How local restaurants in Fayoum handle food rumors?

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Abstract:
Crisis response strategies have been considered a major factor in reputational threats during a crisis and it is necessary to explore restaurants' reactions to food crises. There is a set of procedures followed by the managers of local restaurants to handle the crisis of food rumors. The purpose of this paper is to explore and identify the most important procedures and solution used by restaurant to deal with food rumors. To achieve the objectives of the research 30 questionnaires were distributed on local restaurant managers in fayoum city. The response rate was 85.7%. The findings show that there is a significant impact of the procedures and solutions used by local restaurants to deal with food rumors. The study recommended the importance of holding training courses for restaurant workers on a continuous basis in how to deal with crises and confront rumors in the framework of objectivity and credibility with the public, The necessity of following to restaurant rules by applying the rules related to work ethics and treating the negative behaviors of employees such as spreading information and dissemination of false rumors and the need to prepare for the prevention of crises based on early warning signals to form a crisis management team within the restaurant.
Keywords: Food Rumors, Solutions, Procedures, Fayoum, Local Restautants.

Introduction:
Rumors exist in all parts of society, although unverified information, plausible or implausible rumors may influence customers' behaviors, and often resist correction. They can damage celebrities and non-celebrities, large and small and public or private organizations. Rumors sometimes change society by shaping public opinion (Lee, 2014).

Although some rumors might be harmless, endless lists of negative impacts are attributed to false rumors (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). These range from loss of personal or institutional credibility, decrease of product sales, stock price plummets, travel- or trade disruptions, to violent riots and beyond (Stieglitz & Dang, 2013).

Crisis response strategies have been considered a major factor in reputational threats during a crisis (Anjan, 2017), it is necessary to explore restaurants' reactions to food crises. In contrast to the disciplines of emergency management and disaster management mainly dealing with natural disasters, crisis management deals primarily with human-caused crises such as environmental contamination, product tampering, and food crises (Jooyeon, 2012).

Crisis communication enables an organization to respond and deliver necessary information to the public in order to maintain public confidence and reduce potential harms on organizational reputation. Effective crisis communication allows a restaurant to deliver accurate information and reduce the perceived risk of the probability of an outbreak (Seo, 2012).

Literature Review:
Food rumors in restaurant.
Food rumors, defined as false and damaging information spread on social media, can directly influence consumers' brand choices, even if the rumors are untrue (Distasot et al, 2015).
In terms of a food rumor's key features, Coombs (2007) proposed that the food rumor is similar to a natural disaster in that it is out of an organization's control. A food rumor can also be a type of brand crises which, if believed by the organization's customers, can disrupt corporate profits and reputation, and even public safety.

Rumors on consumer products significantly can tarnish brand image, damage corporate credibility and consumer loyalties, impact sales and prompt the spread of negative word-of-mouth (Kimmel, 2010). For example, when McDonald's was rumored to use red worm meat in its hamburgers, its sales decreased by as much as 30% in areas where that rumor circulated (Sian Lee, C., & Hoe-Lian, 2013).

The restaurant industry is not free from brand rumors, especially food rumors. For example, In January 2016 a story that McDonald's made its burgers using worms as filler to save on costs, and that their customers were infected with parasitic roundworm as a result was published on a number of websites known for specializing fake news (Choi, 2017).

Classification and types of rumors:
Classification of Rumors in manners of their Topics
The rumors are classified according to the motives, the time frame and the topics into the following:
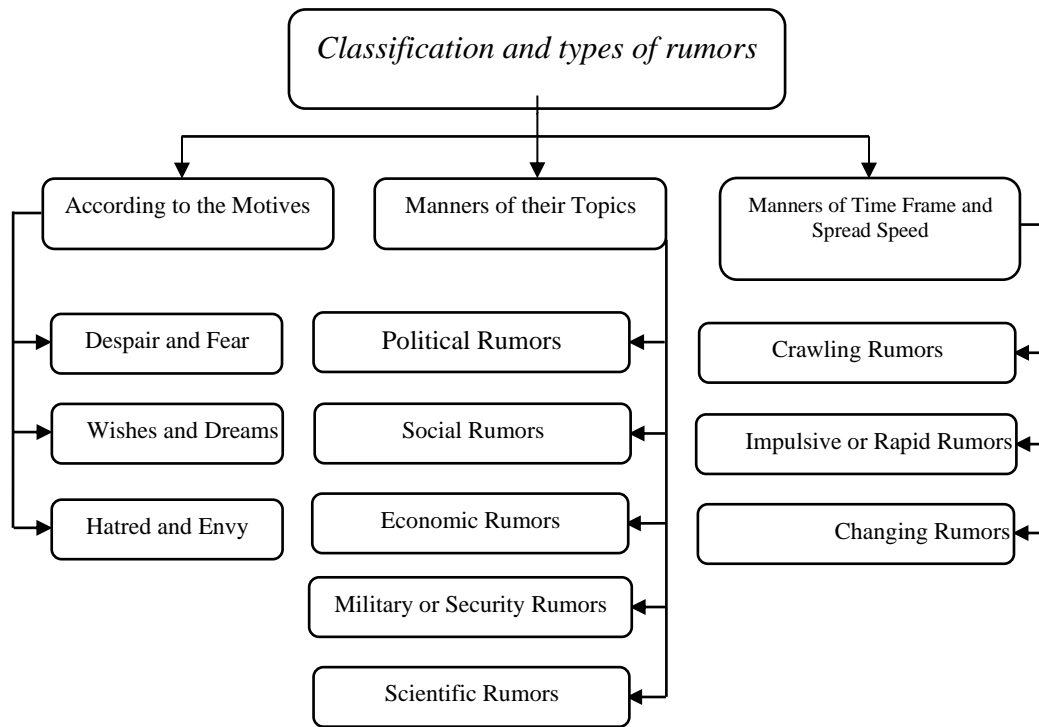
Classification and types of rumors, adapted from Alkalbany (2015)

1. *Rumors according to the Motives*
The psychologists set three types according to the psychological motives as follows:
a) Rumors of Despair and Fear
They are the rumors that are formed out of the fear and despair of the human such as his fear of enemies, spread of diseases or plagues and the terrorist attacks with unknown sources. Fear helps in the spread of the rumor and it magnifies its spread speed. (Alkalbany, 2015).
b) Rumors of Wishes and Dreams
These are also called Desire, Hope or Optimistic Rumor, White and sometimes Wishing Rumors. It is the opposite of the Despair and Fear Rumors. This type represents wishes and dreams that are carried out through the rumors which reassures the listener and the transporter so that both

believe them. For example, when you talk about the job vacancies in the governmental facilities or about a raise in the salary of the employees (Center et al, 2008).

c) Rumors of Hatred and Envy

This is the most dangerous type of rumors because it targets the life of peace and it seeks to split the peoples apart and create hard feelings through personification an individual event then generalizing it all over the people. It also seeks to provoke national, religious and sectarian conflicts so that it could attack the patriotic atmosphere of the country and then destroying the people's spirit. Enemies, Spies and the Fifth Column are the people who publish such rumors (Saflfery, 2005).

2) *Classification of Rumors in manners of Time Frame and Spread Speed*

a) Crawling Rumors

They are the rumors which grow and spread slowly until it reaches a level in which everyone knows about them. These rumors usually target the government's officials. The purpose of these rumors is to mutilate their reputations and they also regarded as obstacles in the way of the economic and social development of the country (Semaisem, 2005).

b) Impulsive or Rapid Rumors

They are the rumors which spread rapidly and reach their targeted society or class of people in a spectacular speed. This type of rumors depends on how mysterious and important the topic of the rumor is (Harby, 2013).

c) Changing Rumors

They are the rumors that appear in a specific time and circumstances, and then they disappear until they reappear again in case of these circumstances return. They're like the rumors that spread during the First World War then it reappeared in the Second World War because of the similarity of the circumstances. The American Rumor that Iraq obtains Weapons of Mass Destruction is regarded as one of this type of rumors (Semaisem, 2005).

3) *Classification of Rumors in manners of their Topics*

a) Political Rumors

They are the rumors that already exist in the meantime and it's related to the political aspect as well as it is regarded as the most dangerous type of rumors. It plays an effective role by its influence on the individuals and the society. In order to spread, such rumors use many forms like jokes, fake photos and scandal stories. Such rumors usually serve political aims that serve a specific class of people and it affects the people's way of thinking and it changes their situations and destinations towards specific cases (Abou Arqoub, 2011).

b) Social Rumors

It's the type of rumors which focuses on the social matters and what matters the society and affects it. It also focuses on what bring the society down and weaken it and paralyze its will. It also makes the society full of anxiety, fear and very likeable to receive any rumor and believe it. This is extremely dangerous type of rumors as it inherits social envy, hatred and hard feelings among all the people of the society (Bai, 2012).

c) Economic Rumors

It is the type of rumors which attacks a specific economic field or all fields. People working on the spread of such rumors seek to achieve a specific purpose out of the economy suck as injuring it. For example, the rumors that target the financial markets, currencies, stock markets and the prices of financial assets. It can also hit the whole economy and its effect can widely affect the country along with the citizens such as the rumors that hit the net price and the local currency (Raheem, 2016).

d) Military or Security Rumors
It's the type of rumors which is used in the military, security and terrorism fields like working on the breakdown of the armed forces spirits and decreasing their determination abilities and their beliefs of defending their homeland or national cases. It also decreases their feelings of the importance of their duty towards their countries. This type of rumors works on the splitting both of the government and the people by various destinations. (Kelley, 2004).

e) Scientific Rumors
It's the type of rumors which related to discoveries and scientific innovations and other cultural matters. Being afraid of the influence of such rumors, the American War Media Office) surrounded the atomic experiments with total secrecy. This type of rumors includes matters related to universities, institutes, colleges and special research centers. (Akheel, 2015).

Strategies and procedures to deal with food rumors:
Rumor response strategies are a means of image repair for a restaurant facing a rumor using a systematic approach to identify rumor response strategies (Coombs, 2007; 2008), these categories of rumor response strategies which will protect organizational reputation and improve their mental image during a crisis:
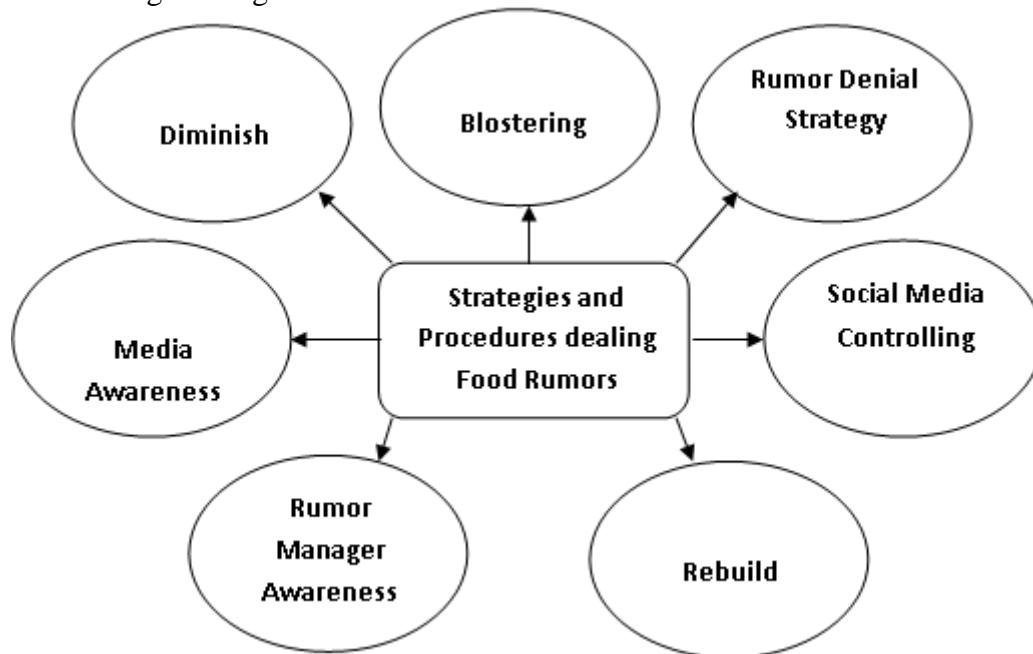
Strategies and Procedures dealing food rumors, adapted from (Seo, 2012).

1. Rumor denial strategy.
 Denial strategies aim to remove any possible links between a restaurant and the crisis (Frandsen,2011). This strategy is often used when a restaurant has no responsibility for the crisis. In response to rumors or speculations, a restaurant is likely to eliminate connections between itself and the event to protect the restaurant's reputation. The denial strategy is effective when stakeholders, including the media, agree that the restaurant has no responsibility in the event (Kaplan, 2010).
More recently, a hoax featuring a McDonald's restaurant sign asserting that African-Americans would pay an extra $1.50 to be served created a tidal wave of discussion among customers in the

Twittersphere. McDonald's decided to respond to the rumor by refuting the facts and stating how they oppose the company values (Sian Lee, & Hoe-Lian, 2013).

Unfortunately, a denial may strengthen the association between the brand and the rumor as it can alert consumers previously unaware of the rumor to it. Denials can also be bet with skepticism since they are often unilaterally self-serving for a company. Even upon hearing the denial, consumers have been shown to sometimes fail to remember the denial (i.e., This restaurant does not serve worm meat) and instead remember the affirmation (i.e., This restaurant does serve worm meat). Indeed, we found that an outright denial failed to change consumers' behavior in response to a rumor. Specifically, when a brand denied using worm meat, consumers were as unwilling to eat at the restaurant as when the brand had done nothing at all (Choi, 2017).

Some studies such (Coombs, 2007) and (Kaplan, 2010) assert denial strategies are the best strategies to use in a food rumor situation.

2. Diminish strategy.

The objective of diminish strategies is to persuade the public about the lack of controllability of the crisis by the restaurant. Diminish strategies are used to reduce the harmful effects of crises on restaurants by providing convincing evidence. Diminish strategies become effective when people accept that the crisis occurred accidentally (Coombs, 2007).restaurants conducting diminish strategies are likely to frame themselves as accidental crisis clusters by using excuse strategies and emphasizing the lack of intention in evoking the crisis (Dwivedi, 2007).

KFC was involved in a food rumor when allegations that they were using mutated chickens was published on the viral news site Daily Buzz, along with references to a study supposedly conducted by the University of New Hampshire. Eventually the rumor was revealed as hoax, and KFC recently won a lawsuit against companies in China whose social media accounts spread the rumors (Peterson, 2016).

KFC decided to handle with these rumors by used diminish strategy to reduce the harmful effects of crises on restaurants by providing convincing evidence (Coombs, 2014).

3. Rebuild strategy.

Rebuild strategies are a key type of strategy in crises to offset negativity and recover a restaurant's tainted reputation. Restaurants can take proactive actions, such as offering compensation to victims and expressing apologies (Kaur, 2013). Restaurants that adopt rebuild strategies admit responsibility for the crisis and attempt to improve the restaurant's reputation by demonstrating proactive strategies that benefit stakeholders (Hoover, 2011).

Most of restaurant used rebuild strategy in dealing with food rumors such as McDonald's, KFC and Umm Hassan restaurant (Choi, 2017).

4. Bolstering strategy.

The denial, diminish, and rebuild strategies are categorized as primary strategies, but the bolstering strategy refers to a secondary communication strategy (Coombs, 2008). In contrast to primary strategies, the bolstering strategy offers an opportunity to develop a restaurant's reputation by ensuring the safety of its products after a crisis (Darban, 2012). The bolstering strategy aims to display goodwill of the restaurant to evoke sympathy from the victim and public, which involves praising stakeholders for their efforts during the crisis and reminding them of past good works of the restaurant (Dev, 2015). The reminder strategy becomes possible only when a company has done good works in the past. The bolstering strategy is considered a supplementary option to the primary strategies (deny, diminish, and rebuild) and more likely to be utilized after the crisis (Dev & Bowen, 2010).

Social media controlling
Food companies and fast-food restaurants became an integral part of our society, far from the rumors; the researchers have noticed many rumors related to food on social media. Four rumors related to food products were identified in the Egyptian market, as follows (Bashir et al, 2017):
The employ of rotten meat which is not suitable for human use in many famous restaurants such as Umm Hassan, and Kentucky Fried Chicken (KFC). As well as the use of (donkey meat) in the meal industry provided by these restaurants and spread in many districts in the Egyptian governorates.
The video shows damaged and unsuitable tomatoes in the factory (Heinz Egypt). The video shows that these tomatoes are used in making sauce and ketchup.
The video contains fruit (Guava) damaged which is unsuitable for use in the factory (company Betty). The video shows that the guava is used in the juice industry
Many of the videos that explain the health damage that occurs to humans because of eating noodles prepared by the company (Indomie). Both Heinz Egypt and Betty Company have been quick to react with these rumors.
Both companies have published short films (videos) explain the manufacturing process of these companies, additionally, publishing some documents that confirm the quality and safety of their products. On the other hand, the approach of dealing with restaurants varied with rumors, some of them responded to and dealt with this rumor (such as an Umm Hassan restaurant), and some of them ignored the handling of these rumors and that was the trend of most restaurants (Bloch et al , 2014). (Indomie) also ignored the rumors (at least in the Egyptian market).Thus, it is difficult to affirm to what extent rumors in social network sites affect the consumer behavior of purchasing food products and to what extent to restaurants and food companies are influenced by such rumors(Abdelkader,2018).
 5. Rumors of social media can be controlled by:

A. Improve citizens' moral quality, strengthen the rational thinking, and enhance the ability of telling information (Darban, 2012).
B. Improve the service quality of media practitioners (Liang and Yang, 2015).
C. Social management system is not perfect (Kaynar, 2016).
D. D) Perfect laws and regulations system; establish strict accountability system of network transmission (Liang and Yang, 2015).
E. Strengthen the internet technology to control and manage the transmission (Hua, 2014).
F. Control the rumors (Pergel& Psychogios 2013).
G. The establishment of public opinion supervision system (Prednergast,2013)**.**

6. Media awareness:
The media have to follow the following steps to confront the rumors:
 A. Do not pay attention to the rumors (Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2015).
 B. Do not display topics that play a great role in spreading the rumors (Bordia,2006).
 C. Check the news before you broadcast it (Kenneth,2012).
 D. Take advantage of the drama, chants and the conductor in confirming the truth denied rumors (Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2015).
 E. The quick recovery of the rumor (Borodina & Zheltukhina, 2015).
7. Rumors monger awareness:
Rumors monger should do the following:
A. Make the rumor stops with you (Anjan,2017).

B. Don't be an audience (Subramanian,2006).
C. Respect Others' Privacy (Saaksjarvi,2017).
D. Get the facts (Saaksjarvi,2017).

Methodology:
Research Hypotheses
The research tested the following hypotheses:
H1: There are statistically significant differences between local restaurant managers regarding the procedures and solutions used to deal with food rumors

Data Collection Instrument:
The questionnaire form of managers divided into two parts. Each part includes some sections. The first part consists of one section with four questions that intend to reveal the demographic data of managers such as gender, education, years of experience and to specify name of restaurant.
The second part consists of three questions designed on a form of 5 Rating Scale (1=Strongly Disagree, 2= Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4= Agree and 5= Strongly Agree).
 The first section of the questionnaire form is to identify means of spreading rumors (social media-mass media-rumor mongers-the competitors) and supported by the following references (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010-kaur,2013- Wilden et al, 2010- Kaynar, 2016).
The second section of the questionnaire is to show managers' opinions on restaurant proceedings taken to face food rumors and supported by the following references such as (Kotler and Keller ,2006-Bordia and DiStaso, 2015 -Choi, 2017- Aydemir and Demirci, 2005- Kimmel 2010).
The third section of the questionnaire intends to point out the effects of solutions and proceedings on the purchasing decision of customers (Kotler & Keller, 2006-Ogba & Tan, 2009- Kimmel, 2010).

Population and Sampling:
There are 35 local restaurants in Fayoum city according to official records registered in the Chamber of Commerce in Fayoum City in 2018.
 It is a limited community so the researcher can't take a sample of as a result of its small size so a total survey method was used and questionnaires were distributed on the local restaurant managers in Fayoum City.
The total number of questionnaires was 35 copies, distributed on local restaurant managers, 30 were returned. The response rate reached 85.7%.

Data Analysis Technique:
Frequencies, means, standard deviation were calculated. Therefore, reliability analysis was carried out to measure the results reliability of the questionnaire, SPSS (version 24) software was used in analysis.

Research Findings:
Validity and Reliability
For validity concerns, the survey was piloted on a sample of 30 mangers to check its face and content validity. The comments of respondents related to language and design of questionnaire were considered in the final form. For reliability of constructs, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was

calculated and exceeded (0.70) for all constructs meaning that the questionnaire results are reliable (Hair et al, 2010).

Table (1): Validity Analysis for managers

Dependent Constructs		Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Cronbach's alpha
6	6-I	0.243	0.765
	6-2	0.551	
	6-3	0.668	
	6-4	0.742	
	6-5	0.654	
	6-6	0.471	
	6-7	0.663	
	6-8	0.589	
	6-9	0.563	
	6-10	0.419	
	7-2	0.670	
	7-3	0.442	
	7-4	0.576	

Descriptive statistics analysis

Restaurant Procedures and solutions to face food rumors

Table (2): Descriptive statistics of restaurant Procedures and solutions to face food rumors

Restaurant Procedures to face food rumors	N	Mean	Rank	SD	Percentage				
					1	2	3	4	5
1- Keeping silence; ignoring rumors and not responding to their mongers.	30	4.03	10	1.47	16.7	13.3	10	30	30
2- Denying rumors and discrediting it by any types of mass media.	30	3.97	3	1.39	13.3	20	13.3	30	23.4
3- Making intensive promoting campaign after breaking- out of rumors.	30	4.1	7	1.4	13.3	16.7	10	33.3	26.7
4- Forming a team for crises management of food rumors inside a restaurant.	30	3.95	9	1.45	13.3	16.7	10	26.7	33.3
5- Discrediting the rumors through co-operation with official and responsible authorities.	30	4.03	5	1.35	10	16.7	13.3	30	30

Restaurant Procedures to face food rumors	N	Mean	Rank	SD	Percentage				
					1	2	3	4	5
6- Identifying reasons, sources and motives of rumor mongers.	30	3.87	1	1.43	13.3	13.3	10	30	33.4
7- Connecting to customers through a website of a restaurant on social media ; denying rumors and persuading them of their fibs	30	4.07	8	1.42	13.3	20	10	30	26.7
8- Rebuilding the restaurant's fame after rumors; trying to develop service's style and quality and using modern methods.	30	3.99	2	1.47	16.7	13.3	6.7	33.3	30
9- Saving a special budget for crises management that faces the restaurant to enable it to deal perfectly with the crises.	30	4.05	4	1.43	13.3	16.7	10	30	30
10- Pre - Planning and getting ready for crises of food rumors to face it and decrease its effects.	30	4.94	6	1.5	16.7	13.3	10	26.7	33.3
Grand mean	400	4.1							

1= strongly disagree, 2= Disagree, 3= Neutral, 4= Agree, 5= strongly agree

From the previous table (2) it is clear that most of the respondents signed off on the procedures followed by the restaurant to face a crisis with grand mean (4.1) and this indicates that the response rate is between people who agreed and those who extremely agreed. This means that the majority of respondents agree to follow the solutions and procedures.

The previous table shows that (60%) of the respondents approve to remain silent and ignore the common and non-response to their promoters. And this means that keeping silent and ignoring the common by the restaurant managers is one solution to address and confront food rumors so that they can be overcome and that agreed with the study (Choi, 2017). When speaking to one of the respondents who said that silence and not talking about the common restaurant facing is one

of the ways we use them to overcome them, but when responding to the common at the time of the outbreak, this leads to the confirmation and promotion rather than put out.

In addition, (53.3%) of the respondents agreed that the denial and denial of the rumors by one of the media is considered one of the main ways to confront the rumors of food and this is consistent with the study (Bordia and DiStaso, 2015) in which he said that the denial of the common is a necessary strategy in terms of reducing the damage to the restaurant, especially in cases of food rumors one of the respondents agreed with this means to confront the crisis of food rumors and said that ignoring the common and not responding to it is one of the means used by the restaurant to face the common and sometimes denied by the media .

It also agreed (60%) to conduct intensive promotional campaigns after the outbreak of the common and this is consistent with the study which emphasizes the need for restaurants to work in a propaganda campaign or campaign against rumors that reinforce the original image of the brand and the restaurant is away from the negative links caused by the common. Most of the respondents confirmed that they were conducting promotional campaigns after the outbreak of the rumor, which may confirm the fact and corroborate it rather than deny it, but they are doing promotional campaigns after a period of time.

In addition, (60%) agreed that the formation of a crisis management team for food rumor in the restaurant is one of the basic procedures that restaurant officials must do. This team is selected from the competent staff of the restaurant and the development of plans and solutions proposed to deal with the crisis of food rumors so they can use them in the event of exposure of the restaurant to this rumor.

The local managers restaurant confirmed (60%) of the respondents on the need to deny the common through cooperation with official and official bodies such as the Ministry of Health. One of the respondents stressed the need to cooperate with the official authorities to deny the rumor.

Also, (63.3%) agreed to identify the causes, sources and motives of promoters of the common, which are important solutions to confront the rumors of food so that it is possible to follow the right methods and develop appropriate solutions to address them. In addition, (56.7%) agreed to address customers through the restaurant's website on social media and denied the rumors and convinced them that they were not correct. This illustrates the role of social media in influencing the public because of its popularity and accessibility so when the restaurant is exposed to a common food, he immediately addresses his customers on the restaurant's site and communicate with them and the common falsity and lack of authenticity and display pictures and videos showing the cleanliness of the restaurant and pictures of the food while preparing and processing in the kitchen, which confirms the credibility of the restaurant and can win the confidence of its customers again.

About (63.3%) of the respondents underlined that rebuilding the reputation of the restaurant after the rumor and trying to develop method and quality   of service and using modern methods, is one of the important procedures to deal with food rumors. This is consistent with the study (Kimmel, 2010) which emphasizes that when the restaurant improves the quality of service, develop and update the equipment will enable it to overcome this crisis and regain reputation, in addition.

In addition, (60%) of the respondents agreed on the need to provide a special budget to manage the crises that expose the restaurant to enable it to deal properly with them after occurring. When there is an available budget to the restaurant that can be used when the restaurant exposed to the

crisis of food rumors so that it can hold campaigns to face the rumor and make improvements and changes and improve the quality of the restaurant.

The previous table also explained that (60%) of the respondents confirmed the need for planning ahead of time and preparing for the crisis of food rumors to confront them and limit their impact One of the important means to address the crisis of food rumors and this means that the restaurant is willing to proposed plans and teams of trained and budget allocated to meet any crisis exposed and this is consistent with the study (Aydemir and Demirci, 2005).

Based on the views of the local restaurant managers supported statistically, the best solutions that may be used by local restaurants in dealing with food rumors as follows; Identifying reasons, sources and motives of rumor mongers, rebuilding the restaurant's fame after rumors; trying to develop service's style and quality and using modern methods, denying rumors and discrediting it by any types of mass media, saving a special budget for crises management that faces the restaurant to enable it to deal perfectly with the crises and discrediting the rumors through co-operation with official and responsible authorities.

 From the preceding results indicate that there is impact of the solutions and procedures used by local restaurants to handle food rumors.

These results agreed to Kotler and Keller (2006), Ogba and Tan (2009), Choi (2017), Bordia and DiStaso (2015) and Kimmel (2010).

Recommendations and future research:
The restaurant managers should hold training courses for restaurant workers on a continuous basis in how to deal with crises and confront rumors in the framework of objectivity and credibility with the public, The necessity of adhering to restaurant rules by applying the rules related to work ethics and treating the negative behaviors of employees such as spreading information and dissemination of false rumors and the need for restaurant managers to follow the so-called (clinic rumors) and rely on these clinics on the need to be on the sites of public networks to deal with those rumors in a manner that suits them and verify the sources of rumors and promoters in order to address them by the necessary means and the commitment of restaurant managers to transparency in presenting information to avoid rumors and misunderstandings along with its consequences.in addition to work on the rapid confrontation of rumors and provide the cost of its avoidance and confrontation, finally the need to prepare for the prevention of crises based on early warning signals to form a crisis management team within the restaurant .For future research it is recommended that same study can be conducted on KFC and McDonald's and it can also be applied to local restaurants in other regions such as Cairo.

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