



Eco Tourism and Its Effect on Tourists and Their Behaviours in a Destination: a Case of Dubai

Stephen Gathuru

HTMI, Hotel and Tourism Management Institute, Switzerland

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background Information

Eco-tourism can be defined as tourism with the end goal of reducing the environmental impact tourists have on the ecosystem and way of life (Frederico, 2020). There are several definitions and interpretations on eco-tourism, centred on the effects or lack thereof that tourists have on the environment. Eco-tourism has a noticeable effect on the tourism industry encouraging sustainability and awareness affecting all industries in a country ranging outside of hospitality (Emily, 2019). Dubai has maintained its position as a leading tourism destination being the fourth highest visited destination, with 715 hotels in the city attracting 2.06 million tourists in the first half of 2021 (GMI, 2022). Eco tourism is a rapidly growing sector worldwide with Dubai being no exception, contributing 7% of the global tourism market (Jonathan, 2001). Sustainable tourism plays an important role in eco-tourism and is essential to manage the impact tourism has on the environment with the goal of maintaining the industry for years to come (sustainabletourism.net, 2022). The industry is now encouraging tourists to consider their action whilst at a destination influencing their decisions such as where to stay (Emily, 2019). The United Arab Emirates has taken steps to preserve their natural environment such as protecting 6.02% of the country as a whole (u.ae, 2021). In response to industry changes UAE launched its own eco-tourism project called 'The UAE Natural Wonders' with the goal of increasing awareness of eco-tourism in the country (Ecotourism |

Knowledge | UAE Ministry of Climate Change and Environment, 2022).

1.2 Rationale

Research (Ecotourism - Global tourism - National 4 Geography Revision - BBC Bitesize, 2022) has been done into the benefits and drawbacks of eco-tourisms impact on people. Most of the research on eco-tourism is centred around the impact on a destination as a whole. Anup (2016) highlighted the positive and negative impacts of ecotourism on the economy focusing on the impact on jobs and the governing body amongst other aspects.

Eco-tourism is a rather new concept that has been developing over the past decade however there is a lack of information on its direct effect on the behaviours of tourists once they have arrived at their intended destination. The industry is rapidly growing, valued as high as 181.1 billion dollars in 2019 internationally, therefore an analysis in the behaviours of individual travellers is essential to understand why the worldwide impact is so high (statista.com, 2021). In order to delve into the inner workings of this gap, the author intends to analyse the eco-tourism sector narrowing into factors that affect the actions of tourists and their interactions with the destination. It is essential to dive into this topic to understand the responsibility a tourist has to have when travelling and the effect this has on the decision making process when choosing a destination. It should also prove to be essential to gain an understanding of the knowledge and information tourists attain as a factor of eco-tourism. An understanding of how tourist behaviour is

affected may help ascertain developing tourist needs and allow businesses to cater to these needs with greater effectiveness.

1.3 Aims and objectives

The goal of this research paper is to analyse the effects eco-tourism has on tourist behaviour, in the case of Dubai. The goal of the research will be realised by following the below objectives:

- To analyse the expected outcome of Dubai's ecotourism strategies for tourism
- Delve in to tourist behaviour and analyse the effect ecotourism has on tourists once in a destination
- Investigate the extent of ecotourism in Dubai and identify if there is any correlation with tourist behaviour.

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1 Introduction

Eco-tourism plays an important and growing role in the tourism industry. With the increasing need to understand consumer psychology in order to satisfy needs, tourist behaviour needs to be analysed to provide insight into strategies that can potentially be used. In the case of Dubai, their current standing on eco-tourism needs to be investigated in order to better understand the best way they can move forward analysing the benefits of understanding tourist behaviour.

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is viewed as the future of the hospitality industry due to its conservative nature, aiming to preserve nature and culture for future tourists (Dimitriou, 2016). In the breakdown of this theory the author will attempt to provide a comprehensive review on the concept of ecotourism and Eco tourists. The concept ecotourism was mainly discussed and focused on ever since the backend of the 1980's developing into a centre of conversation in 2002 after the United States declared this year as the International Year of Ecotourism (Weaver and Lawton, 2007). The constantly growing field of ecotourism can be correlated to the expanding interest and conversation about the environment and the effects society has on it (Orams, 1995). Tourism and the environment have always gone hand in hand with several flora and fauna attractions as the main source of attraction for destinations therefore the conservation of these resources are in the interest of both the host

destination and the tourists (Dimitriou, 2016). The discussion of environmental issues is a topic that has been receiving more respect and attention over the years with one of the biggest examples being global warming and the global conversation and efforts taken to combat it. With the increased awareness of environmental impacts, pollution amongst other topics it can be expected that this increased attention will have a layover effect on the tourism industry. The ecotourism industry is expected to see exponential growth, valued at 181.1 billion dollars in 2019 and is forecasted to reach 333.8 billion dollars in 2027 (Vig and Deshmukh, 2021). Ecotourism seems to be the latest trend in the tourism industry as it has several long term benefits for the industry, culture and environment.

Eco tourism has several benefits, one of which is the jobs and employment opportunities that it can present, this increases involvement with the local community and promotes the further awareness of the field and its benefits (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). There has been an increase of tourists travelling for health and wellness with an approach to tourism that focuses on their wellbeing, as an effect of this growing trend tourists destinations have to adapt offering nature centred experiences making this a major sector in the ecotourism sector (Brymer and Lacaze, 2013). The conservation of natural resources in the name of ecotourism does have some domestic repercussions that include disputes from locals as to the rights to these natural resources (Das and Chatterjee, 2015). This goes to show that whilst eco-tourism has several benefits some drawbacks can be observed especially when looking into the social aspect within local communities within the destination. An aspect that needs to be explored within the ecotourism cycle is whilst a destination might take steps to preserve the local culture and environment the tourist facilities can still have detrimental effects on the environment through processes such as transportation and accommodation (Orams, 1995). These are issues that need to be addressed when developing a destination as an ecotourism destination, increasing the responsibility and accountability of tourists and tourism businesses. There are several definitions and interpretations as to what ecotourism is, leading to the conclusion that the concept is still not fully understood however there are some key points that link most research on the matter mostly centred around the preservation of the environment and the awareness of the impacts society has on it (Dimitriou, 2016). There have been several attempts to segment ecotourists which proves to be challenging as the general parameters of ecotourism are not definite indicating that further research is needed on the market (Weaver and

Lawton, 2007). There are still currently several boundaries surrounding ecotourism that need to be overcome however there is a strong base to build off with many destinations implementing it at some level. Eco-tourism is seen to be successful when the environmental and cultural integrity of a host destination is maintained and nurtured for future longevity and prosperity (Weaver, 2001).

2.2.2 Tourist Behaviour

Tourist behaviour is a broad topic that is widely debated and discussed with several different approaches to the topic. (Kock, Josiassen and Assaf, 2018) believe that tourist behaviour is hereditary and can be related to the behaviours of ancestors approaching the behavioural aspect from a more instinctive approach. (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995) approach the topic of tourist behaviour from a cultural aspect centred around nationality having the main effect on tourists where certain stereotypes and traits can be observed. Tourist behaviour can be generally broken down into two aspects, an emic approach and an etic approach focused on the perception of behaviour by either the one practising it or the individual observing (Pearce, 2005). There are several factors that would influence a tourists behaviour closely related to the general psychology of consumer behaviour with a broad range of research and discussion on the matter. The understanding of tourist behaviour can provide an insight into the steps that need to be taken to improve a destination image as well as an understanding of what factors need to be amended to keep up with trends (Huang and Xiao, 2000). An eye opening aspect to delve into is the social cultural aspect of behaviour and the influences this has on a tourist (Huang and Xiao, 2000). Context is an important aspect that many studies leave out, it can provide a much clearer image of what factors influence the behaviour of tourists giving a clearer image of what destinations can do to ensure that they are providing the right services on a case to case basis (Liu and Fan, 2013). When analysing tourist behaviour, one of the first key points to look at is the decision making process. When a consumer is making a decision such as choosing destinations there are factors that influence this including but not limited to previous experiences, personal beliefs and relatable factors such as visa requirements (Komppula and Benmakhlof, 2019). (Liu and Fan, 2013) analysed the effect of factors that would be considered minimal and might be disregarded such as the mobile devices that a tourist uses factoring in the screen size and internet access concluding that these factors play a role in the behaviour of mobile tourists.

There have been several studies done into the recreational aspect of tourist behaviour, mostly all coming to the understanding that there are differences that can be noticed depending on the nationality of the tourist (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995). These nationality differences layover into how a tourist travels, ranging from a western trend to travel individually or a generalised American approach to being in nature preferring a simplistic travel experience in the wilderness (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995). Alongside individual and culturally influenced behaviour the state of the destination will also have a massive effect on how a tourist chooses their intended travel destination. The political and environmental state of a country will have a massive effect on a tourist's decision making process and will also change how a tourists acts once in a destination, a graphic example of this is fear that can be related to a destination through a factor such as terrorism (Kock, Josiassen and Assaf, 2018). A fear factor or general pre-conceived notion of a country is sure to affect the behaviour of tourists, an extreme example being the current political climate in Afghanistan.

Ecotourism has a noticeable effect on tourist behaviour, this can be partially traced back to the information and education that tourists go through when experiencing some form of ecotourism that may either affect their behaviour in the moment or may affect their future behaviour when travelling (Ren, Su, Chang and Wen, 2021). When investigating the impact ecotourism has on tourist behaviour, socio-cultural impacts is an essential aspect to look into for insight as to how tourists interact with culture in an ecotourism context. When delving into the socio-cultural impact of ecotourism it is important to first understand that it is a two way process interacting with the culture of a destination which places the local culture at risk (Weaver, 2001). The longer an Eco tourist stays and interacts with the host culture and individuals within the culture, the deeper the understanding between the two individuals, these interactions accelerate the change in mindset mostly applicable to the host culture (Weaver, 2001).

2.3 Review of empirical research

2.3.1 Ecotourism

Ecotourism is a broad topic covered by several academic writers and researchers however several different opinions and approaches to the topic exist. This author will now explore the difference in the approaches taken by other authors and analyse the context used, highlighting their results. (Weaver and Lawton, 2007) begin their approach by acknowledging the history of ecotourism research which dates back to the late

1980's highlighting key changes that were made over the next few decades. Acknowledging the history and evolution of the research into the field is an aspect that most authors should take, providing an insight into the baseline of the theory and providing a baseline to demonstrate new concepts. (Orams, 1995) begins his research by highlighting an article on ecotourism published in 1976 moving on to call attention to the conservation aspect further digging into the definition of ecotourism. The definition is an aspect that most journals and articles attempt to take on however most acknowledge the variety of valid opinions and interpretations on the matter. The general view of maintaining and nurturing the environment and culture of a host destination is constantly explored with differing approaches to the expansion of the ideas. (Das and Chatterjee, 2015) approach this by underlining the benefits and goals of ecotourism centering a decent portion of the research into the effects had on jobs and the finance in a destination. Research into the effects of ecotourism on the local community and destination as a whole is broad, providing a key bird eye view into the field allowing for gaps to be identified and for further research to be done into these voids that have yet to be explored. The processes used and highlighted so far coincide with the author's research supporting the basis of the topic, essentially using the same building blocks. Exploring the benefits and drawbacks of any topic is an essential factor to gaining a deeper and more complete understanding, weighing the feasibility of a study which is an approach most journals and articles take to some extent. The issues and potential obstacles is an aspect that (Dimitriou, 2016) delves into providing an insightful covering of how social classes in a destination are affected differently, also touching on the issues with implementing ecotourism due to factors such as the privatisation of the industry. Whilst the focus is not centred on the behaviour of Eco tourists there are several ideas that can be linked supporting the topic of this paper either directly or indirectly. There are several case studies in which ecotourism is analysed, ranging the focus from environmental resources and culture preservation. (Khoshtaria and Chachava, 2017) focuses on the environmental aspect of ecotourism analysing mineral water springs, archeological resources and demonstrates the potential benefits ecotourism could have in the Gujarati valley.

2.3.2 Tourist Behaviour

Tourist behaviour is a highly discussed topic with a wide coverage on several aspects of it. It is a highly debated topic with several viewpoints and different opinions. There has not been a general agreement on the factors that affect a tourist's

behaviour however several journals and articles attempt to make this connection. Tourist behaviour has had a close relation with consumer behaviour in attempts to rationalise it, the psychological aspect of it much like most psychological topics is extremely opinionated and is no exception to the back and forth discussion and developments on the topic. It is an aspect that has evolved over time with the availability of new information to link the concept leading to extremely varied developments from initial concepts. (Liu and Fan, 2013) centred their research around the context spectrum, considering factors such as; user context, physical context, social context, time context, user context and computing context. This takes an extremely detailed approach to understanding tourist behaviour by essentially considering all aspects that can affect tourist behaviour with an extremely theoretical and methodological approach through the use of formulas and patterns. Most journals focus on the cultural aspect as the main factor that affects tourist behaviour, using geographical locations and collecting data to generate a generalised idea of what makes a tourist act the way they do. (Pizam and Sussmann, 1995) analyse several nationalities, diving into stereotypes using different countries to show the difference in the way tourists act and behave depending on where they are from and where they are travelling to. A generalisation based on geographical stereotypes is a more simplistic and possibly more relatable approach to analysing the behaviour of tourists showing a contrasting approach to other articles that dive deeper into more innovative aspects showing the development of the theory over time. Behaviour is an aspect that is certain to change from generation to generation and can also change due to influence from factors such as social media. (Kock, Josiassen and Assaf, 2018) approach the topic with a unique viewpoint, focusing their efforts on identifying the root causes for tourists behaviour which they attribute to a more primal instinct that has been inherited from a tourists ancestors. The psychological approach that (Kock, Josiassen and Assaf, 2018) use is based on individual instincts that all tourists would have; evading harm, exploration, affiliation, status and mating. This approach essentially breaks down behaviour to its fundamentals which can serve as a very good basis to base further research on exploring deeper into all aspects and factors that change over time.

2.4 Background to the primary research context

Dubai and the United Arab Emirates is a region well known for its innovative technology and architecture with its main attractions as a tourist destination being man made attractions. Exploring the extent of ecotourism in Dubai

piques interest as it is not known for its natural resources and is not marketed for its cultural experiences. Dubai is located in the Arabian Peninsula where there is an abundance of desert land on which the city is built on top of. Ecotourism has proven to be extremely successful especially in the case of Al Maha which is a resort located in the desert conservation reserve. The land was previously all desert however now has extensive greenery and is creating an ecosystem that is attracting wildlife to the oasis (Santarém and Paiva, 2015). Dubai has taken several steps to promote and practice ecotourism, as a destination it may have a preconceived image due to its immense wealth from use and trade of non-renewable resources such as oil. The wetlands of Ras al Khor is another example of Dubai's successful approach to ecotourism. The blend of man-made attractions and having this wildlife centred park advertised as a sanctuary provides a unique experience for tourists within the city to witness wildlife being fed (Ryan, Ninov and Aziz, 2012). It is important to understand the extent of ecotourism in Dubai and analyse ecotourism in different countries to understand the basis of the effects on tourist behaviour. Before analysing ecotourist behaviour in Dubai it is also essential to first understand who the general tourist going to Dubai is and what the general behaviour is to serve as a base to analyse any changes when bringing ecotourism into the equation. Looking into the general description of who an ecotourist is also plays an important role in this research as this will be the target population that the research depends on. Understanding the characteristics of an ecotourist along with their typical behaviour serves as a good comparison especially in the case of other countries where similar research has been conducted. With an understanding of ecotourism and who an ecotourist is, analysing factors that affect tourist behaviour becomes the logical next step with typical descriptions and definitions as the basis to build upon.

Chapter 3 Methodology

3.1 Research aim and objectives

The aim of this research is to explore the effect and impact of ecotourism on tourist behaviour by analysing secondary data along with a qualitative research approach. The author intends to settle the case of ecotourism's effect on tourist behaviour in Dubai through exploring other similar cases. The goal of the research will be realised by following the below objectives:

- Use an interpretive paradigm approach with the use of secondary data analysis

- Use non-probability sampling techniques to collect relevant and broad data

- Process data with an inductive approach providing the researcher with a fresh and new perspective.

3.2 Research approach

This author intends to take an inductive approach as it reflects the author's viewpoint on life. An inductive approach entails processing information at face value and evaluating the information they have to work with (Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef, 2013). The author attains the freedom to approach existing information and question it in order to improve the quality of research (Corley and Yu, 2020). This author intends to analyse the effect ecotourism has on tourist behaviour by analysing existing examples and developing a possible new approach. An inductive approach provides the opportunity to investigate and use themes from raw data without general constraints allowing the author to create strong links between the objectives and the raw data (Thomas, 2006). The inductive approach can also be referred to as exploratory research; it allows for an in depth analysis and exploration of data identifying several patterns and useful information (Woo, O'Boyle and Spector, 2017).

3.3 Research paradigm

This author will take an interpretive approach as he believes that facts are not fixed in stone and that the context matters focusing on the human aspect (Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef, 2013). The ontological presumptions constitute that information will vary from individual to individual based on there being several layers to go through before an outcome is reached (Hussain, Elyas and Nasseef, 2013). An interpretive research finds meaning and interacts with like-minded researchers in the pursuit of generating meaning from data focusing not on generalising information but instead explores the meaning behind why things are the way they are (Phothongsunan, 2010).

3.4 Case study design

The case study design is descriptive as it aims to gain a deep and comprehensive understanding of how separate case studies can be applied to the case of Dubai (Creswell, Hanson and Morales, 2007). With a descriptive design the author can centre his focus on certain aspects of the samples that are being studied with an additional benefit of generalising data collected from a sample group to the general population (Omair, 2015). A descriptive design focuses on one group and does

not have to have a comparable sample group (Omair, 2015).

3.5 Sampling

For this process we will focus on non-probability sampling to show how ecotourism affects behaviour within the inbound tourist population. The results of the research will not serve as a standard for the whole general population. This form of sampling falls in line with the qualitative approach centred on asking questions that assist broad answers. The population for this sampling and data collection will be inbound tourists who are leaving Dubai as these are tourists who would have interacted with ecotourism if at all and will be the only people capable of answering questions about the impact ecotourism had on them and their behaviour.

3.6 Data collection

The questions will be asked in an interview setting with a set number of questions that all participants will answer. Broad answers are essential in this case as the data that is needed is mainly opinionated and requires a certain level of personal input in the answers to make it as accurate as possible. A snowball sampling approach would be ideal in this case to reach a greater number of individuals. Snowball sampling draws randomly from individuals within a limited population where individuals are asked to name the next participant. Snowball sampling is ideal in terms of finding participants since an Eco tourist cannot be visually identified and also cannot be tracked through any statistics however with snowball sampling it makes it a lot easier to find like minded individuals or individuals who have been through similar experiences.

3.7 Data analysis

Analysis of qualitative data poses a challenge due to the subjective nature of the data collected, organising and structuring the data is a fine science that can be achieved through limited methods. The author will implement a thematic analysis approach to process the data collected. This approach will provide clarity by analysing the patterns and interpretations by focusing on the frequency of recurring opinions and connecting it with the theme of the paper (Alhojailan, 2012). A thematic analysis will allow the author to analyse data from qualitative sources such as tourist attitudes towards ecotourism in Dubai and changes in behaviour due to ecotourism. Coding will be an essential process, providing clarity to the data collected that can then be thematically analysed. Coding organises text in a manner that sifts through a data pool and extracts the necessary information in an organised format that

can then be structured (Auerbach and Silverstein, 2003). After the data is collected, to prepare for analysis coding is an essential cornerstone to providing coherence to the data and begin the transformative process of converting the data into information.

3.8 Trustworthiness in research

Credibility in a qualitative research approach poses a major issue due to the open ended nature of the sampling and data collection. To be credible issues such as triangulation, validity and reliability need to be addressed when gathering data in a proficient manner (Patton, 1999). There is a general belief that the data gathered from qualitative research can not be exactly replicated due to the relationship between the interviewer and participants (Finlay, 2006). This author will mostly use the audit trail process to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. The audit trail process entails vigorous record keeping, meticulous notes on decisions made and why they were made and furthermore involves a non-biased 2nd party auditor to overlook the process (Cutcliffe and McKenna, 2004). This author believes in an audit trail approach as it provides insight into the thought process of the author and allows the opportunity for a second opinion ensuring that the data collection and analysis is as honest as possible.

3.9 Limitations

An evident limitation specific to this research case is a sampling limitation due to the impossibility of identifying an ecotourist or a tourist that has been affected by ecotourism. Due to the nature of the topic several people will have to be approached in order to collect enough data where a trend can be noticed, the budget constraints will be an obstacle that proves to be difficult to overcome due to the sampling requirements. Bias is a limitation closely linked with most qualitative research with no exception in this case. It will prove challenging to avoid bias because of the open ended interview questions and this researchers desire to attain certain answers.

4.0 Ethical issues

Gaining the consent of the local governing body may prove to be an ethical issue. Aside from this avoiding pressuring individuals may prove challenging. Respecting the power imbalance between an interviewer and the participant may also pose an ethical issue that needs to be overcome (Creswell, 2014). In this case where the author is trying to identify the effect that ecotourism is having on an individual's behaviour, an issue that will have to be overcome is asking questions that provide detailed

information without being too invasive. Ecotourism is a form of tourism that tends to cost more and if the industry gains a fully or clearer understanding of it, this may lead to the research being used unethically to extort or take advantage of tourists by businesses and governing bodies in the industry.

Chapter 4: Discussion

4.1 Introduction

(Mazanec, 1983) developed a model to understand the variables that affect tourist behaviour, analysing the correlation between input elements and output behaviours. It is then essential to understand what ecotourism stimulus that Dubai has that can possibly lead to a change in tourist behaviour. Dubai already has a preconceived perception due to the conservative nature of the United Arab Emirates and Muslim destinations in general which would affect tourist behaviour due to the rules and restrictions in place. The level of consideration for ecotourism in Dubai will be investigated and interactions between tourists and these ecotourism factors will be analysed to identify the existence of a correlation. In this chapter, the extent of the correlation between ecotourism and tourist behaviour in Dubai will be explored, considering the current state and any plans to develop this correlation.

4.2 To analyse the expected outcome of Dubai's ecotourism strategies for tourism

The United Arab Emirates is a world leader in terms of the ratio of protected areas per land mass accounting for 14 percent of the total countries land mass (The First Group, n.d.). Dubai is setting a new focus on ecotourism and sustainability moving forward taking it into consideration for most projects moving forward. Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST) is one of the initiatives that the city has implemented to transform themselves into a green and sustainable economy through the use of their sustainable development targets (Giorgadze, 2018). Opened in 2018 the Al Marmoom Desert Conservation Reserve is one of the latest ecotourism projects that Dubai has undertaken and is the most ambitious ecotourism project currently undertaken in the Arabian Peninsula (The First Group, n.d.; United Arab Emirates Ministry of Climate Change & Environment, n.d., p.116). There are currently no worldwide standards to label a location as an ecotourism destination therefore the labelling would be under the jurisdiction of the local government or tourism body with Australia being a great example of labelling and segmenting their tourism sector (Ecotourism Australia, n.d.). This opens the door for Dubai and the UAE to label

themselves as an ecotourism destination and market themselves as such, however, their tourism offerings will need to align with the ecotourism identity which can be achieved with the steps that they are taking. The UNWTO (n.d.) highlights key points for tourism to be considered ecotourism which in summary is centred on nature based tourism, the local cultures in these natural areas, educational aspects, economic benefits and the maintenance of these natural attractions. Dubai meets all of these criteria hence it can be assumed that there is a strong possibility of a future where Dubai markets itself as an ecotourism destination. The United Arab Emirates is developing hundreds of natural sites and investing in resorts surrounding historic and nature sites, they will still develop their conventional tourist attractions but are considering how to add ecotourism activities in order to target new markets (Raouf, 2017). Dubai attracts several million tourists per year hence the need to evaluate their approach to ecotourism due to the impact people have on the natural environment and culture therefore an approach that doesn't focus on the number of tourists as a measure of success is essential (Raouf, 2017).

4.3 Delve in to tourist behaviour and analyse the effect ecotourism has on tourists once in a destination

Tourist behaviour is a phenomenon that has been analysed over time with several approaches to the studies that have been undertaken. Kock, Josiassen and Assaf (2018) approach the analysis of tourist behaviour by tracing its origins, they do this by first taking the motive of a tourist into consideration with factors such as exploration, affiliation, status and mating. When trying to understand why tourists act the way they do, the factors that go into their decision making processes is a key component and has a layover effect as to how a tourist behaves once in a destination. When examining the topic on a micro level a correspondence of several elements can be noticed with multiple stimuli affecting a tourist before observable behaviour can be noticed (Mazanec, 1983). The behaviours associated with ecotourism would be eco friendly, sustainable with emphasis on being environmentally responsible hence these are amongst the main factors that need to be considered when attempting to observe the effect that ecotourism has on behaviour (Ren et al., 2021). According to the research (Liu, Hong and Li, 2013) we can determine that an ecotourism experience will be educational to some extent however, it is essential to have a positively impactful experience attaching emotion and recreation to the package, therefore enhancing the possibility of long term behavioural changes. Environmentally friendly behaviour stems from existing environmental knowledge that a tourist has which could have

been attained through education or previous experiences (Ren et al., 2021). Environmental attitude is also a factor that needs to be considered which is a collection of an individual's pre conceived emotions, beliefs and intentions since a positive attitude towards the environment would have a massive impact on a tourists behaviour and the willingness to change their behaviour (Ren et al., 2021). Behavioural change is a hard thing to achieve for any individual even in an everyday life context therefore it is important to gain an understanding of behavioural change to then apply it to an ecotourism context. Behavioural change is a challenge due to the unfamiliarity of it and is not a smooth process but instead a process that takes time overcoming setbacks which eventually leads to new behaviours and possibly even developing a habit (Call, 2022). Due to the long process of changing behaviour in an ecotourism context it can be assumed that behaviour will not immediately change when interacting with the industry however can spark the mentality to change behaviour over the course of time. Because of the short term nature of tourism interactions an immediate behavioural change would most likely not be noticed however a change in attitude is achievable with long term implications as previously stated.

4.4 Investigate the extent of ecotourism in Dubai and identify if there is any correlation with tourist behaviour

Whilst Dubai has several ecotourism offerings it is not the main attraction or identity of the destination hence the extent of its effect on tourist behaviour is difficult to ascertain due to so many other tourism attractions that the destination has. Tourist behaviour is a cornerstone for the successful development of ecotourism which is a sector that Dubai is focused on hence the need to affect tourist behaviour with their ecotourism facilities (Lee and Jan, 2017). A relationship between the marketing of ecotourism sites along with the regulations and restrictions that these sites have in place and the attitude or behaviour of a tourist has been identified, with a tourist being more likely to take actions such as picking up trash in a protected area (Lee and Jan, 2017). The wetlands of Ras Al Khor is a good example of a tourist destination that is marketed in a way that instals an ecotourism mindset with it being an educational centre that promotes awareness of wetland ecosystems (Ramsar Sites Information Service, n.d.). Based on the findings of Lee and Jan (2017) it can be assumed that the wetlands of Ras Al Khor would have an effect on tourist behaviour due to the protected nature and educational aspect of it. Data suggests that 44 percent of tourists travelling to Dubai consider sustainability an "essential idea that impacts

their behaviour" with 22 percent of tourists identifying as sustainability-conscious travellers (Janjusevic, 2022). Al Maha is a Dubai Desert Conservation Zone that has a unique approach to the ecotourism market, with essential factors such as a desert regeneration initiative (Ryan and Stewart, 2009). Their unique approach ties the luxury accommodation that Dubai is known for attracting a new market to the ecotourism facility and provides a perfect platform to have an effect on tourist behaviour (Ryan and Stewart, 2009). Based on the ecotourism offerings that Dubai has coupled with the basis of affecting tourist behaviour it can be concluded that ecotourism does have a correlation with tourist behaviour.

4.5 Conclusion

Tourist behaviour can be affected by several stimuli in the ecotourism industry and has long lasting effects on the tourist and their future actions. Dubai's ecotourism industry is currently small but has plenty of room to grow and has the necessary sustainable growth plans in place to do so. Tourist behaviour is a key component in sustainable tourism growth hence the need to understand if the current ecotourism offerings that Dubai has is having an effect on behaviour. It can be concluded that focusing on protecting the natural environment and culture with an educational experience that leaves a positive impact on tourists is essential to have an effect on tourist behaviour which Dubai is successfully doing with its current attractions.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Ecotourism is a broad and widely discussed topic that requires a lot of in depth analysis on a case to case basis. It is a rapidly growing sector therefore understanding who an ecotourist is becomes more and more important. There is a lot of information and description on what makes a tourist an ecotourist however understanding their behaviour within a destination provides a more in depth view and understanding of the growing sector. Dubai is a massive tourism market and being a part of an Arab nation it already comes with several factors that affect tourist behaviour however there is minimal research as to how ecotourism affects tourist behaviour. Dubai has very limited ecotourism efforts that they undertake therefore the effect it has on the general tourist population would be extremely minimal. It would be essential for Dubai to undertake this research into ecotourist behaviour since one of the general behaviours that ecotourists have is paying more for products and services that fall under the ecotourism umbrella. Since Dubai and the United Arab Emirates in general is perceived as a major source of non-renewable resources an ecotourism push would

lead to a better public image and could lead to positive impacts on tourist behaviour when in the destination and when considering the destination. Dubai has undertaken very ambitious ecotourism efforts pioneering in some aspects in the middle east proving the attention and priority that they are placing on this growing sector. Dubai has such a variety of attractions and offerings hence the challenge of analysing the effect of a more niche industry such as ecotourism. It can be assumed that the perception of Dubai has a major impact on whether people interact with their ecotourism offerings which they do have in limited variety. The preconceived image of Dubai is that of shopping, a lavish lifestyle and high tech experiences, which are all images very distant from ecotourism. The success that Dubai receives from all its other tourism affairs may draw away attention from their ecotourism attractions which is another reason why analysing how people that interact with these ecotourist facilities behave. Do these tourists still interact with the 'lavish' attractions? Do these tourists travel to Dubai specifically with these ecotourism attractions in mind? Analysing the behaviour of these tourists has the potential to provide key insights as to how Dubai can attract and retain them. Dubai should take steps to market their ecotourism factors a lot more and prioritise the branding of their attractions. A variety of expats live in Dubai comprising most of the population hence educating this population and all those to join in the future could be an essential turning point on getting the word around and increase their ecotourism efforts. Education is a massive aspect in affecting tourist behaviour hence increasing the awareness through tools such as billboards could be a small pivot that gets the conversational ball rolling with the end goal of rebranding the destination image. It is evident that the future of ecotourism in Dubai has a close connection with brand and destination image and this can be understood and possibly achieved by understanding tourist behaviour and using this information to their benefit. A change in destination image is a phenomenon that takes a great deal of time and attention; however an understanding of the effects on tourist behaviour can rush this process somewhat. Once tourist behaviour is analysed Dubai can use this information to develop their product to attract a larger audience and also use this information to develop the perception of tourism in Dubai. There are several aspects that affect tourist behaviour which only becomes more detailed when observing an ecotourist therefore an understanding of this would provide crucial information that can be used to generate more pull factors for the destination. Ecotourism's effect on tourist behaviour is a field that requires a lot more research and can yield several benefits for both destinations and tourists alike.

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