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Communication Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Environmental Tourism in the United Arab Emirates

"A case study"

Fakhrah Abdullah Alblooshi(1)

Thouraya Snoussi(2)

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Abstract:

This paper aims to identify the communication strategies for promoting sustainable environmental Tourism in the Arab Region, specifically the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The importance of promoting environmental tourism and how to deal with it, stems from the presence of negative aspects that affect environmental sites as well as the influx of many tourists to these environmental tourist sites and their lack of commitment to preserving the tourist attraction, such as leaving waste and damaging property. A special focus was put on the case of the United Arab Emirates UAE. The research is centered on the following question: What are the communication strategies for promoting ecotourism? It is considered an access point for implementing modern strategies to keep pace with the growing interest in promoting sustainable eco-tourism. To answer this problem, this paper included an overview based on previous research that addressed the topic in context of the Arad world in general and within the context of the United Arab Emirates, which gives priority to sustainable tourism strategies. This paper provides an overview based on previous research addressing the topic in an Arab context. Sustainable tourism strategies prioritize the

(1) College of Communication - University of Sharjah (Sharjah - U.A.E.)
u20104227@sharjah.ac.ae

(2) College of Communication - University of Sharjah (Sharjah - U.A.E.)

conservation of environmental resources and the promotion of responsible travel, in collaboration with the local communities, to accelerate the adoption of ecotourism strategies. Sustainable tourism includes practices such as staying in environmentally friendly places, making optimal use of environmental resources, using public transportation, and respecting the culture of local communities. Ecotourism strategies focus on encouraging responsible travel behaviors, such as reducing waste, preventing littering, and respecting local cultures. The proposed framework for sustainable ecotourism emphasizes the need to recognize all impacts of tourism, minimize negative impacts, and maximize positive impacts. This is the first study that reviews the literature on Communication Strategies for Promoting Sustainable Environmental Tourism in the MENA region context.

Keywords: Communication Strategies, Sustainability, environmental Tourism, MENA region, UAE.

1- Introduction

Environmental tourism is becoming increasingly important as more people prioritize sustainable and responsible travel. Along with economic growth and job opportunities, promoting environmental tourism is critical for preserving natural environments and protecting local communities. Streimikiene, Svagzdiene, and Jasinskas (2021), argue that tourism not only brings some economic benefits, but it also creates some serious problems such as excessive energy consumption and increasing negative environmental effects. Effective communication strategies are essential in influencing travelers' choices and raising awareness about the importance of sustainability in tourism.

Sustainable tourism is concerned with balancing obtaining an economic return income from tourism and providing a clean environment for tourists by addressing the tourism negative and positive impact issues on environmental tourism sites. The positive aspect of tourism lies in increasing income, providing job opportunities and attracting foreign investments; however, these results will be compared with adverse effects. According to UN environmental research (Tourism :n.d.), tourism uses more vital resources, such as energy, water, land, and materials (like fossil fuels, minerals, metals, and biomass). It also contributes to issues like solid waste, sewage, the loss of biodiversity, and greenhouse gas emissions. If it continues the current path, tourism will consume 154% more energy, increase greenhouse gas emissions by 131%, use 152% more water, and generate 251% more solid waste by the year 2050.

Environmental issues such as climate change will affect economic growth in various areas, such as the problem of food and water security and the health sector and will contribute to increasing concern about the impact on the tourism sector and threatening sustainable tourism development efforts. Soliman, Fathy, & Soliman (2024) emphasize the significant impact of climate change on tourist destinations, including alterations in temperature, archaeological structures, and rainfall patterns. These changes

affect natural areas, biodiversity, and the appeal of tourist sites. Additionally, the authors note that human activities, such as tourism, hospitality, and transportation, contribute to environmental degradation through pollution, carbon emissions, ecosystem destruction, and increased greenhouse gases. Although tourism regions and destinations will be differentially affected by climate change, in the globalised and increasingly interconnected world of tourism, the consequences in vulnerable tourism regions will transverse political boundaries to influence travel patterns, value chains, and tourism investment worldwide (Scott ,2021:13). Successful communication methods are critical to promoting ecotourism in the highly competitive global tourism industry with the rise of the environmental issues which affect tourism sector, so to achieve the target goals; it should be an effective strategy.

This literature review aims to address the following problem: What are the communication strategies for promoting ecotourism? It is considered an access point for implementing modern strategies to keep pace with the growing interest in promoting sustainable eco-tourism. It also aims to conduct a comprehensive analysis of current research on communication strategies to promote ecotourism, in addition to focusing on the effort in applying communication strategy in Arab region and the UAE. The study seeks to provide an overview of digital communication practices in promoting ecotourism and identify gaps in the existing literature by examining the effectiveness of narrative strategies used in digital communication media and written communication methods in promoting ecotourism. This review will provide an insight into the most appropriate communication strategies to promote ecotourism in the UAE, which has recently begun to take interest in it by hosting COP28 and coinciding with the announcement of the Year of Sustainability 2023. To answer this problem, this paper included an overview based on previous research that addressed the topic in context of the Arad world in general and within the context of the United Arab Emirates, which gives priority to sustainable tourism strategies

Methodology:

The main objective of the study is to find the research gap in communication strategies in promoting sustainable tourism by delving into literature reviews, and then implementing the recommendations for the policymakers and researchers for future improvement in ecotourism and research.

Literature review:

Communicating environmental tourism strategically

Communication can be defined as the process of delivering messages from someone to other people to tell and change attitudes, opinions, or behavior either directly, orally, or indirectly through the media (Amin & Priansah, 2019:162).

The strategy is defined according to its specific field. One of the important definitions of strategy is Broad definitions which emphasizes how strategy is about 'maintaining a balance between ends, ways, and means; about identifying objectives; and about the resources and methods available for meeting such objectives' (Freedman, 2013:516). On the other hand, there are earlier definitions; Chandler's definition in 1962; Strategy is the determination of the primary long-term goals and aims of an enterprise, and the adoption of courses of action and the allocation of resources necessary for carrying out these goals (Evans,2015:14). In his latest edition, the writer asserts that this definition is widely regarded as the most comprehensive definition applicable to the tourism sector. It encompasses three key elements of strategy: long-term goals, the adoption of courses of action, and the allocation of resources, including financial, human, tangible, and intangible resources (Evan, 2024:15). Overall, the central core of the strategy is to obtain the organization's goals. Communication must have a strategy to achieve the organization's goals. Because communicating strategy increases the chances of an organization "winning" by helping people decide where to focus their attention, energy, resources, and capabilities (Lancefield, 2022).

Communication strategy is an all-encompassing roadmap for business and marketing communications. It guides communications across all formats, mediums, and audiences; and aligns them with core values, purpose, and desired outcomes (Ranjhaa, 2023). There are four types of communication strategies in general form, as Ruler (2003 : 24) mentioned: one-way persuasion, one-way synchronization, two-way dialogue, and two-way consensus-building. With the recent technical developments, the elements of the communication strategy have also evolved, as Ranjhaa (2023) explained the three main types of communication strategies: Verbal Communication as a type of non-written communication taking forms of phone calls, emails and face-to-face meetings), non-verbal communication, based mainly depending on expressions and body language, and visual communication using tools such as ads, videos and infographic.

Studies dealing with communication strategies are diverse and include several fields. Muhammad, Basha, and Al-Hafidh (2020) explained the need to create communication tools that highlight UAE Islamic banking promotional strategies; they argue that familiarizing customers with the concept of Islamic banking is essential to gaining clients' confidence and effectively promoting products and services. Moreover, the authors concluded that social media (Instagram and WhatsApp), play a significant role in engaging in community activities, and direct communication with the sales representative as they contribute to changing customers' perceptions of Islamic banks. In the same vein, Snoussi (2020) addressed the use of social media as a tool for crisis communication. Two cases were in focus: the Turkish political crisis in 2016 and the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The author emphasized that social networks are vital management tools for organizations in times of crisis and called for a strategic communication plan through social media to reach the masses. Van Ruler and Vercic (2004 :138) assert that efforts in communication strategies aim to target audiences by engaging in dialogue and negotiation, while considering the context and situation. According to them, the importance of communication strategies lies in building a long-term interactive relationship with the target audiences through the concerted efforts of organizations of interest.

Falkheimer and Heide (2022: 96) argue that modern business trends consider that Marketing is not isolated to one department performing special operations with specific tools and methods, but instead it is a way of thinking that should imbue the entire organization and contribute to shaping the public's view of the organization and its goals. As van Ruler (2004) claims, the orientation of the organizations in communication plans will contribute to shaping the public's view towards the organization and decide the level of interaction with the value of the products offered to them through the strategies used.

Communication Strategies for promoting tourism

In Tourism, building a communication approach through branding strategies involving the city community cannot be the task of one organization. All stakeholders must be involved, including the City Government, Business Actors, Media, Local Universities, Cultural Institutions and heritage, tourism actors, community leaders and others (Astuti, 2020:330). For that, practical communication tools will support efforts in promoting tourism even in different languages. The success of tourism promotion includes many aspects, such as interacting with tourists in their language or through the international language, which is English. A study by Konchiab (2015:28) suggested that employing a communication strategy in teaching tourism students in Thai, the second language English besides their Thai language will help support marketing and destination development. According to Esipova and Gokova (2020). It outlines several marketing tools that can be used to promote tourism, including regular marketing research, exploration of priority markets, integration of information content with the "portfolio of brands," creation of a unified tourism platform, optimization of tourist information centre systems, organization of presentations and business events, and promotion of tourism opportunities within significant events.

Moreover, Johnson (2019) pointed out that marketing planning in the Tourism industry has distinctive characteristics from other marketing

plans; since the tourists' experience is temporary, their stay in the tourist destination and its services are short. Thus, tourists count on having more fun. For this, Johnson insists that Tourism should consider strategies that appeal to emotions, such as treating children to an unforgettable experience. Picincu (2018) argues that the importance of Tourism Marketing lies in business growth as customers who are satisfied with the Tourism service will contribute to promoting the destination with their words, which will bring more customers and thus realize an increase in spending; the more people visit a city or country, the more it will help grow the local economy, attract investors, and create jobs.

Over the years, traditional Tourism Marketing methods have been used, such as advertisements, participation in annual exhibitions, public relations, and sponsorships. With the advent of the Internet, these means need more destination marketing to reach a massive audience in various locations. Švajdová (2019) pointed out the new tools of marketing communication, and the author pays more attention to the Word of mouth, Q.R. codes, Realtime marketing and social media marketing tools. Yousif and Rosnand (2020) explained that Word of mouth is an effective marketing tool for the medical tourism industry in Malaysia. Furthermore, they showed the positive impact of this tool, both traditional and electronic, on the decision-making process of consumers. These efforts are made by searching for the destination through websites and digital platforms of hospitals. The result concluded that electronic word-of-mouth tools helped promote medical tourism in Malaysia and attract patients. As Alzaabi, sunossy & Aslan (2022) find that 31.2 % of the participants preferred to learn about Emirati culture through electronic media (Internet) rather than through physical visits. Moreover, they stressed that implementing a diverse electronic strategy will contribute to keeping pace with modern change in society and making better use of modern and digital technological means to support the promotion of Emirati culture.

In addition, Švajdová (2019) defines Realtime Marketing as the development of a plan that prioritizes current, pertinent trends and prompt client input. QR codes, short for 'Quick Response' codes, are widely utilized across several industries worldwide due to their user-friendly nature, making them a crucial marketing tool. Q.R. codes have numerous practical applications in the travel and tourism sector, including verifying transportation timetables, accessing details about tourist attractions like museums, zoos, and hotels, and facilitating smartphone-based ticketing (Bulk, 2020). Gaffer et al. (2022) highlights the importance of social media marketing in the tourist sector and its potential to generate value by collaborating with customers to enhance travel experiences and expand customer reach. The data findings demonstrate that social media marketing exerts a favorable and significant impact on the perception of a destination and the increase in visits to the Botanical Garden in Indonesia.

Narrative strategy refers to the use of certain narrative techniques and practices to achieve a certain goal (Tjupa,2016). Applying narrative strategies in designing messages will contribute to delivering awareness toward environmental sustainability. According to the language expectancy theory, people have expectations about the appropriate communication style and the message appeal can affect those expectations positively or negatively (Kapoor, Balaji, & Jiang, 2023). Mateus et al. (2020), have examined the effectiveness of utilizing narrative and storytelling in enhancing the quality and retention of historical-military tourism products; the study argues that narrative structures are a preferred method for organizing information, and thus, academic knowledge can be effectively communicated to the public by utilizing storytelling techniques that retain both nuance and historical accuracy. The proposed approach involves utilizing a platform that provides visitors with this narrative-driven information, while also offering local agents the necessary tools to enhance their tourism products using readily available information and connections. Additionally, the study emphasizes the potential of military history to attract tourists and create cultural experiences by using storytelling and narrative structures as a compelling attraction.

An effective communication strategy in the tourism sector targeting the regional and local levels will promote sustainable tourism. As Vereczi, Christie and Scuppa emphasize in their conference paper (2006: 4), traditional communication methods (e.g., forums, workshops) and the application of recent technologies (e.g., Internet, databases) are essential elements for developing sustainable tourism policies. The participants added that the government must have a leading role in implementing communication strategies and creating websites that have stimulating and updated information for tourism promotion and dissemination of information about tourism policies and plans.

Communication strategies to promote environmental tourism in the MENA region

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has an environmental diversity that attracts tourists to visit it, the growth of tourists increased during the period from January to July 2022 in Africa by +17%, and in the Middle East by +287% compared to the year 2021 (World Tourism Barometer, 2022) shows the value of ecotourism in MENA region.

Timothy (2019) assets that ecotourism, sustainability, and communication strategy are key subjects in the development of the tourism industry in the MENA region. Ecotourism encourages conscientious exploration of natural landscapes, to preserve the environment and bolster local communities. This is particularly crucial in the region, where environmental issues such as water scarcity and climate change present substantial hurdles. Sustainable tourism aims to mitigate adverse effects on the environment and local traditions, while simultaneously enhancing advantages for the community. For promote ecotourism, Wood, (2002) from the United nations Environment Program said that each region should develop its own principles, guidelines and certification procedures based on the materials available internationally like minimize the negative impact that can damage a destination, educate the traveler on the importance of conservation and seek to ensure that tourism development does not exceed the social and environmental limits.

Efficient methods of communication enhance awareness regarding responsible travel, enlighten tourists about indigenous cultures, and promote sustainable tourism initiatives. These measures facilitate the harmonization of economic development, environmental conservation, and cultural preservation. Additionally, establishing collaborations with local businesses, communities, and government agencies to foster the growth and implementation of sustainable tourism practices can be facilitated.

The relationship between ecotourism and sustainable development strategies is a reciprocal relationship, Tolulope, Folorunsho & Olufemi (2023) show in the study from 1995 to 2019 that there is correlation between tourism and sustainable development in the MENA region. A bidirectional association between tourism and sustainable development is identified, suggesting a causal connection in the region. According to the research, policies that support ecotourism can aid in sustainable development by generating financial, economic, and social capital. In addition, the study demonstrates that tourism and sustainable development exert a beneficial influence on natural resources and economic expansion, while having an adverse effect on domestic credit, globalization, and population in MENA countries. The results also suggest that sustainable development and tourism have a larger impact on the changes in control variables over time compared to the individual control variables. In addition, the results show that previous tourism has a beneficial impact on current sustainable development and that there is strong evidence of a positive effect of previous sustainable development on current tourism. Moreover, the study establishes that there exists a dual-causal connection between tourism and sustainable development in MENA nations, wherein tourism has a positive and non-linear influence on sustainable development, and vice versa.

Guettaf, Khallout, & Guoufi (2020, translated) The research titled "Benefiting from international experiences in sustainable tourism: a study of the Experience of the United Arab Emirates" explores how sustainable tourism serves as the meeting point between the desires of tourists and the demands of the visited region. They outlined that sustainable tourism relies

on several crucial components, such as the establishment of tourist control centers, assessing the capacity of the visitation area to accommodate tourists, and organizing workshops to raise awareness and educate the local population on ecosystem preservation. The success of the United Arab Emirates' strategy in promoting sustainable tourism was attributed to the implementation of many programs, such as the Dubai Sustainable Tourism Initiative, the user guide for hotels, and the carbon emissions calculator program. The study found that meeting the demands of tourists should align with maintaining environmental resources at the highest level. This can be achieved by promoting responsible travel, which involves implementing sustainable tourism strategies, reducing carbon emissions, optimizing electricity and water usage, and addressing pollution issues.

Bou Zaid (2023 translated) elucidated the pivotal position that Tourism might assume in fostering the development of the Arab region, with a particular emphasis on its economic, political, social, and cultural dimensions. The author elucidated the Algerian endeavor in advancing sustainable tourism, emphasizing the necessity of implementing protective regulations for natural and historical assets, as well as ensuring the long-term viability of tourism activities. Faraj (2022) has discussed the significance of the Local Community in realizing the goals of Egypt's 2030 vision for sustainable tourism development. The author emphasizes the crucial role played by the local community in promoting sustainable tourism. The study emphasizes that community participation is a crucial aspect in promoting tourism growth. The text also explores several forms of community engagement, including decision-making procedures, planning, and execution of tourism initiatives. Meanwhile, the author recognizes the difficulties encountered by the local community, such as coordination difficulties, lack of environmental consciousness, disregard for historical sites, security apprehensions, and a scarcity of skilled individuals.

COP28 discussed several important topics related to climate change and shed light on the MENA region, where The MENA Climate Week Bulletin (International Institute for Sustainable Development, 2023) provides a

comprehensive overview of the discussions and outcomes of MENA Climate Week 2023, emphasizing the focus on advancing inclusivity and circularity for just and equitable energy transitions. This aligns with the main subject about tourism in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, which is focused on sustainable development and environmental conservation. Efforts are being made to integrate nature-based solutions (NbS) into tourism infrastructure, promote biodiversity, and reduce carbon emissions. Additionally, there is a focus on sustainable waste management, climate resilience, and the impact of climate change on tourism and the environment. The region also aims to harness critical energy transition minerals for sustainable development and promote circular economy principles in waste management. Overall, the MENA region is working towards creating a sustainable and environmentally conscious tourism industry.

The case of The United Arab Emirates

Tourism in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is considered as the main economic nerve and a significant factor in diversifying the economy of the UAE, taking it apart from energy production (Yas, Mardani & Streimikiene, 2020). The UAE Government has chosen the strategy not to rely only on non-oil resources to support the economy. For that, a special focus was put on the Tourism sector and planning to make the UAE one of the most important tourist destinations on the Global map (Sharpley, 2008 conduct)

Since early 2000, UAE has kept on developing more tourism projects (Oil Economy to Tourism Economy, UAE, 2016). Famous recent projects consist of Louver Museum in Abu Dhabi, Burj Khalifa in Dubai, Sharjah Safari in Sharjah, Al Mowaihat archaeological area in Ajman, Jess Slider in Ras al-Khaimah, Senya Island in Um Al Quwain, and Fujairah Forts in Fujairah (worldscoolestwinter.ae, 2023). The tourism industry has established itself as a powerful amplifier of economic divergence. It has been projected that the travel and tourism industry will contribute about 280.6 billion United Arab Emirati dirhams to the UAE's GDP by 2028 (Tourism industry in UAE, 2023). The travel and tourism sector directly supported 317,500 jobs in the

UAE which is 5.4 percent of total employment; this number is expected to rise by 2.4 per cent per annum to 410,000 jobs which would be 5.9 per cent of total employment in 2027 (Tourism and Economy, 2020).

Nevertheless, Tourism is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic which started on 2020 and lasted almost three years; it has had a huge impact on the economy, livelihoods, public services, and opportunities on all continents. All parts of its vast value-chain have been affected (tourism and covid-19, 2023), including the Travel and Hospitality sectors. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) report in August 2020 showed that global travel decreased by 56% from January to March 2020 compared to 2019 (Covid-19 could set, 2020).

The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and the measures taken to contain it have negatively and significantly affected the tourism sector, which is considered a vital non-oil economic sector, and the impact of the pandemic was greatly evident on trade, business and travel. Due these abrupt changes brought by the COVID 19 pandemic, tourism in the United Arab Emirates declined (Al-Qasem,2021). As a result of the pandemic, the GDP of UAE in 2019 was approximately 421.14 billion dollars, It dropped by more than a hundred in 2020, which resulted in353.9 billion dollars(O'Neill, 2021).

The UAE initiated its inaugural camping event on 15-12-2020, lasting for a duration of 45 days. This initiative is a component of the recently introduced UAE Strategies aimed at rejuvenating the Tourism sector and promoting domestic tourism within the country. The event, titled 'World's Coolest Winter', was announced by H.H. Sikh Mohamed bin Rashid as the first federal domestic tourism camping endeavor. Furthermore, His Highness initiated a consolidated tourism identity with the aim of promoting investment in the tourism sector. In 2019, the domestic tourist industry in the UAE made a significant contribution of AED 41.2 billion ($11.2 billion) to the country's economy (The United Arab Emirates' Government portal, n.d). It accounts for 23 percent of the overall revenue in the tourism sector, while international tourism makes up the remaining 77 percent. Under the new strategy, the country's objective is to increase

domestic tourism earnings twofold and attain a more equitable distribution between the two types of tourism by 2030. The source of this information is a news article from the year 2020.

As per the official figures released by the UAE Federal Media Office in 2021, the initial campaign drew the attention of 950,000 local tourists and generated AED 1 billion in income in just one month. Additionally, there were over 2,000 media pieces and the UAE's touristic elements garnered 215 million video views. The campaign is started on a yearly basis, accompanied by the development of new strategic initiatives every year. In 2021, an application called "Emirates Tourism" was introduced, followed by the establishment of a website, "https://worldscoolestwinter.ae/ar", in 2022.

The UAE has experienced a surge in environmental tourism in recent years. This is due to the implementation of various local and global initiatives aimed at preserving the environment and promoting sustainable tourism. These efforts involve collaboration between the local tourism authorities and the Ministry of Economy through the Emirates Tourism Council. It is worth noting that the UAE will be participating in G20 Tourism in 2023.

According to Latifa, Abu Shawq, & Salem (2021), environmental tourism emphasizes the implementation of environmentally friendly practices, minimizing detrimental effects, establishing a balance between tourists and the natural surroundings at the destination, and fostering a positive environmental mindset. Their research determined that the UAE stands out due to its abundance of environmental tourist attractions and features. The UAE has implemented various environmental practices, including green transportation, environmentally friendly practices for airports, and green hotel practices. As a result, the UAE has been recognized as an environmental tourist destination. Regarding Egypt, it exhibits similarities to the Emirates in terms of incorporating environmental aspects and practices in airports and hotels. However, like Algeria, it faces a deficiency in implementing sustainable transportation methods within the Transport sector.

The Dubai Emirate has implemented many steps to promote environmental tourism, including the establishment of Dubai Sustainable Tourism (DST). Giorgadze (2018) demonstrates that DST is a collaborative effort between the government and corporate sector, with the participation of civil society. Its purpose is to support Dubai's broader goals of clean energy and sustainable development by incorporating sustainability concepts into all elements of tourism. According to the author, DST unites several economic stakeholders in the travel and hospitality industry, including tour operators, hotel developers, and hotels. The holistic approach of this initiative is based on the shared objective of ensuring long-term economic sustainability across its entire life cycle.

The Dubai Sustainable Tourism report (2021) introduced a new program called "Get into the Green Scene" aimed at educating Dubai residents and tourists about eco-friendly tourism locations and providing guidance on environmental preservation practices. To achieve this objective, a variety of environmental initiatives were organized throughout the year, encouraging fans to actively contribute to the reduction of plastic usage. Additionally, a Beach Cleaning Day event was celebrated, and participants were invited to share their experiences using the hashtag #DubaiGreenScene on social media platforms (Dubai Sustainable Tourism, 2021).

Moreover, the Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi Emirate has launched three initiatives to promote sustainability in the tourism sector Sustainable Tourism Guidelines, a Carbon Calculator, and an energy-saving audit for all hotels in the emirate for providing tourists and partners with a roadmap for implementing sustainable practices in the tourism environment; these measurements are in line with the vision of the United Nations World Tourism Organization for the year 2030 (News desk, 2023).

The success enjoyed by the UAE in various fields was based on strategic planning for the future of the tourism sectors, as the tourism sector is being seen as a part of a holistic strategic vision that incorporates all the social, cultural, political, and economic components of a nation eager to embrace future generations of success and prosperity

(Stolz. et al., 2005:16). As Sheikh Khalid Bin Ahmed bin Sultan Al-Qassimi during Sharjah Hospitality Forum 2020 said, Tourism is among the hardest-hit sectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic ... the UAE has demonstrated its readiness and ability to ensure business continuity in vital sectors, including travel, tourism, and hospitality, capitalizing on the country's advanced technological infrastructure (Ahmad, 2020).

One of the initiatives undertaken by the UAE is to enhance the visibility of its tourism destinations and investment opportunities. After the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, it became imperative to implement strategies in the tourism industry. Aburumman (2020) offers valuable insights on methods to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 problem and enhance the competitiveness of the MICE industry in the UAE. He stated that two tactics were proposed to ensure the ongoing success of the meetings and events industry: the competitive survival plan for MICE companies and the 5p marketing strategy. The primary objective of the first strategy is to establish long-lasting competitive advantages and minimize expenses to enhance competitiveness. Conversely, the second strategy complements the first by leveraging MICE companies and employing the 5P marketing strategy (product, price, place, promotion, and people) to effectively mitigate the impacts of the Corona pandemic. According to the report, MICE enterprises should maintain their efforts, hire skilled individuals, develop contemporary communication techniques, and encourage the use of digital technology (Aburumman, 2020).

Similarly, Stolz, et al., (2023) contend that the UAE has implemented a tourism strategy for the year 2031 to effectively promote tourism initiatives in the country. This strategy aims to enhance the unified national tourism identity, foster the growth and variety of specialized tourism offerings, bolster tourism capabilities, promote the involvement of domestic resources in the tourism sector, and augment investments across all tourism segments.

The Emirates of Sharjah has implemented a distinctive initiative to bolster the tourism industry by formulating a strategic plan to advance halal tourism and preserve Arab traditions. In 1998, UNESCO designated

it as ‘The Cultural Capital of the Arab World’ (Sharjah | the Official Portal of the UAE Government, n.d.). The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) is formulating strategic initiatives to enhance the promotion of tourism in Sharjah. These initiatives encompass several forms of tourism, such as natural, maritime, mountainous, and Islamic tourism, and are reinforced by a comprehensive range of social and traditional platforms.

The 2022 annual report of the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) highlights significant growth in the tourism sector, particularly in sustainable tourism development. This growth is attributed to the implementation of sustainability initiatives, such as the development of environmentally friendly accommodations, promotion of sustainable transportation, support for local communities, preservation and protection of natural resources, and comprehensive support for all aspects of tourism. The SCTDA focused on communication strategies to bolster special initiatives and events aimed at promoting sustainable environmental tourism. A key focus has been on enhancing the website (www.sharjahtourism) to provide comprehensive information pertaining to the tourism sector. As a result, there has been a significant 155% increase in the number of users accessing the website compared to the previous year (Annual report, 2021 p54). The Instagram account (@shjtourism) achieved an interaction and access rate of 281,886, while the Facebook account (visit_SHJ) reached a rate of 195,889, as reported in the 2022 social media report (73:76).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, previous research confirms that sustainable tourism is crucial for the long-term success and preservation of tourism destinations. While tourism brings economic benefits and job opportunities, it also poses significant environmental challenges such as resource consumption, waste generation, and greenhouse gas emissions. To address these issues, it is essential to implement sustainable tourism strategies that prioritize the preservation of environmental resources and promote responsible travel. The involvement of the local community is vital in achieving sustainable tourism development, as it fosters awareness, collaboration, and participation in decision-making processes. The findings of the overview can serve as a foundation for future research and inform policymakers and practitioners in the field of sustainable tourism development in the MENA region. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) appears in the literature as a successful model in supporting sustainable tourism through various initiatives. However, challenges such as environmental awareness need to be addressed.

Overall, sustainable tourism development requires a holistic approach that balances the needs of tourists with the preservation of environmental resources and the well-being of local communities through the use of modern communication strategies. A gap was noted in the literature studies addressing environmental tourism in the Arab region, the UAE; to fill this gap, a study measuring the impact of environmental problems such as climate change on tourism sustainability in the Emirate context will be conducted as future research.

Recommendations:

Environmental awareness There are several recommendations that may help achieve the goal of sustainable ecotourism:

- Spreading awareness and education: working to disseminate information about ecotourism among school and university students through school curricula.
- Paying attention to developing the content of electronic and digital websites: These platforms are considered an important element for providing content related to environmental sustainability and correct practices that will reach a large segment of society members and tourists.
- Developing content in traditional media: Traditional media such as television is considered one of the most important elements through which sustainable ecotourism can be promoted to a large segment of society who prefer to watch television and read newspapers.
- Adapting sustainable practices: Incorporating environmentally friendly transportation and clean technology information to promote environmental awareness. This could include highlighting initiatives aimed at reducing the carbon footprint and showcasing sustainable practices in various sectors.
- Implementing a summer environmental tourism campaign, similar to winter campaigns: developing a campaign that focuses on sustainable practices to reduce temperatures and how to conduct tourism in the summer period in a way that is safe for nature and tourists. This could include encouraging the use of green technologies and environmentally friendly infrastructure to mitigate the urban heat island effect.

- Promote environmental awareness: Create interactive content such as infographics and videos that educate users about environmental issues and sustainable practices. This can help engage a wider audience and promote a culture of sustainability.
- Supporting research in the field of ecotourism: To ensure environmental protection and the sustainability of economic benefits, we must focus on supporting the research sector, which will contribute to knowing what affects the environment, and thus the research outputs will help in developing policies and strategies in order to support the sustainable ecotourism plan.

By integrating these elements, decision makers can make sustainable decisions for sustainable ecotourism that serve the parties involved (the community, the tourist, and the tourist site), meet the global and local need to sustain the green economy, and enhance sustainability and environmental responsibility.

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إستراتيجيات الاتصال لتعزيز السياحة البيئية المستدامة في دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة "دراسة حالة"

فخرة عبدالله البلوشي[1]

ثريا السنوسي[2]

ملخص البحث:

تهدف هذه الورقة إلى تحديد إستراتيجيات الاتصال لتعزيز السياحة البيئية المستدامة في المنطقة العربية تحديدا دولة الامارات العربية المتحدة. وتأتي أهمية الترويج للسياحة البيئية وكيفية التعامل معها، بسبب وجود جوانب سلبية تؤثر على المواقع البيئية نتيجة تدفق عدد كبير من السياح إلى هذه المواقع السياحية البيئية وعدم التزامهم بالحفاظ على البيئة في المواقع السياحية، مثل ترك النفايات وإتلاف الممتلكات. وتم التركيز بشكل خاص على حالة دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة. ينطلق البحث من الإشكالية التالية: ما هي الإستراتيجيات الاتصالية المستخدمة في الترويج عن السياحة البيئية؟ للإجابة عن هذه الإشكالية تضمنت هذه الورقة نظرة عامة بناءً على الأبحاث السابقة التي تناولت الموضوع في السياق العربي بشكل عام وضمن سياق دولة الإمارات العربية المتحدة، والتي تعد مدخلا لتوظيف إستراتيجيات حديثة تواكب الاهتمام المتزايد بالترويج عن السياحة البيئية المستدامة. التي تعطي إستراتيجيات السياحة المستدامة الأولوية للحفاظ على الموارد البيئية وتشجيع السفر المسؤول، بالتعاون مع المجتمعات المحلية، لتسريع اعتماد إستراتيجيات السياحة البيئية. وتشمل السياحة المستدامة ممارسات مثل البقاء في الأماكن الصديقة للبيئة، والاستغلال الأمثل للموارد البيئية، واستخدام وسائل النقل العام، واحترام ثقافة المجتمعات المحلية. تركز إستراتيجيات السياحة البيئية على تشجيع سلوكيات السفر المسؤولة، مثل تقليل النفايات، ومنع رمي النفايات، واحترام الثقافات المحلية. ويؤكد الإطار المقترح للسياحة البيئية المستدامة على ضرورة التعرف على جميع تأثيرات السياحة، وتقليل الآثار السلبية، وتعظيم الآثار الإيجابية. هذه هي الدراسة الأولى التي تستعرض الأدبيات المتعلقة بإستراتيجيات الاتصال لتعزيز السياحة البيئية المستدامة في سياق منطقة الشرق الأوسط وشمال أفريقيا

الكلمات الدالة: إستراتيجيات الاتصال، الاستدامة، السياحة البيئية، منطقة الشرق الأوسط.

(1) كلية الاتصال - جامعة الشارقة (الشارقة - الإمارات العربية المتحدة)
u20104227@sharjah.ac.ae

(2) كلية الاتصال - جامعة الشارقة (الشارقة - الإمارات العربية المتحدة)