



Quality and Sustainability in Tourism and Hospitality

Assignment 3

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Tourism destinations development:

The example of Dubai, United Arab Emirates

Dubai has few destinations that have changed as radically over the last few decades as it had. Previously a small trading port which was mainly characterized with the pearl diving background and the desert scenery, Dubai has been transformed to one of the most popular destinations in the world, synonymous with luxury, innovation, and the massive development of tourism. The emergence of the city provides useful opportunities into how strategic planning, investment and branding can remodel a destination. Simultaneously, the development of Dubai points to the risks and pitfalls that should be addressed by other destinations. A study of what has made it successful, and what it has encountered to still be criticized in its success, can be of value to other places as they seek to plot their own tourism futures.

Causes of Success of Dubai

1. Good Government Vision and Long-Term Planning

The government has had a clear strategic vision and this has been one of the main driving forces behind the success of Dubai. Already in the 1990s, the leaders realized that oil revenues were few in comparison with those of the neighboring emirates. This saw the concerted attempt to diversify the economy with tourism being seen as a pillar in future development. Efforts like establishment of Dubai Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM), creation of free-economic zones and their long-term development strategies like the Dubai Strategic Plan 2015 were what made the difference in ensuring that the development of tourism was not haphazard. Researchers tend to underline that the destinations, which have consistent, long-term policy frameworks, are in a better position to succeed, and Dubai is one of the bright examples of this idea (Sharpley, 2008).

2. Infrastructure Investment at an All Time High

The fast development of Dubai cannot be separated with its huge infrastructure investments. Airports, highways, metro lines, hotels, and other tourist sites like Burj Khalifa, Palm Jumeirah and Dubai Mall were built to the world standards. The growth of the Dubai International Airport to be among the busiest airports in the world in addition to the strategic expansion of the Emirates Airlines was an essential factor in the rise in accessibility and connectivity. Dubai is also a destination and transition place to many of the travelers and therefore it will continue to receive millions of visitors who will pass through and in most cases come back to enjoy leisure or do business. This combination of the transportation, hospitality, and attractions shows the importance of the physical and logistical infrastructure in turning a destination into a place that is attractive and efficient to the visitor.

3. Creating Marketing and International Branding

The branding approach of Dubai is one of the most well-known across the world. The city was also positioning itself as a city of superlatives, the highest building, the biggest mall, the most luxurious hotel, etc. and these were the key words in its marketing position. Dubai established its image of innovation, ambition, and luxury in lieu of natural scenery or historical sites. This branding was felt all around the world, particularly with tourists who were after unique or aspirational experiences. The city has focused on events including the Dubai shopping festival, the expo 2020 and the various international sports events, which have further helped to build or enhance the reputation of the city, attracting both tourists and media. According to tourism researchers, this is usually done by successful destinations, which develop strong and memorable identities which make them stand out in the saturated global market (Govers & Go, 2009).

4. The Tourism Products should be diversified

Although Dubai was originally famous because of its luxury experiences, the city became more diversified to enable more types of tourists. The small airlines increased, the middle-range

hotels were constructed and new attractions like the Miracle Garden, Global Village and the different cultural museums, were developed that targeted the needs of families, cultural tourists, and nature lovers. It was also aided by the establishment of the Al Fahidi Historic District and cultural events such as the Dubai Opera which serve to soften the image of Dubai being made up entirely of glass towers. This diversification enabled Dubai to cut across various market segments and this enabled stabilization in the number of visitors in the event of global economic fluctuations.

Challenges and Criticisms

Although Dubai has been very successful in the tourism development, it has not been free of controversies. These issues provide valuable experiences to other destinations:

1. The problem of overdependence on Mega-Projects

Most attractions in Dubai are based on the expenditure of massive capital and construction projects. This brings into worry the issue of sustainability both environmentally and economically. Others complain that such excessive dependence on mega-projects will produce a weakness in case international economic situations change. This risk was demonstrated in the 2008 financial crisis when some of the developments were stalled or postponed. The other destinations need to think whether their tourism policies are overreliant on big developments that are not viable and ecologically suitable.

2. Environmental Sustainability Issues

The high rate of growth in Dubai has put a lot of strain on the available natural resources particularly water and energy. Air conditioning, desalination plants and land reclamation projects like the Palm Islands have attracted the global attention. Environmental sustainability is a theme that has gained prominence in the global tourism planning and a case of Dubai shows the impact of focusing a lot on fast development without considering the ecological

level. Due to the climate change that has been impacting the trends in global tourism, tourist destinations should consider the effects of their development to the local ecosystem.

3. Authenticity and Social Perceptions of Culture

Dubai is a city where a modern city and luxury are stressed upon, which is why some travelers perceive it as a city that is culturally shallow. Although the city has made efforts to make the heritage of Emirati prominent, the metropolitan environment may seem cosmopolitan to the extent of neglecting the local cultures. Social disparities in the system of migrant labor as well as the high dependence of the city on this type of work are also mentioned by critics. Although Dubai is becoming a favorite destination to millions of people, these problems demonstrate the necessity of making sure that tourism development is a process that is oriented to cultural authenticity and fair work practices.

Lessons to Other Destinations

The success of Dubai provides some of the most important lessons to the destination that pursues sustainable and strategic tourism growth.

1. Sustainable Growth is Directed by a Clear Vision

Long-term tourism strategies ensure that the government agencies, the private investors, and the local communities are all aligned to the destinations. The unified vision of Dubai demonstrates that a coherent strategy can have a powerful effect, yet other tourist destinations cannot disregard sustainability and well-being of the community as the vital elements of its infrastructure.

2. Infrastructure is Essential, but needs to be Moderated

Good infrastructure, such as airports, transport, hotels, etc, assist destinations to compete in the world. Nevertheless, infrastructure has to expand according to the environment, local culture and economic capacity. The magnitude of the projects which Dubai has implemented

has been both an admirable and a despised factor, with the need to think the developments through, proportional to their level.

3. Diversity Strengthens Portfolios

Dubai makes its attractions and tourist segments varied, which decreases the exposure to market changes. The strategies can be applied in other destinations, though, to make sure that it attracts both domestic and international tourists, and also to the tourists with a variety of incomes and interests.

Conclusion

A case in point of how far strategic vision, investment, and branding can go is the transformation of Dubai into a world tourist destination. Although its experience has involved issues to do with sustainability, cultural identity, its successes can provide useful insights to the destinations that would want to develop responsibly. The way other destinations can create tourism models that do not only attract visitors, but also help the community will continue to flourish in the long term is by balancing between ambition and sustainability, authenticity, as well as inclusivity.

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