

ORIGINAL ARTICLES

The Role of the Government of Abu Dhabi for Promoting Eco-tourism

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ABSTRACT

The development and encouragement of eco-tourism industries nowadays is no longer a responsibility of the practitioners, but there has been a general trend worldwide towards promoting eco-tourism. This trend is supporting by the policies of all countries and it is keen to emphasis by governments. Each government plays an important role towards development of its potential tourism as an integral part of its strategy, all of which supports eco-tourism industries. Therefore, government's programmes and planning are being co-ordinating to this direction as well as the direction of the preservation of the environment. The eco-tourism area has received the lion's share of encouragement from most countries in order to preserve the natural environment in the world. Since the implementation of tourism plans in the UAE, the eco-tourism has achieved a great progress. The government, therefore, has pushed forward the process of planning a major tourism programmes in the UAE and this is what emphasising in this paper.

Key words:

Introduction

One of the most important factors of the economic successful in the world today is tourism. Tourism industry in general, especially eco-tourism has developed rapidly during the last decade of the last century. This indication has indeed confirmed the continuity of investment's growth in this sector.

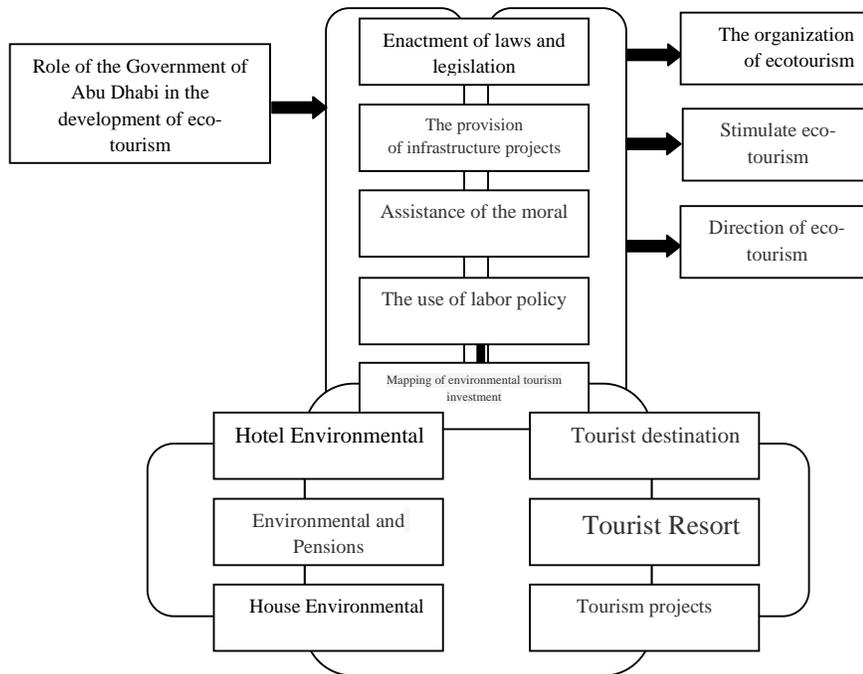
Statistics released by the World Tourism Organization WTO/IATA indicate that the general output from tourism industries worldwide has become a large part of the total national income of various countries that given priority to the tourism industries. The promotion of ecological tourism is certainly the right policy to be pursued by developing countries as a development industry that could help them to diversify economic as well as to stimulate the economic activity especially in a remote and isolated rural areas. However, eco-tourism need to be well managed by experienced staff who are able to control (endurance of environmental capacity) in a case where the limits of possible visitors is exceeding the endurance of nature, thence, the vulnerable environment would be subjected to harmful situation. (Greta S. Goard, *Ecological Politics: Ecofeminists and the Greens*, Temple University Press 1998.)

During the last two and a half decades, the UAE in general and Abu Dhabi in particular, have achieved an active presence and influence on the international tourism map, in comparison with many other countries that preceded it by tens of years in the world of tourism. UAE and its surrounding areas has developed tourism infrastructure and was able to devise unprecedented ways to attract and encourage tourists. The government is making efforts to develop different tourist facilities for the purpose to meet different desires of tourists, including gorgeous beaches in the east and more splendours and virginity in the north, as well as providing advanced services in the field of high-class hotels, high-speed communications, also rapid and convenient transportation.

The Abu Dhabi Government has played an important role in the development of the national tourism economy and has established an eco-tourism industry that promotes the tourism performance that has a positive impact on other economic sectors. This effort is therefore, reflects the role of the Government of Abu Dhabi to promote the Emirate as a unique and special tourist destination. In addition, the Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority has a responsibility to take in charge the various projects and plans related to hotel facilities, airlines, tourism agencies and others, whether governmental or private. (Muhammad. Jassim Mohammed Abdul Karim. 2003)

The Commission has within its scope of works, conduct and manage all events and activities that could support the promotion of tourism in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi. Therefore, it becomes a major contribution to the promotion of tourism record in the global market and indirectly that enable it to meet the needs of tourists who are seeking the privacy and authenticity of destinations.

Hence, the policy of the Government of Abu Dhabi in promoting eco-tourism industry is concentrated clearly towards the development of revenue, cost-effective, making direct or indirect income resulting from the tourism sector. The Government by having ownership of the potential resources, could stimulate the investment in the tourism destinations, eco-tourism resorts as well as providing them with the required core infrastructure projects as shown in the following figure.



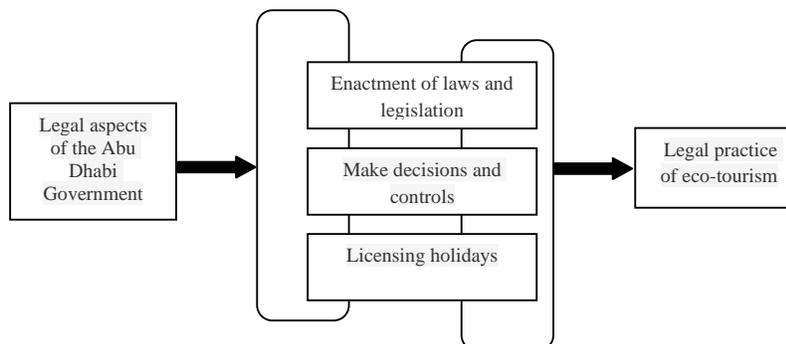
The State has become a major and an essential key in the development of eco-tourism by supporting, stimulating the investment and even its organization and setting rules for implementation. (ELHOUDERI. Mohsen Ahmed. 2005)

The Government of Abu Dhabi is currently exerting its best role in promoting eco-tourism through some main activities, as follows:-

1. *Enactment of laws and legislation that protect the environment*, whereby the Abu Dhabi Government has enacted laws and regulations that govern the practice of tourism activity and the protection of the environment, especially legislation regarding the establishment of nature reserves, the laws, regulations and decisions governing the work of eco-tourism. The Abu Dhabi Government has ensured a package of laws associated with eco-tourism, in order not to leave any legal gaps for corruption and criminalization of assault on the environment, as well as clarifying the rights, duties, and obligations of the different parties practicing eco-tourism. As shown in figure (2) the legal aspects of the Government of Abu Dhabi in influencing the activity of environmental tourism. (United Arab Emirates, 1978. A Comprehensive Survey. Abu Dhabi)

Thus, Abu Dhabi Government with its legislative and administrative rule has managed to ensure law enforcement and its implementation.

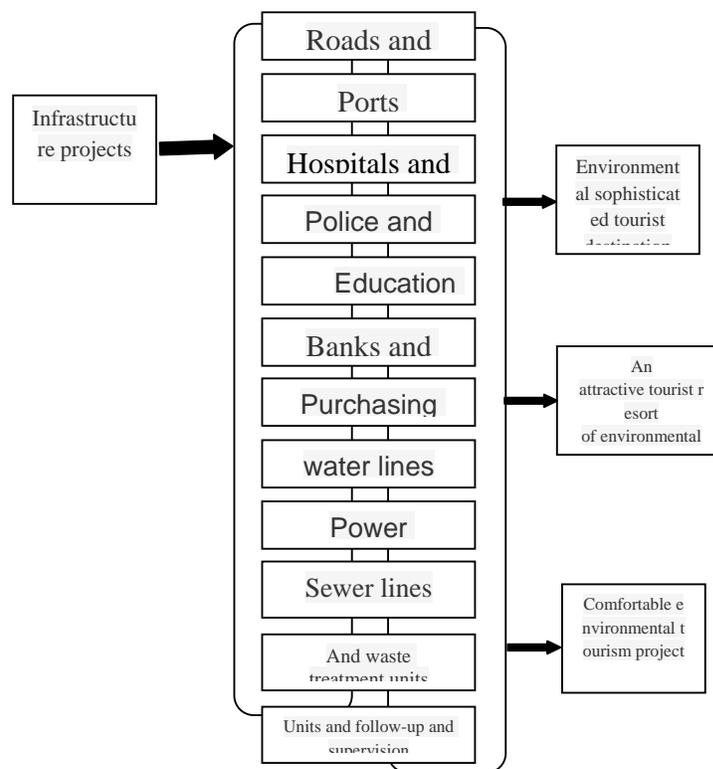
2. *The provision of infrastructure projects*, where infrastructure projects are the most important of which together constitute the absorptive capacity of the area or of the eco-tourism resort as shown in the following figure:



Structural facilities and infrastructure projects are those among projects that are indispensable places of inhabitancy and most demanded by tourists. Without these facilities, it is difficult for tourists to enjoy a comfortable stay. Such facilities is needed by investors who constructs of his own projects; especially those expensive infrastructure projects with limited income. The Government of Abu Dhabi is keen to build and create networks of structural facilities, and provide support for network infrastructure of various projects, which develop the necessary capacity to attract investors and enhance the establishment of their tourism business in the Emirates.

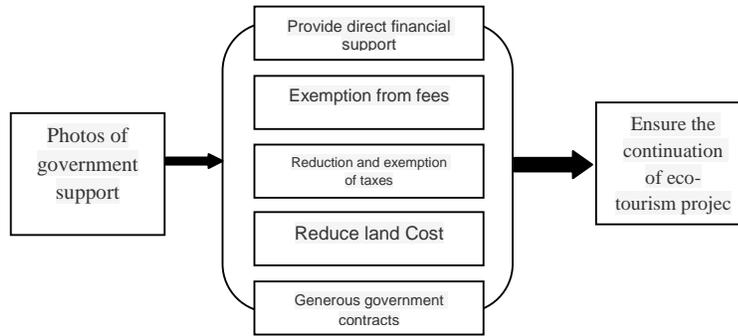
In terms of transportation, the Government has also established networks of highways and internal roads that are useful for the tourists to travel to and from their destinations, as well as supplying tourism destinations with clean water, electricity, and gas. Besides that, the Government has also been given attention in term of establishment of airports and ports as well as services of quality life, for instances; the provision of hospitals, security, education, communications, transportation, workers in the tourism sectors and the geographical region. (ELHOUDERI. Mohsen Ahmed. 2005).

3. *Providing material and moral support for infrastructure projects:* where this support comes from different ways whether directly, implicitly or indirectly, ranging between direct subsidies and various tax exemptions, as illustrated in the following figure:



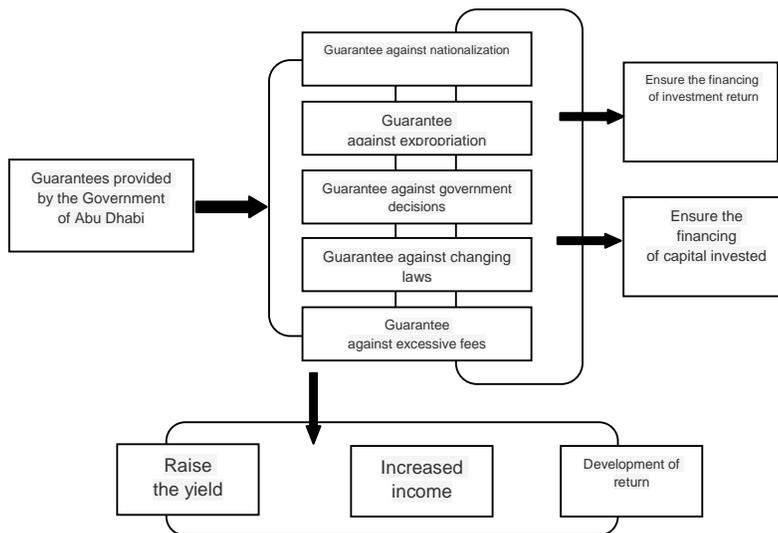
We may notice the contribution of the state and the government in providing full support to ensure the projects' continuity, especially in terms of tax cuts, the abolition of custom's duties, and the exemption of payment of registration fees imposed on the projects of eco-tourism. In addition, the Government has also provided a direct and indirect support whether for existing tourism projects or proposed projects to be implemented in the future, especially facilities related to land such as land prices, costs and governmental service fees. (Tainable Tourism and Eco-tourism, Institute for Policy Studies, 2001).

4. *Using the policies of visible and invisible governmental hands.* Each of the two elements represents major way, mainly to demonstrate the interest of the state and government in projects. It is often used by the government in the provision as a main factor to attract huge local and foreign investors, as shown in the following figure:



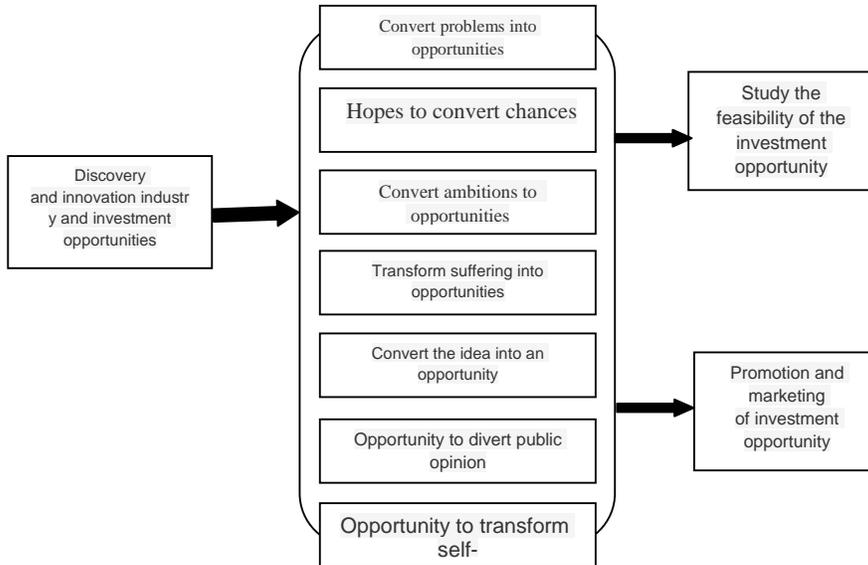
The Abu Dhabi Government is very keen to develop sources of income in order to raise the standard of living, to create job opportunities for younger generations, to increase the return of the investors and to increase the yield of the funds expended in the protection of environmental resorts and its maintenance in ensuring its continuity. In order to achieve these purposes, the Government is applying the policies of visible and invisible hands in the provision of direct and indirect support for tourism projects. Besides that, the Government used a governmental procurement policies and policies of accessing tourism services for workers in the government to any tourism destination by ensuring a minimum number of operational drivers to the destination, to ensure the continuity of the projects following the government’s policy to maintain a minimum level of employment and recruitment (United Arab Emirates, 1978. A Comprehensive Survey. Abu Dhabi).

5. *Provision of sponsorships and governmental guarantees to foreign and local investors.* Foreign and local investors often have concerns regarding political and sovereignty risks or some actions that may be taken out by the Abu Dhabi government, such as private confiscations, nationalizations and the excessive imposition of fees and taxes and other governmental actions that investors need to secure their projects from, such as follows:



Here, we find that the Government of Abu Dhabi is providing the attractive climate for investment by increasing the safety factors for investments. For example; the security and insurance against nationalization and expropriation, providing letters of credit and guarantees to secure bank loans, whether domestic or international obtained by the tourist agencies, or any other investment projects in the eco-tourism sector. It also helps the agencies in the management of foreign currency needed to repay its obligations of the loan. (ELHOUDERI. Mohsen Ahmed. 2005)

6. *Discovery of investment opportunities in general and investment opportunities in eco-tourism in particular:* Where the Emirate of Abu Dhabi has a huge potential, both in the geographical survey and in the field of study and analysis by providing requirements and needs for the candidate and proposed regions to be a home for investment. We may find out more investment opportunities as shown in the following figure:



It is very clear that the State plays an important role in the process of discovery and creation of investment opportunities, through conversion of existing problems, hopes, ambitions, suffering, ideas, opinions, and perspectives to investment opportunities. As well as transforming the self-creative to investment opportunities, then to take advantage - thus can activate the State and the Government's investment through two main aspects:

The first aspect:

Feasibility study on the eco-tourism's investment opportunity.

The second aspect:

The promotion and marketing of investment opportunity that its feasibility has been studied and proven as potential for the state, which means searching and discovery is greater than potential individual investors. The government of Abu Dhabi through its potential, able to survey and discover the suitable places for the purposes of tourism, and hence providing the elements and facilities for the establishment of these projects, the feasibility of its construction and move forward to their implementation and supervision of its implementations. (Ajili, Mohammed Saleh,2000).

7. *Mapping of investment in tourism:* The Abu Dhabi government, in preparing a mapping of investment, applied a non-stop process that it does not limit at the borders of projects itself to be set up and implemented, but included its drawing, identification and development of interrelationships and interdependence between some of these projects and others. The State has organized an investment's exhibition to invite foreign investors to invest in the State. This is one of the most important means of activation and promotion of investment to various countries. (United Arab Emirates, 1978. A Comprehensive Survey. Abu Dhabi).

Conclusion:

The government of Abu Dhabi has succeeded in its policy towards upgrading and promoting eco-tourism industry and has made a great progress in order to support the tourism industry and the promotion of tourism investment in the field of eco-tourism. The following points might be evidence to prove of such claim, as the results and outcome of this paper.

Facilitating and Implementation:

1. Creating a safe and stable environment, politically and economically for tourism.
2. Facilitates and provides appropriate incentives for private sector investment in tourism.
3. Encouraging the workforce to develop cultural tourism.
4. The allocation of adequate financial resources for tourism development.
5. Promoting tourism as a national priority.
6. Facilitates and conducts effective marketing and promotion for the country.

7. Encourage and facilitate foreign investment.

Coordination:

1. Coordination and communication with international organizations, regional and local governments, concerning all aspects of tourism development.
2. Coordination of efforts related to tourism between governmental departments and relevant government institutions.
3. Coordination and communication with non-governmental organizations, labour, society, training institutions, universities and other relevant bodies for the development of the tourism sector.

Planning and Policy-Making:

1. Formulation, monitoring and updating of policy and national strategy for tourism, in cooperation with relevant stakeholders.
2. Integrated plans for the development of national tourism in cooperation with the concerned authorities.

Organization and Supervision:

1. Ensuring the application of integrated environmental management principles in the development proposals, in terms of the use of land to facilitate the sustainable use of natural and cultural resources.
2. Facilitating sustainable development with responsibility for the tourism sector, through the formulation of appropriate development guidelines and regulatory measures
3. Establishment and maintaining standards of facilities and services.

Promotion of Development:

1. Promotion of equitable development for all destinations with the potential, whether the potential is high, medium or marginal
2. Encouraging the participation of local communities in the appropriate levels of tourism activity.
3. Promoting the spread of responsible tourism.
4. Encouraging the development of major tourism projects that will have significant effects on the government.

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