COVID-19 can cause mild to severe illness and even death (Medline, 2022).

Cape Verde Republic had its first confirmed case of coronavirus on March 19, 2020 on the island of Boavista (where the state capital, Praia, is located), the first case of coronavirus was reported three months after the outbreak in China (Silva J. S. et. al., 2022).

As of May 2023, the total population in Cape Verde who have contracted the SARS-CoV-2 virus represents a percentage of 11%. This percentage represents the confirmed infection cases in relation to the total population of 550,000 inhabitants. It was registered a number of 115 per 1,000 affected people and 0.75 per 1,000 deceased individuals (WHO, 20230).

According to COVID observer (a website that records daily updated statistical data), the island of Sal reported a total of 3,983 cases of coronavirus have been recorded so far, out of which 3,961 patients have recovered. The number of infections among females was 33,393 (52.84%), while among males it was 29,801 (47.16%).

The highest level of COVID-19 infections recorded in a single day on the island of Sal during the pandemic occurred on January 7, 2022, with 1,469 residents diagnosed with SARS-CoV-2 viral infection. A total of 19 deaths have been reported due to SARS-CoV-2 infection since the beginning of the pandemic, with most cases showing favorable medical recovery in the majority of situations. This can be attributed to the demographic factor, as the majority of COVID-19 cases on Sal Island are among individuals aged 23-34 (15,086 cases) compared to those over 65 years old (6,487 infections) who may experience complications and have a more challenging recovery.

Sal Island in Cape Verde has not reported any confirmed cases of COVID-19 since December 2022, successfully preventing contact and outbreak of infection (covid19.cv, 2023).

COVID-19 hygiene protocols refer to a set of measures and guidelines implemented to prevent the spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and ensure the safety and well-being of individuals in various settings. These protocols have been developed and implemented across various industries and settings to ensure the health and

safety of individuals and communities. COVID-19 legislation refers to the set of laws, regulations, and measures enacted by governments at various levels to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. These legislative actions aim to mitigate the spread of the virus, protect public health, support healthcare systems, and provide economic relief to individuals and businesses affected by the crisis. COVID-19 legislation encompasses a wide range of areas, including public health measures, travel restrictions, testing and vaccination policies, business closures, remote work arrangements, eviction moratoriums, financial assistance programs, and more. The implementation of such legislation is crucial in managing the impact of the pandemic and promoting the well-being of communities.

Cape Verde established rules regarding the use of masks as a complementary measure to limit the transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in the community, along with other hygiene measures, prevention of contagion, and health surveillance, in accordance with the principle of precaution in public health; delegating the authority to the Minister of Tourism and Transport to coordinate preventive measures and limit the spread of COVID-19 contagion on Sal Island. Approval of the directive for monitoring and controlling the implementation process of general health safety conditions applicable to institutions, companies, services, or activities, along with specific procedures to be followed, in the context of preventing SARS-CoV-2 contamination. General health safety conditions applicable to institutions, companies, services, as well as specific procedures to be followed, are established for public health reasons, in the context of preventing SARS-CoV-2 contamination. Additionally, sanitary control norms applicable to travel are added (Ministério do Turismo e Transportes, 2020).

In the context of restoring social interaction, focusing on all economic and public service activities that involve close proximity to other individuals, the following measures approved by Decree-Law No. 47/2020 dated April 25, 2020, should be highlighted regarding the organization of public services and the regular and mandatory disinfection of spaces for clients and public services, to be carried out by management entities under the supervision of health and civil protection authorities:

- Mandatory wearing of face masks in enclosed spaces with multiple individuals, especially for public and private sector workers whose duties involve direct contact with the public, as well as users and clients of these services. Masks, when mandatory, are considered a working tool and should be provided free of charge to workers and service providers, in a quantity and type that comply with the rules specified in Decree-Law No. 47/20, particularly regarding their durability.

- Mandatory provision of hygiene materials free of charge at the workplace, such as liquid or solid soap, 70% or 96% alcohol.

- Mandatory installation of transparent barriers separating users and workers in services intended for the public.

- Special rules for the operation of services, particularly regarding in-person meetings, which should be avoided by organizing meetings through alternative means.

The institutions mentioned in the decree have an obligation to refuse assistance to users who do not wear appropriate masks or refuse to use them when provided by the entity providing the public service, except in emergency services in healthcare facilities.

Failure to comply with the rules specified in Decree-Law 47/20 will lead to disciplinary procedures (for public institutions), fines ranging from CVE 15,000 to CVE 500,000, and/or, in case of persistent non-compliance, suspension of activities, closure of the business or unit, or revocation of the license (for companies and other commercial and industrial entities) (Vieira de Almeida, 2020).

In an official food safety guide provided by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations in collaboration with the World Health Organization, good practices for food businesses and personal hygiene measures for food handlers during the COVID-19 pandemic are emphasized. Maintaining the health and safety of all workers in the food production and supply chains has been crucial for surviving the pandemic. Ensuring the movement of food along the food chain is an essential function that all stakeholders must contribute to. This is also fundamental for maintaining consumer confidence in the safety and availability of food products both globally and nationally (WHO and FAO, 2020).

Some of the food hygiene measures to ensure the proper functioning of food and touristic establishments and prevent the spread of COVID-19 include:

- Training employees on the risk factors of COVID-19 infection;
- Isolating individuals displaying symptoms of SARS-CoV-2 infection;
- Regular testing of workers;
- Practicing good personal hygiene, such as regular handwashing and sanitization, respiratory hygiene by wearing protective masks and hairnets, and using disposable gloves during food handling;
- Sanitizing and applying alcohol-based disinfectants to work surfaces, tables, and other inventory items used by customers and employees;
- Implementing social distancing measures, reorganizing preparation stations, serving routes, and seating arrangements within the establishment;
- Limiting the number of workers per shift and the capacity for reservations and occupancy in the establishment;
- Displaying guidelines and signs promoting good practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19, as well as hand sanitizers,

CONCLUSIONS

The implementation of enhanced hygiene protocols in tourist services in Sal, Cape Verde, post-COVID-19 has played a crucial role in ensuring the safety and well-being of both tourists and the local community. These protocols, including measures such as regular testing, staff training, proper sanitation practices, social distancing, and the use of personal protective equipment, have helped prevent the spread of the virus and instill confidence in visitors.

In order to ensure the continued success of enhanced hygiene protocols in tourist services post-COVID-19 in Sal, Cape Verde, it is recommended to maintain strict adherence to these protocols even as the situation evolves. Regular training and updates for staff members regarding hygiene practices should be conducted, along with ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the implemented measures. Collaboration between stakeholders, including tourism authorities, businesses, and the local community, is essential to sustain a culture of hygiene and safety. By prioritizing these recommendations, Sal can solidify its reputation as a safe and responsible destination, inspiring

protective masks, and disposable tissues within the premises;

- Installing plexiglass barriers at counters and booths as an additional level of protection for staff;

- Encouraging the use of contactless payments (via card) and online food orders (IFSAN, 2020).

Cape Verde Republic has implemented the concept of safe tourism. The purpose is to ensure the implementation of the minimum necessary measures for social distancing, hygiene, and cleanliness in tourism establishments, but most importantly, to promote the country as a safe destination in terms of the measures taken to prevent the spread of the virus (Ministério do Turismo e Transportes, 2020). The concept is based on 4 stages: sanitary safety; qualification and diversity of the touristic product; ambient, economic and social sustainability and protection and stimulus for companies and jobs (Ministério das Finanças e Fomento Empresarial, 2022).

travelers to choose the island for their future vacations.

The proactive approach taken by the tourism industry in Sal, Cape Verde, highlights the commitment to providing a safe and secure environment for tourists. By prioritizing hygiene and implementing comprehensive protocols, the destination has positioned itself as a responsible and trustworthy choice for travelers seeking a post-pandemic holiday.

Furthermore, the efforts made to protect companies and jobs in the tourism sector have been instrumental in mitigating the economic impact of the pandemic. By providing support and stimulus packages, the government and relevant authorities have helped sustain businesses and preserve employment opportunities in the region.

Moving forward, the lessons learned from the implementation of enhanced hygiene protocols in Sal, Cape Verde, can serve as a valuable blueprint for other tourist destinations worldwide. These measures, combined with ongoing vigilance and adaptability, will continue to be essential in ensuring the resilience and recovery of the tourism industry in a post-COVID-19 era.

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