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The Role of Media and Public Relations Departments in Effective Tourism Marketing in Sharjah

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Abstract--The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the value of the public relations and media role in the industry of tourism and to justify its position. The research is survey depending and adopting a Sharjah case-study method by quantities approaches. It shows the growth of media activities and public relations within the tourism industry.

Keywords---media departments, public relations, tourism marketing.

Introduction

Since earning big oil profits in the 1970s, the Arab Gulf states have witnessed a fast growth. Subsequently, all of those countries (Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, UAE, Saudi Arabia and Oman) have greatly improved the public sectors (Badran, 2019). Their substantially improved revenues have enabled these countries' governments to steadily modernize the services they provide the citizens whereas enhancing service quality and cost-effectiveness in a shared quest towards excellence at the same time (Al-Kandari et al., 2019). In order to reach to a sensible appreciation of the radical growth in the public sector, the real context in where government agencies function must be explored through evaluating the reforms of the public sector and the actions towards quality. Due to its peculiar form of governance, not only within the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries but also in the broader Middle Eastern and Arab contexts, this is an especially important exercise in the case of the UAE. There are two official government layers in the UAE: federal and local. Which applies to every one of the seven emirates: Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Sharjah, Ras Al-Khaimah, Umm Al-Quwain and Al-Fujaira. Economic local services are legally administered and governed by local governments, who

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participate to the federal budget. Thus, although the UAE has a federal political structure and local government autonomy, it is the duty of every emirate to manage its natural resources and debts (Almutairi & Kruckeberg, 2019).

As a developing country, in a short time period, Sharjah has undergone fast growth and transition. The Sharjah attracted tremendous foreign investment and, due to its oil wealth, free market economy and fair management, was able to be a centre for industry and trade (Khatib & Maziad, 2018). Sharjah has a high revenue per capita, a robust infrastructure, a free market economy and a cosmopolitan society of foreigners from around the world. Global investment was drawn by this safe and enabling climate. The Sharjah offices were set up by hundreds of international and global firms, getting access to the development of the public relations industry. In order to adapt the latest developments and growth, both the private and public sectors began public relations divisions, facilities and offices (Haak-Saheem et al., 2017). The Sharjah has not only dependent on oil resources and income, but has varied its economy and invested heavily in telecommunications, shipping, tourism, commerce and, most recently commercial property. Public relations started and continued to expand and evolve with what was occurring in the Sharjah tourism field. Within and beyond the visitor company, public relations conduct various advertising and contact roles. Consequently, several tourism organisations have a specialist public relations department (Al Saqer, 2019).

While tourism is a fairly recent concept, it has a strong tradition. Since earlier civilizations, there has been curiosity in exploring other locations, but it was considered in old period to be reserved exclusively for adventurers finding new lands. In recent history, only the (financially) privileged had the opportunity to visit foreign countries and their people. Tourism has been evolving in a more mainstream way since the second half of the 19th century, reaching great heights following World War II (Khan & Callanan, 2017). New technological advances, higher wages and more leisure time presented the working class with new pleasures. No destination was too far. It was the tourism sector which set the stage for heritage and culture protection. Cultural travellers have become world people who have acknowledged the need to preserve the landmarks and places where contain the treasure of the world (Ephraim, 2019).

Marketing of tourism have addressed current and rising obstacles which are profoundly influenced by modern technology, industry standards and criteria for travellers. Nowadays travellers have increasingly affordable travel goods and facilities and greater discretionary income and experience a broad variety of recreational activities. The expectations of people for travel experiences are much more varied, and their styles and reasons for travel have become more precise. Depending on the above, Sharjah has a number of tourist attraction criteria. These criteria have made Sharjah a modern tourist destination on the world tourism map. Sharjah, for example, is a tourist destination for cruise visitors. (Paris et al., 2017). Sharjah is also a tourist destination for those wanting desert and adventure tourism. Sharjah is a tourist destination for anyone pursuing archaeological and cultural tourism. Sharjah is also a draw for those who are searching for medical tourism. This is because Sharjah has several hospitals in the area of health care that have received universal accreditation. This study,

therefore, focuses on the significance of the Department of Media and Public Relations by addressing its definition and function suggested through earlier scholars. It also examines if media and public relation department are efficiently used in the tourism marketing in Sharjah (Creedon & Al-Khaja, 2019).

Public relation as a marketing tool

"Public relations is a communication weapon", which has a part to play in engaging with the goal of bridging the audience with a marketing message. It is a clear necessity for public communicators to include all the audience. The overall audience is made up of the financial group, traders, franchises, lenders, and customers. Public relations has a broad potential to get people in this large crowd and at the same time to manipulate them. In addition, when it relates to motivating and engaging the workers, public relations acts as an effective instrument in internal marketing (Kumar & Patra, 2017). Several people argue that public relations is a straightforward activity that can be done by anyone or that public relations is a way to waste energy like money and time. These persons who create those claims are more likely either distant from this area and may not grasp the meaning and the operating framework, or they have experienced and found some form of unsuccessful attempts made by others (Assimakopoulos et al., 2017).

Public relations is not interested with direct transactions. The effect of public relations, though, is tremendous in opening up a view which enables in seeing and quantifying revenue. The use of this important method in advertisement helps the brand to meet the whole possible marketing markets. In public relations, the whole public is involved, in particular the media, individual and future clients, workers, the financial and local communities (Bala & Verma, 2018). If public relations are successfully applied, it can offer positive outcomes, like a comparative edge in the region where industry is, regardless of whether it applies to retail, distribution, development or operation in some aspect of the supply chain. The following strategic benefit mentioned above is most frequently ignored by the private sector as well as by public relations professionals. The correct implementation of a public relations storytelling strategy will gain a strong profile by establishing a positive public image for the business company category (Safiullah et al., 2017).

The intended advantage from the prestige and positive name acquired is that these qualities also play a key role in consumer choice and desires. In addition, the strategic edge provides a desirable atmosphere in which the business can succeed, that is the commercial goal of the company. Publicity is one of the components of public relations. The positive side of advertising is that most frequently it can be free or cheap. While it can be cost-free, it may also be either positive or negative. There are items which ought not be excluded from the public relations programmes of the organisation. Target audiences, plans, timetables, priorities, expected outcomes and measurements should be used in public relations initiatives (Fedorchenko et al., 2021; Priadko et al., 2021). In public relations, there are infinite tools which can be utilized, like radio and TV television shows, news conferences, press reports, announcements, interviews, employee relations, lectures, photos, civil social and community engagement, print media.

The professionally structured public relations policy will still be assessed by the media exposures gathered. Another approach that makes it possible to calculate public relations is to review questionnaires provided to workers and to determine details pertaining to the amount of pilferage, breakage, turnover ratios, etc (Avidar, 2017).

Media role as a marketing tool

In such moments, the media should play a critical role. The media's role should be to educate and to inform. At the same time, when writing specific things, the media should be restrained, such as publishing bloodshed videos. There is no doubt that news and events should be projected by the media (Yadav, 2017). About this, there is no doubt. "The debatable question is, "How far and at what pace the daily or media centre comes up with the important story?". They work against each other due to hectic rivalry in media houses and outlets, ignoring 'ethics' in journalism (Leite & Azevedo, 2017).

Tourism is a very delicate field. International visitors and domestic tourists visit destinations. Smooth news, better project, rather than addressing 'hard news' each one and then, media should allow sufficient time and space for highlighting the tourist locations and travel mode to hit the destinations (Khayrulloevna, 2020). This sort of content is not much accessible from the media, electronic and print media as most networks and newspapers are involved presenting mainly politics. If the media can enter and promote the extremely unexplored areas, the tourist potential of that area rises, thereby raising the revenues of the state. There are also several other fields (Harb et al., 2019).

Media influence in supporting tourism

The media have led to transform tourism as a responsible industry in advocating the following good practises:

- It protects the environment and reduces tourism's adverse social effects.
- It creates larger economic gains and increases the well-being of host areas for local residents.
- It gives beneficial contributions to the survival of environmental and cultural heritage and encourages the richness of the world.
- It offers tourists more enjoyable opportunities through more meaningful links with local people.
- It assists in considering the socioeconomic, environmental and social problems.

Public relations, media and tourism

Public relations are a management activity, that provides to the mutual understanding, communication, recognition and continuity of communication between establishments and their target audiences, and they are the attempts for public or private agency, which is, an individual, organization, or public or private foundation for establishing relationships with groups which are involved in common commerce and for promoting the growth of created relationships. Also

public relations avail aims like proving good news in different circles about a business and its goods and creating a good image of the business (Amin & Priansah, 2019).

Also Rathore et al. (2017), claims that public relations can be seen as an operation which executes activities like making a positive name for the company, spreading the name or logo of the organisation more efficiently, raising sustainability and maintaining longevity. To perform those roles, whereas historically mass media like TV, radio, magazines and newspapers have been utilized, advances in communication technology enable organisations to make regular use of the Internet and channels offering communication and interaction, like social media, in this sense. Since the late 1990s, public relations analysis has gradually regarded Internet media as a tool of public interaction. The usage of the media as a form of public communication has been an increasingly relevant topic for academics and public relations professionals. Nevertheless, several experiments have been carried out to examine the influence of media platforms on public relations (Magno & Cassia, 2018).

All parties within the target mass of organisations have had more voice and been more influential than in the past, along with the growth of internet-based technology, particularly the media. Furthermore, corporations have developed modern options to meet the target audience, to learn their opinions and to improve two-way contact. Media platforms, which enable bidirectional communication and is the focus of this research as a new form of public relations, have also become increasingly relevant for hotel businesses who want to be involved and creative in their advertising campaigns. It should be remembered that the media definition, that is a platform for public relations experts not only to engage with the target audience, but also to improve media relations at the exact period, has the following characteristics to be best presented as a type of media network (Febrina & Halim, 2020).

The ideas in media and public relations which are attempted to be conceptually explained in terms of meanings and examples indicate that they are valuable instruments depending on the assumption that firms that aiming to compete in dynamic markets use them to reach the masses. The usage of media by tourism companies, that have a large portion in the service sector and manufacture tourism goods with an uneducated key characteristic, would help to manage an efficient marketing mechanism as a public relations method by adopting the developments of the moment (Pradhan & Ehnis, 2019).

Tourism as a Key Strand of Sharjah

Transportation and connectivity are faster and more effective as globalisation progresses. This draws the interest of visitors and tourists, and has allowed the business to expand on a global scale. As such, it becomes a future sector which could add to the various countries' optimistic revenues. The tourism sector could therefore be a significant alternate revenue source for the area and could be included in the possibilities for its growth. According to the UN World Tourism Organisation, where Europe driven industry development strongly followed by Africa, Asia and South America, the global tourism industry has made it huge in

previous years. Consequently, the global crisis had a significant effect on the industry's development and progression. Owing to the decline in their buying power, the need and demand of individuals to travel decreased. Though this has had a significant impact on industry growth, countries have been able to rebound from this situation and reap good income from it, and are projected to grow at a slow yet growing rate in the future (Shadab, 2018).

Depending on this situation, the tourism sector could significantly lead to a huge enhancement of Sharjah as an economic area. The sector has numerous opportunities to give and explore, which will aid in the region's growth goals. For the following factors, the tourism sector was chosen to be included in the region's growth programme: The output of this sector to GDP is projected to grow gradually because of the geographical benefits of Sharjah. Study on the sustainable growth of tourism services and amenities, that is one of the conceptual pillars of the enhancement strategy (L'Etang et al., 2007; Robson & Robson, 1996). The increase of the potential energy in this sector consequences in the continuation of its development; the decrease in the tourism capacity of several countries in the area; the shortage of the stability in politics - the preference of other near-regional countries for tourists; the selection of the Sharjah as the representative of Islamic culture. This calls for the development of cultural and conference tourisms; and the low price of enhancing the tourism industry, relative to the high revenue produced by the enhancement of the tourism sector, will be behind the interest in enhancing the sector in order to improve its impact to the GDP. There are various types of tourism that any given country will market, including the following forms of tourism: adventure tourism, cultural tourism, family tourism, ecotourism, sex tourism, and food tourism. It will be wise to inform Sharjah that the area has invested in ecotourism and cultural, because the area is equally rich in those opportunities. Because of the region's rich culture, Sharjah is labelled as the cultural hub of the UAE. In this, the area could spend and make the best of it. Those services should be handled and preserved well and differently packaged in order to better attract tourism and travellers to the area, so that they can give something modern to stakeholders in the area (Feighery, 2017).

Literature Review

An necessary task in any research work is to conduct a comprehensive literature review (Al-Emran et al., 2018; Salloum et al., 2017). The researcher referred to many similar prior studies, depending on the subject of study. Abd Al-samee (2012), pointed to identify the guaranteed success volume of chosen media in attaining their aims. The investigator utilized a variety of techniques to achieve the findings of the analysis, like explanatory, empirical and descriptive techniques to evaluate the information of the questionnaires utilizing SPSS. The method of interpretation explained the findings of the research and the theoretical explanations for presenting advice and guidance for future work. The findings of the study revealed that there was a general outlook towards the use of social media platforms in Egypt, and the whole respondents accepted the concept of utilizing media platforms in tourism marketing because of its several benefits. The research suggested that the efficacy of media sites in tourism marketing should

be improved, including the need for media usage and the need to create a separate division responsible for tourism.

[Doolin \(2002\)](#), targeted to display the media role in hotel booking and build the trust of customers in booking five-star hotels' services through media. The descriptive analytical approach was used in the study and the sample contained of 294 participants. To gather the information of study, questionnaires were distributed. The research has obtained a variety of outcomes, the most significant of which is the existence of confidence in the electronic environment of the electronic world. The findings revealed that the existence of confidence affected the acceptance of the electronic environment about the attitude concerning hotel facilities. In order to be compatible with the electronic environment, the report proposed that hotels should be concerned about the tourism facilities offered to visitors.

A research like [Edwards \(2006\)](#), study found out that the whole marketing plans were important on summative representative 39%, however events/festivals and security/environmental enhancement were assessed extremely great as the most influential marketing strategies on tourists' choice of destination attraction. [Gulbahar & Yildirim \(2015\)](#), researched the present condition of Pietarsaari, containing the whole lodging, transport, events and attractions for tourism services, and revealed that a small town's tourism marketing is not a simple operation. Strong proposals and bringing them to effect would be needed.

[Edwards \(2006\)](#), noted that many marketing programs/strategies and vast quantities of promotional messages are made accessible to inform visitors to make their decision and which place to visit regarding the tourism potential of his study fields. This contain events/carnivals; gift items/wrapping gifts; join me to cross river; cloud paradise; destination events and beautification for safety/environment. Additionally, contact resources for tourism marketing like TV, internet, radio, billboards, handbills, flyers, reviews from relatives and friends, material on the travel agency desk, etc. were considered. Such marketing techniques and marketing engagement methods need occasional assessment in order to assess their degree of impact on the decision of visitors to select a particular visiting destination.

[Huertas \(2008\)](#), focused on evaluating Beijing's marketing materials through content review for foreign and domestic visitors, containing blogs, videos and brochures. The study showed that the latest marketing tactics of Beijing are explained due to the possible discrepancies between foreign and domestic visitors. [Atinafu & Muuz \(2017\)](#), investigated the possible characteristics of the six chosen South Gondar historical places for tourism and examined the complexities of using them for tourists. Then, the study showed that the shortage of coordinated initiative for providing opportunities to travel agencies, tour operating firms, visitor data centres and museums was seen as an obstacle for visitors to use these locations.

[Frechtling \(1987\)](#), study focused on the status of public relations role in Ethiopian government institutions, and he indicated that a lot of activities have been undertaken in the communication job process. However, many of them are subjected to publicity and community affairs; the communication core job process

has its own annual plan subordinated to the strategic plan, but research and evaluation activities are insignificant; there are not familiar with the notion of the formal crises' management and communication which in turn doesn't let them prepare a formal kind of crisis inventory and management plan.

The objectives of paper

The goal of the current study is to accomplish the following:

- Categorizing the effect of the Public Relations, Media departments on tourism industry
- Measuring the impact Public Relations, Media departments on tourism industry

The model of study

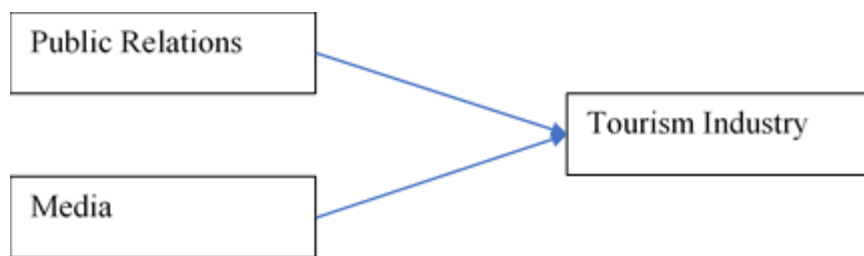


Figure 1: The model of study

Hypothesis 1: Public relations significantly effect tourism industry

Hypothesis 2: Media significantly effect tourism industry

Sample and procedure

Cross-sectional field information was obtained from 180 participants. At first, 310 questionnaires were issued, out of 217 with a 70 percent response ratio were retrieved. We left with 180 useable responses after scanning and sorting out partially or improperly loaded questionnaires.

Results

The findings for the main variables of the sample also indicate high mean values. The mean value of public relations represents 4.99 (S.D = 0.98). Mean value of media represents 4.09 (S.D = 0.56) and mean of tourism industry represents 3.01 (S.D = .93). Two large strong associations between every variable were also observed in the correlation coefficient results (Lin & Huang, 2006; d'Angella & Go, 2009). The findings of the correlation indicate a strong positive association of public relations towards tourism industry ($r = 0.51, p < 0.01$) and media towards tourism industry ($r = 0.38, p < 0.01$). The alpha reliability statistics contained in an appropriate norm of 0.70 and above for the whole constructs show it as an adequate reliability.

Conclusion

Public relations and media are increasing extremely quick. Local and regional associations and companies are represented by multinational public affairs and media firms. Skilled organizations are now moving to make the profession of public relations and media in the UAE, especially in Sharjah more credible, more professional and more effective. As the verdict goes, for enriched economy, community and politics, the media have a civic duty to strengthen the integration of national, local and foreign cultural values. Responsible tourism, in terms of public relations, means cohesive policies to promote certain destinations whose cultural heritage is the major attraction. This suggests greater awareness of tourist destinations, high-quality facilities and thorough segmentation of the aimed population. Responsible tourism, in our point of view, would be the most effective solution, a true incentive to leverage and encourage local goods and services, a market for tourism that can be built in order to increase the positive effects on tourism destinations.

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