

Chapter 8.7

Emerging Trends in Tourism Industry in Oman

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ABSTRACT

Tourism industry is the largest industry world wide and is the main source of economic development of countries like Singapore, Bangkok and Dubai. It is also the main source of income generation for countries like Mauritius, Spain etc. Oman being the second largest country in the Middle East possessing wealth of natural resources has everything to offer to the tourists. It has a long coastline with pristine beaches, beautiful mountains, and world's best deserts with rolling sand dunes. With breath taking Khareef festival of Salalah, Musundam in the Khasab region which is referred to as Norway of Arabia and Bhala with its forts and castles being listed in the UNESCO world heritage monuments, Oman is one among the best ten countries of the world for tourists to travel (International Travel Magazine). This chapter attempts to review the strategic approach adopted for tourism development, gives the SWOT analysis for the tourism industry and discusses the emerging trends of tourism and related sectors like hospitality, travel and aviation, training and education with special reference to Sultanate of Oman.

BACKGROUND

The importance of the tourism system for economic development in Oman has been clearly acknowledged in the development strategies and plans. Despite the recognition of the potential significance of the tourism system for economic development there have been few detailed and

comprehensive studies of the structure, dynamics and potential opportunities of tourism development. Moreover, the research that has appeared tends to be extremely narrow in sectoral and/or spatial focus. This in turn renders it unhelpful in terms of a more general understanding the trends and the need of the strategic approach for tourism management in Oman. In the context of such limitations and in particular the lack of detailed research covering the tourism sector as a whole,

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-4666-0882-5.ch8.7

strategic management of tourism is difficult to undertake.

Purpose of the Project

- To gather relevant data to understand the trends and dynamics of the tourism economy in Oman and the challenges that confront it.
- To provide the basis for an action plan and a set of strategic development interventions to assist tourism service providers, and to maximise the impact of tourism development.

Objectives:

1. Understand the trends and effectiveness of government policy,
2. Identify impact on growth of related business.
3. Gaps in implementation of tourism policy

The core objectives of the research are first, to gather relevant data to understand the trends and dynamics of the tourism of Oman and the challenges those confront it and then to provide the basis for an action plan, and a set of strategic development interventions, to assist tourism service providers, and to maximize the impact of tourism development within Oman.

Questions for Investigation and Research Approach

The research questions to be addressed here are directly related to the above objectives. The research approach and research outputs relate to the core questions of the investigation and the research approach begins from the basis that at the national level a growing body of research has been undertaken on the general issues concerning tourism development in Oman.

The research approach that is used involved several stages of analysis:

- First an outline of the importance of tourism as an economic activity in Oman is provided.
- Second, the current policy frameworks that guide tourism development in Oman are analysed and a review of the domestic tourism structure is made.
- Third, a detailed description and analysis of current tourism trends, with specific attention to international and domestic tourism is considered, a macro-analysis and profile of the tourism economy in Oman is made and an analysis is given of the key features of the most important role-players in the Oman tourism system.
- Fourthly, the fallout of tourism development – namely need of trained manpower leading to creation of educational institutions thereby facilitating the national objective of Omanisation is also discussed.

Data Sources and Methodology

As compared to other economic sectors, such as agriculture, manufacturing or mining for which there is considerable official data at the national level, the tourism sector is distinguished by the poor state of official data collection. It is, therefore, not surprising that there is minimal official information upon which to provide a macro-analysis of the tourism sector. Given this context the first major task of this investigation was to collect and compile relevant data. This information was collected from the information offices of the local authorities and Tourism's web-directories. It has to be noted that the methodology used might have led to certain tourism information or data being over-looked. On the other hand, however, the methodology works on the same basic search behaviour of potential tourists and tourism sector. This data was augmented with survey material collected during March and April 2009.

This chapter also examines how many regions/communities have been able to improve their tour-

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