

# Chapter 42

## Creative Tourist Experience: Role of Destination Management Organizations

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### ABSTRACT

*The chapter explores the role and importance of Destination Management Organizations in managing the delivery of creative tourist experience. The study is divided in two parts whereby the first part adopts a qualitative methodology of exploration in regard to Destination Management Organizations and Creative Tourist Experiences while the second part is a case study of the tourism organizations of the UAE. The role of creativity in managing the total tourist experience is the core theme of the study. The study finds that co-creation of tourist experiences have a lasting memory value. Creative tourist experience can be achieved in the creative-theatre by a combination of designed aesthetics, choreographed activities and co-created souvenirs as the major elements.*

### INTRODUCTION

Holiday at a destination remains etched in one's memory because of the collective impression of several fleeting moments; this happens absorbing the aesthetics, participating in activities created for tourists and the mementos collected during the visit period. Together, these form the tourist experiences. Buhalis (2000) believes that 'Destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers'. To coordinate the offerings of the tourist industries and ensuring smooth delivery of this experience has increasingly become a function of the Destination Management Organizations (DMO).

The study proceeds upon the assumption that creative experiences at a tourist destination are a combination of aesthetics, activities and souvenir shopping. It explores the role of Destination Management

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Organizations in managing the delivery of Aesthetics, Activities and Souvenirs, as creative tourist experiences. As such the study aims to examine the increasingly changing role and functions of DMOs in planning tourism development for creative tourist experiences. United Arab Emirates (UAE) has been taken as a case example to highlight the value attached to visitor experience. This article is divided in two parts wherein the first part deliberates the concept of Destination Management Organizations (DMO) as organized and practiced in most forms and its relationship with the concept of creative tourism while the second part attempts to redefine the role of DMO with the UAE taken as an example.

The study takes a qualitative route to explore DMO structure, role and functions as established and hitherto practiced. This has been possible with extensive review of literature. The study also includes a case-study of the UAE to corroborate the reviewed literature from which it has drawn the conclusions.

## **BACKGROUND**

With more than 4% growth in tourist arrivals annually and 10% contribution in GDP, tourism sector has been identified as one of the main international economic drivers in the twenty-first century (UNWTO, 2016). Considering the sector's contribution to generation of employment opportunities and also to safeguard a destination's art and culture, development of tourism has been a priority for many governments. However, regularizing tourism sector involves more challenges due to involvement of various suppliers catering to the tourist demand. Buhalis (2000) claims that destinations are amalgams of tourism products, offering an integrated experience to consumers. A tourist would consume a variety of tourist products ranging from airlines, ground transportation, hotels, restaurants, information bureaus, tour guides, to shopping and attractions. The integrated experience thus is shaped by multiple experiences which might differ depending on the delivery of the service which in turn is largely affected by the service providers' efforts and abilities to deliver! Owing to this distinctive nature of tourism sector, there has always been a need of coordination amongst these suppliers to deliver standardized service eventually leading to increased level of satisfaction. With several inherent attributes of a tourism destination established, perceiving a management organization is pretty logical that will oversee the variety of functions within a destination. The innate corollary is a tourism destination organization. Several terms have been used to define and describe such organizations which are part of this discussion. Functionally the tourism sector works on its organizations. These organizations have complex interaction within a preconceived framework, often strictly, on a practical level. The tourism sector is a combination of various industries performing a dual role i.e. catering to the local populace along with the tourist. Tourism has become a key sector with ramification in all aspects of nation's life. To foster it and develop it on a scale proportionate to its national importance, as well as to mobilize all available national resources to that end, it seems necessary to centralize the policy making authority within the state which can thus take appropriate measures for creating a suitable framework for the promotion and development of tourism by the various sectors concerned. State's role in tourism includes:

- Coordination,
- Planning,
- Legislation, and
- Regulation.

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