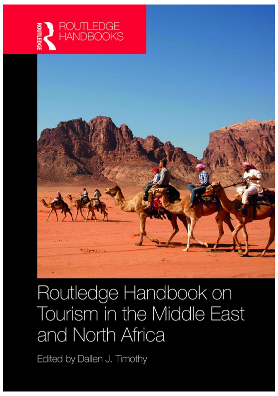

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Shopping, tourism and hyper-development in the Middle East and North Africa

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28

SHOPPING, TOURISM AND HYPER-DEVELOPMENT IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

Esmat Zaidan

Introduction

Tourism has the potential to drive growth and economic diversification in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) (UNWTO 2016). However, maximising the influence of the industry needs increased cooperation within the region, prioritisation of tourism within national agendas, and building resilience and sustainable growth. Despite the challenging global situations the world is facing due to geopolitical conflicts, economic crises, and travel health notices, the tourism industry in MENA continues to thrive, remaining one of the world's fastest growing tourism regions (Kovjanic 2014; UNWTO 2016). Until relatively recently, tourism was only an afterthought in the high-income countries of the Arabian Gulf where economic development and fiscal policy have depended overwhelmingly upon the 'rent' acquired from the exploitation of natural resources, such as hydrocarbons (Becken 2015; Bill & Springborg 1994; Ross 2001). These other so-called 'rentier states' (e.g. the UAE), however, have recently placed tourism at the forefront of their economic development plans with the goal of achieving diversification and fiscal strength while reducing their reliance on fluctuating oil prices (Zaidan 2016a).

One of the preeminent forms of tourism taking greater hold in the Middle East is shopping. As a visitor attraction and revenue-generating activity, shopping is a fundamental element of tourism, and there is a growing literature on its importance in the travel experience (Henderson, Chee, Mun, & Lee 2011; Timothy 2005). Shopping is an essential part of the tourist trip and frequently an influencing factor in destination choice (Moscardo 2004), with a distinction between shopping as the prime goal of travel and where it is a secondary activity (Timothy 2018). Even with less emphasis, shopping is a salient tourist hobby enjoyed universally, and opportunities to get involved in it can improve the appeal of a destination (Butler 1991). A range of factors affect the extent and nature of tourists' commitment to shopping, such as age, gender, socio-economic position and family status (Kozak 2001), all of which have consequences for tourist satisfaction (Henderson et al. 2011). Currency conversion rates, lifestyles, reasons for travel, accommodation and transportation types, and exposure to attitudes towards destination cultures are also influential factors, not to mention the origin of the shopper. The acknowledgement of

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tourists' enthusiasm for shopping and its actual and potential contribution to local and national economies has resulted in its adoption as a 'tourism policy and promotional strategy' (Timothy 2005: 72) in many places; and destination marketing material worldwide mentions the wide-ranging shopping attractions awaiting potential visitors (Henderson et al. 2011).

Although the literature on shopping tourism is growing, much of it is North American and European in orientation (Henderson et al. 2011). There is still much to learn about different parts of the emerging world, particularly amongst the developing and newly developed countries of North Africa and the Middle East where shopping studies are limited (Cohen & Cohen 2015). This chapter explores aspects of shopping and tourism in MENA with specific reference to cities that advertise themselves as retail destinations and the factors that enable their success. The chapter demonstrates how tourism and shopping are closely connected and emphasises how shopping destinations in the Middle East are a suitable setting for exploring this inextricable and dynamic relationship. The emerging shopping–tourism nexus in certain MENA cities is becoming a highly profitable prospect with a large and diverse supply of retailers being developed. These matters are discoursed within the geographic framework of MENA and specifically the cities that are leading international tourist centres where shopping is crucial to the visitor experience.

Shopping as a tourist activity

Shopping is an important leisure activity at home and tourist activity while away from home. The pervasiveness of shopping reflects how consumerism 'pervades modern capitalism' (Bocock 1993: 50). Shopping is an extremely important part of the economy and has several purposes beyond the utilitarian, being a leisure activity that satisfies a variety of psychological and social needs (Henderson et al. 2011; Timothy 2005).

The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2017) estimates that the number of individuals travelling globally more than doubled in the past 20 years, to 1.24 billion in 2016. A significant driver of domestic and international travel has been shopping. While not the principal reason for travel in most cases, shopping is a significant activity for tourists in a destination. The impact of tourist shopping on the development of the retail industry in destinations and, more broadly, to the development of local economies, is strong and the role of retail in increasing the appeal of tourist destinations has been widely acknowledged (McIntyre 2012; Timothy 2005; Zaidan 2016b).

Overall, shopping is valued as the second most vital onsite expenditure after accommodation; however, when it comes to prominent retail destinations (e.g. Hong Kong), shopping tends to be tourists' primary expenditure item (Turner & Reisinger 2001). Retail purchases continue to account for about one-third of total tourist expenditures, but the proportion differs from nation to nation and from one market segment to another (Chang, Yang, & Yu 2006; Jin, Moscardo, & Murphy 2017; Keown 1989; Kim & Littrell 1999, 2001; Wong & Law 2003). For instance, shopping has traditionally comprised approximately half of the total budget of tourists visiting Hong Kong (Mak, Tsang, & Cheung 1999; Wong & Law 2003). Tourists shop for a variety of goods, ranging from handicrafts to luxury items (Park, Reisinger, & Noh 2010) and may even include utilitarian purchases (Timothy 2005). Thus, tourist shopping plays a considerable role in the development of the retail industry in destinations and has a major impact on the economy (Lin & Lin 2006).

Despite extensive recognition that shopping is a key tourist activity and destination attraction, the role of shopping in tourism has only recently started to receive substantial academic attention (Choi, Heo, & Law 2016; Jin et al. 2017; Moscardo 2004; Timothy 2005). Not surprisingly,

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given its economic potential, many destinations have sought to exploit tourists' retail tendencies by developing shopping malls and precincts as tourist attractions and by providing numerous incentives such as tax-free shopping programmes (Butler 1991; Shim & Santos 2014; Timothy & Butler 1995; Zaidan 2016b). Moscardo (2004) examined shopping as a factor in tourist destination choice and how retail areas can develop into prime attractions. She suggested that tourist shopping is a multidimensional phenomenon that should receive more attention by researchers. Moscardo concluded that traditional tourists' consumption concentrated on particular goods and services (hotels, restaurants, cultural or leisure and entertainment offers), while modern tourists' expenditures reflect high purchasing power, focused on broader goods, such as fashion, crafts or design.

For tourists, shopping tends to take on a more leisurely aura compared to shopping at home. Foreign customers often purchase more items and spend more per item than domestic customers do when offered the same retail environment (UNWTO 2014). Timothy (2005: 11) added, 'consumption is not just about products. It is about consuming places, spaces and time', which is inherent in the definition of tourism. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO 2014: 13) defines shopping tourism as 'a contemporary form of tourism fostered by individuals for whom purchasing goods outside of their usual environment is a determining factor in their decision to travel'. This exemplifies the notion that shopping is becoming an increasingly salient motivation for travel and marker of destination attractiveness.

This has resulted in an increasing number of destinations focusing on shopping and providing retail opportunities. In their marketing efforts, many destinations have come to emphasise their retail services as they realise that many tourists consider unique shopping experiences when selecting their holiday destinations. Travellers nowadays tend to focus on what they can do rather than on what they can see. Accordingly, whether cities can become destinations of choice relies significantly today on the quality of their retail offerings (UNWTO 2014).

Urban change, retail and tourism development in the Middle East

The exponential physical growth of cities in several hubs, such as Dubai, raises a plethora of issues pertaining to local marketplaces and the development of urban landscapes and tourism. In most cases, this Westernised approach to urban development and tourism does not consider local environments, human scales, cultural values, or the historical urban fabric, as the call for 'iconic high-rise buildings' tends to ignore the fundamental conditions of producing sustainable structures and comfortable living spaces (Ogaily 2015). Since the 1970s, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries have seen immense urban population growth. Because of this, there has been considerable pressure to transform the region's cities rapidly by using imported Western technology and designs. Up until then, urban transitions had occurred much more slowly, allowing cultural values and identities to adapt to change and to be conserved and reinforced during the development process. However, since the 1990s, and particularly in the GCC countries, the normative transitional phase was superseded as speed, abundance and quantity drove development. Consequently, modern, world-class skylines appeared incongruously in traditionally conservative areas.

The 1930s saw the unconventional expansion of culturally and traditionally conservative areas into extraordinary cities based on blueprints of wide highways and roads with unusually large plot sizes, starting an era of major urban and social transformation. The following few decades, especially the 1950s and 1960s, brought about major structural changes promoted by governments and famous architects and based on Western styles. The result has been a rapid growth in international-style buildings and tourism-related infrastructure (e.g. retail outlets,

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large-scale shopping malls, hotels, amusement parks, and event and entertainment venues) superimposed upon very traditional environments (Stephenson 2014). The new urbanscapes had little to no connection with traditional Arab cultural landscapes.

Indeed, urban development is closely aligned with retail development. Trending growth in hotel, leisureplex and mall construction is directly linked to growing trends in tourism. Waterfront development in the form of urban gentrification and construction of new waterfronts through land reclamation are part of this new urbanscape development. Waterfront renewal and urban growth in general in the modern world are intrinsically connected to growing leisure opportunities, including recreational shopping.

The influence of shopping environments on retail experiences and purchase decision-making has been well studied (Michon, Chebat, & Turley 2005; Wakefield & Blodgett 2016). MENA's shopping environments, which range from high-end malls to street markets and beaches served by mobile vendors, also affect shopping experiences and decision-making. Shopping centres have undergone major transformations in their forms and functions during the past three decades. They have gone from being boxy, generic establishments containing a random collection of retailers to now having more distinctive personalities, appealing designs and controlled tenants. Perhaps the most prevalent change has been from purely non-descript shopping venues to malls becoming mixed environments replete with recreational facilities, entertainment complexes, and lodging under one roof, oftentimes with a specific underlying theme (Nelson 1998; Simmons 1991; Vester 1996). While this experiment in 'shoppertainment' was pioneered in North America (Timothy 2005), related changes are occurring throughout the world, nowhere more evident than in MENA, especially in the Gulf States.

Many companies have resorted to integrating hotels and malls, especially in the Gulf States, to exploit the booming shopping tourism sector (Shankman 2012). Some hotels in Saudi Arabia and the UAE have also begun offering multi-mall shopping tours. Lodging establishments in Dubai achieve a nearly 90 per cent occupancy rate during shopping festivals, which attract millions of tourists annually (DTCM 2016).

Parallel to these developments is a boom of large-scale projects that are fundamentally reshaping tourism landscapes across parts of the Middle East (Steiner 2010). For instance, in Dubai, the construction of iconic hotels such as the Burj al Arab and the Palms, a fabricated island network designed to resemble a palm tree, have come to represent Dubai as a destination. The proliferation of shopping malls and the remarkable design of buildings complement these efforts. Due to their striking scale, these projects have evolved and come to define the touristic image of numerous cities, areas and countries in the Middle East (Table 28.1).

Tourists are enticed by such venues and share the spaces with residents, although they may use them in contrasting ways (Snepenger, Murphy, O'Connell, & Gregg 2003). Commentators have cautioned about focusing too heavily on tourists while neglecting the cultivation of a loyal local customer base (Henderson et al. 2011). Overwhelmingly luxurious in style and iconic in design, new hotels complement the large-scale landscaped waterfront developments and the restructuring of tourism spaces throughout the Gulf countries (Steiner 2010). These projects along with skyscrapers such as the Burj Khalifa (currently the tallest building in the world), shopping malls such as Qatar Mall in Doha, the Ibn Battuta Mall (a retail outlet designed in various 'traditional' oriental architecture styles), the Dubai Mall (with 450,000 m2 gross leasable area, or GLA) and the recently planned Mall of Arabia (which will be the largest shopping mall in the world with 600,000 m2 GLA), and leisure and fun projects such as the Ski Dubai hall (which offers a 400 metre ski slope in a desert environment) are increasingly shaping the international image of Dubai and the UAE. All of these integrated tourist resorts, iconic buildings,

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Table 28.1 A selection of current waterfront development projects in the Middle East

Name	*Country*	*Estimated investment cost (€)*	*Facts*
The Pearl	Qatar	2.0 bn	400 ha; 8000 residential units; 3 hotels, 4 marinas; 60,000 m² retail
Bahrain Bay	Bahrain	2.5 bn	Business, retail and residential areas, yacht club, hotels
Two Seas Islands	Bahrain	2.5 bn	1100 ha; residential clusters; luxury hotels; schools; hospitals; retail
The Wave	Oman	3.0 bn	7 km beachfront; 200 ha; 18-hole golf course; marina; hotels; villas; apartments
Palm Islands	UAE (Dubai)	100.8 bn	Two man-made islands in the shape of palm trees with a beach front of 120 km; 5000 villas; 3600 apartments; 100 hotels; 4 marinas; theme parks; restaurants; shopping malls; sports facilities
The World	UAE (Dubai)	11.0 bn	300 Islands in the shape of the world
Waterfront Dubai	UAE (Dubai)	Not specified	World's largest waterfront project with 81 million m² beachfront; mixed use destination encompassing
Saadiyat Island	UAE (Abu Dhabi)	21.0 bn	3 marinas; 29 hotels; 8,000 private villas; 38,000 apartments; 2 golf courses; various museums, including branches of the Louvre and the Guggenheim; 1 concert hall; various galleries

Source: Steiner (2010).

massive shopping malls, leisure and sport facilities, and waterfront projects have become tourist destinations and attractions in their own right.

The recent phenomenon of integrating shopping and entertainment complexes has been used to create a universal retail experience, especially in popular tourist destinations. This innovative trend has been dubbed 'retailtainment' (Stephenson 2014) or 'shoppertainment' (Timothy 2005) and is derived from the ubiquitous shopping environments of several tourist havens in MENA, specifically Dubai. Retailtainment and shoppertainment reflect the new trend of combining retail and entertainment into a single venue, and is widespread in Dubai. Malls are no longer only a shopping venue, but also an entertainment complex and total holiday destination in some cases.

While the number of retail centres, malls, leisure and entertainment complexes, iconic buildings, and waterfront projects continue to grow across the Arab world, these projects increasingly lack spatial, historical and social embeddedness. Rather, architectural and interior design styles are eclectically combined and may be incongruous with traditional architecture and urban forms. They often showcase architectural features and forms from other building styles and cultural and historical contexts that have minor practical significance to the functionality of the building (Steiner 2010). The Balbaa Hotel in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt, is constructed in an exaggerated and fantastical 'Pharaonic' style, combining large papyrus columns with Asian-style bamboo huts. The Royal Mirage hotel in Dubai merges Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian and Gulf

Arab architecture and interior design. These eclectic blends can be viewed as an 'orientalisation of the Orient' (Al-Hamarneh 2006; Steiner 2010) in an effort to accentuate the exotic, orientalist image of the Arab world. In comparison, a shopping mall like the Mall of the Emirates in Dubai, the fourth largest shopping centre in the world, includes an indoor ski hall that resembles materialised paradoxes of hyperreality (Henderson et al. 2011). The integration of shopping with snow skiing in a desert society does not reflect an expressed 'genuineness' but offers a new hyperreal experience of the Orient that is clean, calculable, reliable and streamlined. Here, the hyperreal Orient has been transformed into a complete commodity for tourism, reflecting the sentiment of Henderson and her colleagues (2011) that in the Arab world, a lot must change for everything to remain the same.

Dubai—the shopping haven of the Middle East

Dubai is well recognised globally as the shopping haven of MENA (Alhosani & Zaidan 2014; Sharpley 2008). Shopping centres in Dubai are not just simple venues to purchase products but are much more than that (Zaidan 2016b). For instance, the Dubai Mall, the world's largest shopping centre spanning over 12 million square feet, has an Olympic-size ice rink and an indoor aquarium. The Mall of the Emirates accommodates bars and hotels, as well as an indoor ski slope with artificial snow (Stephenson, Russell, & Edgar 2010). Horner and Swarbrooke (2005: 110) note that Dubai, as a shopping destination, has 'pioneered a new, almost post-modern, style of recreational tourism incorporating entertainment, shopping, and strikingly designed luxury hotels'. Dubai, similar to Las Vegas and Honolulu, has become a critical shopping zone to which many tourists travel to capture the shopping experience for themselves. Dubai offers a wide range of luxury retail services (Anwar & Sohail 2004), trailing only slightly behind London in number of retailers. Tourist shopping opportunities have spread beyond the malls to include outdoor shopping districts, official retail shops, luxurious cruise liners and hotels, airports and famous shopping festivals. All international brands can be found in Dubai's 95-plus shopping centres and major retail outlets. The Dubai Mall is popularly known to house every international fashion brand, and is soon expected to emerge as an international fashion capital thanks to the 440,000 square feet of fashion space. As part of the city's growing commercial landscape, Dubai has developed a year-round programme of shopping festivals, such as the Dubai Shopping Festival (DSF) and Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS) (Stephenson et al. 2010).

The growth of self-contained and gated corporate parks, residential communities, and giant multipurpose shopping malls may be described as a source of mega-physical 'damming'. In fact, these three types of projects are increasingly merging into enormous developments that combine residential, entertainment, retail and tourism functions. These projects may be called, collectively, 'late capitalist phalansteries' because of their 'symbolism of size, interiority or self-sustainability, and hybridity' (Kanna 2005: 66).

Airports are unconventional shopping environments whose customers are largely transit travellers and other tourists, at least in the departure lounges where retailers exploit passengers' spare time and boredom (Choi et al. 2016; Chung 2015; Timothy 2005). Major airports are no longer defined simply as travel hubs, but are also venues for shopping that compete with city centres and one another. Numerous international airports run intensive advertising campaigns and feature prominent shopping facilities. In MENA, Dubai International Airport stands out amongst airports in this regard. Airport retail revenues rely heavily on duty-free shopping, which is estimated to comprise approximately 30 per cent of all spending by travellers (Henderson et al. 2011). Such shopping activity tends to focus on high-end brands, has its own pricing system, caters to a captive audience and is contingent on special taxation rules.

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Established in 1983, Dubai Duty Free generated sales of US$20 million in its first year and has matured into one of the largest travel retail operators with worldwide sales of US$1.85 billion in 2016. Currently employing some 6,000 workers, the company has consistently raised the bar for airport retailing, and it continues to grow. Dubai Duty Free currently operates over 35,400 square metres of retail space at Dubai International Airport and 2,500 metres at Al Maktoum International, which is expected to grow in conjunction with the immense development plans of Dubai South and will ultimately cover some 80,000 square metres of retail space (Dubai Duty Free 2017).

Dubai has innovatively created a unique combination of shopping and entertainment to revolutionise a universal shopping experience that appeals to volumes of global customers (Zaidan 2015). It is one of the only places where tourists can swim with dolphins and sharks, while remaining close to the most popular international brand retail outlets. Consumers in Dubai can wander around traditional Arabian markets and browse through spices and gold the same way people have done for centuries, and then head for the modern, world-renowned fashion district in downtown Dubai. The 'retailtainment' experience of Dubai is unique in the world and continues to attract tourists from all over the globe (Zaidan, Taillon, & Lee 2016). This is especially so during the peak season when Dubai hosts its shopping festivals. Apart from its unprecedented shopping experiences, the malls in Dubai also provide a wide range of recreational opportunities.

On most sightseeing tours of Dubai, the malls are the main attraction. Named after the famous Arab explorer, the Ibn Battuta Mall has country-themed sections representing Andalucia, China and Egypt. Tourists can also view the Egyptian pyramids at the Wafi Mall, stroll through the Italian village at Mercarto Mall, and see the largest Chinese-based market outside China at DragonMart, which is shaped like a dragon. The Mall of the Emirates enables tourists to watch Gentoo and King Penguins or enjoy a zip line ride down the snowy bank of Ski Dubai inside the mall.

Tourists and other shoppers visit local *souqs* (markets) to experience traditional Arab marketplaces. Two famous marketplaces are the Souq Al Bahar and the Madinat Souq, which aim to conserve the traditional souq heritage only steps away from five-star hotels and eateries. Tourists can walk through the famous Gold Souq or stroll through the Spice Souq to enjoy the tastes and fragrances of the Middle East.

In contrast to the local experience, tourists can visit Global Village where over 65 countries and their native products are represented in luxurious pavilions. Products such as Iranian carpets, Yemeni honey, African wood pots and Thai dried fruits are amongst the most popular commodities.

Qatar—an emerging shopping destination

Like Dubai and some other UAE locales, Qatar is becoming a key venue of world-class facilities, aesthetic buildings, entertainment complexes and diverse cultural activities. The State of Qatar began focusing on tourism in 1989; however, not until recently has it become a major destination. It is becoming increasingly known as an emerging destination for leisure and business tourism. The small peninsula boasts a coastal area of more than 700 kilometres with several areas having shallow enough waters for tourists to enjoy. In addition, the country is home to several islands.

Qatar shot to fame after it successfully bid and won the rights to host the World Cup in 2022, which cemented its spot in the sport tourism sector. The country is up to date with the latest technology, including 12 air-conditioned stadiums, which will harness solar energy to provide the electricity for each stadium's operations. When the stadiums are not in use, the harnessed power will be transferred to the national grid. This is Qatar's initiative to reduce its carbon footprint while maintaining carbon-neutrality. To prepare for the upcoming World Cup, Qatar's government has funded several high-end projects to expand its social and tourism infrastructure, in addition to constructing new cultural and event venues. A larger number of world-class four- and five-star hotels and leisure facilities have been included in the bid to attract global visitors, helping to place Qatar at the centre of international sports. In the meantime, regional tourists from the Gulf States and other Arab countries are attracted by the implementation of new festivals and entertainment opportunities. Up to the end of 2011, US$25 billion had already been invested, according to Ahmed Abdullah Al Nuaimi, the chairman of the Qatar Tourism Authority. A further US$11 billion investment had been secured to develop and construct a new international airport to accommodate up to 50 million passengers annually, alongside another massive investment of US$5.5 billion for a mega-seaport to facilitate cruise ships and offshore residential facilities. Qatar currently has approximately 30,000 rooms in a wide range of world-renowned hotel and residential properties.

Like the UAE, Qatar is a major shopping destination in the Middle East. It sports traditional marketplaces, such as Souq Waqif, which has undergone huge renovations to preserve cultural and traditional architectural values. Boasting authentic cafés and restaurants, antique shops, craft vendors, and textile and metal merchants, Souq Waqif remains an extremely favourable tourist attraction (Adham 2008). It is built over an area of 20,000 square metres and houses over 1,200 shops, which sell a wide array of products. It sees over 7,000 visitors each day, with figures skyrocketing as high as 20,000 during busy weekends. Apart from Souq Waqif, there are several other textile and gold souqs that offer items including clothes, fragrances, shoes, household goods and carpets at unbeatable prices, especially on Thursdays and Fridays.

There are also several modern shopping complexes in Doha, such as the new Mall of Qatar and Al Hazem Mall, alongside the classic City Centre Doha, Landmark Mall, and Mall of Villagio, which is based on an Italian theme and provides Venetian-style canals which can be travelled through the mall in a gondola. The Mall of Qatar, which was inaugurated in 2017, covers a 500,000 square metre area with a US$1.4 billion price tag. This mall sports 500 shops, a five-star hotel, an indoor amusement park for children and an oasis area with restaurants, fountains and live entertainment. Doha Festival City was also inaugurated in 2017, and is located 1 kilometres north of downtown Doha. It spans 477,837 square metres and includes an IKEA store, an entertainment park and two major hotels. The complex provides over 400 shops and services, alongside restaurants featuring multinational cuisines, an Angry Birds theme park, a snow park, and an F1 simulator. The cost of the project was approximately US$1.7 billion.

Doha also saw a rise of GCC visitors by nearly 40 per cent during the first half of 2017, a result of Qatar's policies easing access by GCC citizens. This statistic is forecasted to rise further due to a six-week festival planned to run after the Islamic month of Ramadan, until Eid al Adha, in Doha Park. Spanning over 30,000 acres of open land close to the Doha Exhibition Centre, the festival includes over 100 entertainment events, amusement centres, shopping areas, restaurants, internationally known circuses, an electronic video gaming arena, theatrical productions, art exhibitions, and sporting contests and prizes.

The 2006 Asian Games torch stands as a monument to the success of Qatar's sporting ambitions. Lifestyle-based projects are complex to implement as they present a difficult stakeholder environment for the project teams. 'When developing a traditional mall, you have multiple users with their own agendas, but they are all retail-, dining- and entertainment-driven,' says Karen M. Scott (cited in Burba 2016: 12), senior project manager, Skye Group, Orlando,

9781138651920_pi-386.indd 372 24-Sep-18 7:02:26 PM

Florida, US. The primary niche of Skye Group is managing shopping centre projects and coordinating tenants. 'Mixed-use projects are more complicated because all the uses have different requirements. They do not always easily coexist.' The complications are visible in several ways, such as nearby residents who want a quiet atmosphere near their residences; however, some lifestyle centres promote live music to attract customers, which is contradictory to residents' desires.

Qatar's policymakers and leaders have identified and stressed the need for a highly developed and diversified economy capable of meeting the needs of, and establishing a high standard of living for, current and future generations (General Secretariat for Development Planning 2008). Tourism plays a key role in Qatar's pursuit of achieving a highly competitive and diversified economy. As a result, the Emir of Qatar announced the Qatar National Tourism Strategy 2030 with the aim of developing the country's tourism industry. Since the strategy was put into motion, various shopping campaigns have been launched to provide unique retail experiences for tourists and residents. Held annually, the Summer Festival is a major attraction with live shows and concerts, shopping promotions and raffle draws in several malls. The Qatar Summer Festival has proven to be a successful shopping campaign launched by the Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA), with an estimated contribution of QAR 630 million to the economy in its third year alone (Qatar Tourism Authority 2017). Another successful campaign launched by the QTA to boost shopping and tourism is the Shop Qatar festival. Designed to offer the best shopping and entertainment experiences for tourists and residents, the inaugural 2017 Shop Qatar festival generated about QAR 1.06 billion (Qatar Tourism Authority 2017).

Other shopping contexts

Mega-malls, gold souqs and shopping festivals are not the only retail contexts of interest to tourists in the Middle East, even though they dominate the GCC region. Tourists look for a variety of merchandise, ranging from luxury items to handicrafts, and they are not always seeking to be surrounded by hyperreal urban landscapes. Handicrafts are an important source of income for local artists, and they are an important tourism resource as they increase the retail appeal of the destination in the eyes of the tourists (Kozak & Baloglu 2011; Swanson & Timothy 2012). In addition, handicrafts comprise a vital part of the tourist experience as they often signify the traditions and cultures of indigenous populations. The Middle East region is blessed with a variety of handicrafts that play a key role in offering a touch of culture to curious tourists. This is important, as culture plays a vital part in displaying a positive image of the destination (Al Refaie, Ko, & Li 2012).

A good example of this situation is Jordan, which is rich in cultural heritage with historical sites, festivals, performances and handicrafts. Tourism is an important part of Jordan's economy, comprising 14 per cent of the country's GDP (Mustafa 2011). The handicrafts sector in Jordan is diverse with products such as handmade glass, mosaics, woodcarvings, pottery and ceramics leading the craft market (Abuamoud, Libbin, Green, & Al Rousan 2014; Mustafa 2011, 2014). Handicrafts in Jordan generate approximately 30 million Jordanian Dinars every year (Qattan 2009).

Turkey also has a strong and diverse handicrafts sector that appeals to international tourists. The handicrafts industry in Turkey consists of traditional handicrafts such as ceramics, embroidery, carpet-making, rug-making, cloth-weaving and woodwork (Traditional Arts and Crafts n.d.). Tourists in Turkey spend generously on Turkish handicrafts, especially on carpets and rugs with a total spending of US$46 million between the months of January and June in 2017 (Daily Sabah 2017). Empirical research shows how these handicrafts are an important part of the

Turkish experience for foreign visitors and how they contribute to tourists' overall satisfaction (Tosun, Temizkan, Timothy, & Fyall 2007).

Religion has been and continues to be a significant motivator for travel to the Middle East (Egresi 2012; Stausberg 2011). Religious tourism is big business with an estimated value of US$18 billion and an annual market of 300 million dedicated travellers (Tourism and More 2014). In addition, religious tourism is less prone to fluctuations in demand incurred by unstable economic and political conditions (Collins-Kreiner, Kliot, Mansfeld, & Sagi 2006; Tourism and More 2014). Shopping plays a key role in pilgrimage tourism experiences in the Middle East. A prime example of this is Palestine, which has important historical significance for Christians, Jews and Muslims in Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Hebron and Jericho (Abahre & Suleiman 2016). Bethlehem, which is believed to be the birthplace of Jesus, attracts more than 80 per cent of tourists who come to visit the Palestinian territories (Rabinowitz 2010). Around Christmas time, Christian pilgrims from all around the world spend generously on olivewood carvings—the most profitable tourist product in Bethlehem (Bethlehem Christian Families 2017).

The streets of Bethlehem and Old Jerusalem are lined with handicraft vendors selling a wide variety of locally produced and imported products. What the majority of these products have in common is their focus on the life of Jesus, but they also depict biblical scenes and images of the Holy Land more broadly. Outside of Palestine and Israel, Holy Land Christian tours frequently include Egypt and Jordan on their itineraries, and Christian-themed tours of Turkey are becoming more popular. Wherever Christian tours circulate, vendors have set up shop, selling olivewood carvings and other regional crafts that allow spiritual visitors to take home a physical reminder of their sacred experience. These vendors and the crafts they sell, especially in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, are prominent fixtures in those cities. They have become, through the years and generations, an integral part of the physical urban form and a striking part of the religious tourism landscape.

Conclusion

Postmodern development may be a plausible explanation for the success of new shopping tourism destinations in the Middle East owing to conditions of hyperreality in urban design and related shopping landscapes. The total simulation of various realities is a basis for their attractiveness, and these simulations ideally fit postmodern consumers' demands and expectations in hyper-McDisneyised ways (Ritzer & Liska 1997). Postmodern hyperreality's economic value is based on places' value as shopping capitals in a global race for recognition and retail consumers. Official tourism marketing and development strategies in some MENA destinations recognise the positive economic influence of shopping, which plays a vital part in future growth strategies. Shopping 'paradises' within MENA possess both weaknesses and strengths, and the tourism authorities in retail destinations should consider both perspectives as the question of global competitiveness in tourism becomes more critical.

Shopping and tourism are unmistakably linked. Retail destinations in MENA are an interesting and suitable setting for investigating this close and dynamic relationship. Official marketing and development strategies point to the increasingly important role of shopping-based tourism, in many forms, in the broader goals of economic development. As cities in the Middle East continue to grow, and as economic development continues to subsume tourism, shopping will remain a major feature to attract international tourists and an ancillary activity to occupy those who may be visiting for other reasons.

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