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## The feasibility of establishing a ministry of tourism in the United Arab Emirates

Suhail Al Neyadi

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THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

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A Project  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Arts  
in  
Interdisciplinary Studies:  
Marketing Communication

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by  
Suhail Al Neyadi  
September 2002

THE FEASIBILITY OF ESTABLISHING A MINISTRY OF TOURISM  
IN THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

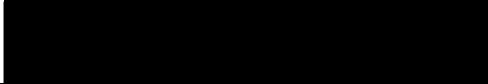
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by  
Suhail Al Neyadi  
September 2002

Approved by:

  
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## ABSTRACT

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) is a new country located in Middle East on the Arabian Gulf. For centuries the area was known as the Trucial States, being made up of small emirates. In 1971, a Federation of States was created and the UAE was born. Since that time, revenues from oil have been used to modernize the emirates and develop the country into one of the most advanced in the Middle East.

To lessen dependency on oil revenues, the various emirates developed a tourist industry that has flourished since the 1980s. Today, millions of people, travelers, businessmen, industrialists, sportsmen, and others have found the UAE to be a beautiful and interesting place to visit and to do business. During the last decade, each emirate has built a variety of attractions and accommodations for tourists. Five star hotels exist in every major city. Parks, museums, golf courses, exhibition halls, horse and camel racing tracks, and many other tourist attractions have been built.

The purpose of this study was to review the tourism industry as it currently exists in the UAE today. Recommendations have been made to establish a Ministry of Tourism in the Federation instead of each emirate having

their own tourist industry. This will eliminate redundancy and the need for building more hotels, golf courses, etc. It will benefit all emirates and attract more people to the UAE. This will bring the greatest benefit to the industry, and make better use of the facilities that currently exist in all emirates.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my committee chair, Dr. Kevin Lamud for his assistance, patience, and guidance. I am greatly indebted to my country, the United Arab Emirates, for the opportunity to study for a master's degree in my field. Others to whom I owe a great sense of gratitude are members of my family, Mohammad Khalafan AlNeyadi, Khalifa AlNeyadi, and Said AlNeyadi.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

Some years ago the idea that the UAE would become a major tourist attraction on the world stage seemed a remote possibility. While those who knew and loved the Emirates were aware of its many attractions, the prospect of large numbers of people choosing to holiday there seemed to many inconceivable. Given the widespread skepticism, one must recognize the determination of the UAE government and its enterprising businessmen who have made tourism a reality and who have created a situation in which this industry is likely to experience strong and steady growth in the years ahead.<sup>1</sup>

The UAE has already gained international recognition as an attractive tourism location. Thousands of visitors arrive each winter to enjoy the unique combination of sea, sand, desert, oases, and mountains which the country offers. Not only is the climate regarded as close to perfect for much of the year, it also offers some of the finest facilities available in the world. Much of this has

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Vine and Paula Casey, *United Arab Emirates*, Abu Dhabi: Immel Publishing, 1992, p. 149.

been achieved with the liberal use of revenues from oil for all to enjoy.

Exploration for oil began in the Gulf states in the 1930s. World War II limited exploration for almost a decade. Oil was found in Abu Dhabi. The first commercial exports was on July 4, 1962. This was followed by discoveries in Dubai, Sharjah, Ras Al Khaimah. Gas was discovered offshore at Umm Al Qaiwain. The UAE is a member of the Oil Petroleum Export Countries. Today, the UAE continues to play an important role in providing energy to countries throughout the world. However, the government is aware that once oil is used, it will not replenish itself. Unlike many other oil producers, including others within OPEC, the UAE need not fear a rapid exhaustion of its hydrocarbons. Oil and gas production can continue at preset rates for well over a hundred years, and not even the most futuristic of economic forecasters can present a convincing model of when the world's economy will be like after such a time. There is the recognition that it is important to diversify sources of income so that the country is not dependent on the fluctuation world price of oil and gas, and the potential of alternatives promoted making oil and gas in less demand. It was also important to offer alternative sources of employment for the

country's citizens and promote their entrepreneurial talents outside the capital intensive oil industry.<sup>2</sup>

#### Purpose of the Study

Tourism in the UAE differs from tourism in other countries in that it is a year round industry, and what it provides and promotes are a variety of events. Therefore, marketing these events is a continual process. Each month and each event requires different marketing strategies.

The purpose of this study is to identify the various events that would attract tourists, and develop strategies that would reach the target market to increase tourism in the UAE.

#### Statement of the Problem

The UAE is relatively a small country. It gained its independence from Great Britain in 1971. At that time the seven emirates joined forces and created the federation that we know today. The UAE covers approximately 33,375 square miles and has a population of approximately 2,500,000. It is geographically located on the eastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, extending along part of the Gulf of Oman, and the southern coast of the Persian Gulf.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 66.

The nation is the size of the U.S. state of Maine. Its neighbors are Saudi Arabia to the west and south, Qatar to the north, and Oman to the east. Most of the land is barren and sandy. Until the British withdrew from the Gulf and was no longer a protectorate of the smaller nations, it was known as the Trucial states. Together they created the federation and became an oil producing country. At that time, the government began a journey to modernize the emirates and make the deserts bloom.<sup>3</sup>

The UAE is also endowed with an extensive coastline, sandy beaches and varied landscape where a wide variety of activities take place ranging from powerboat races to sand skiing. Manicured golf courses provide ready enjoyment and for less active people, shopping opportunities bound. In addition, the country's deep-rooted cultural heritage, accessible in the many cultural centers and at traditional sports such as falconry, camel and hors racing, has been a powerful attraction for tourists. The UAE has also become a much sought after venue for conferences, regional and international exhibitions and major sports events such as

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<sup>3</sup> Borgna Brunner, ed., "The United Arab Emirates," The Time Almanac 2000, Information Please, 1999, p. 319.

the Dubai World Cup, the Dubai Desert Classic Golf tournament, and polo and cricket competitions.<sup>4</sup>

#### Methodology

The methodology selected for this research is descriptive and qualitative, collecting various data to identify the events that are being held in the UAE, their origins, participants, and objectives, identifying the target market for the various events. The organizations involved in the various events will be studied, and different methods to promote the events leaning toward increasing the number of tourists throughout the year.

#### Scope

The scope of this study is limited to the UAE and the tourism industry. Data collected will be that which is available through the various UAE organizations, the Internet, magazines, journals, newspapers, and UAE originated data.

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<sup>4</sup> "Tourism," UAE, <http://www.emirates.org/tourism/>, May 1, 2002, p. 1.

## Plan of the Study

The plan of the study is as follows:

Chapter One: An introduction to the UAE and the subject.

Chapter Two: A brief review of the history and development of the UAE, its resources, and what it has to offer tourists.

Chapter Three: Dubai is an example of the tourism industry in UAE. Its strategies are serving as guidelines for other emirates for the purpose of assisting them to also derive the greatest benefits from the industry.

Chapter Four: This chapter identifies marketing strategies for the purpose of promoting the different events, and sites that the UAE has to offer.

Chapter Five: A summary and conclusion of the study and a forecast of the future of the tourist industry in the UAE.

The next chapter is a brief history of the UAE from ancient times to the present.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

Man probably arrived in the area now known as the UAE at the beginning of the Late Stone Age, around 8,000 years ago. Some of the earliest sites have been found on offshore islands like Merawah and Ghagha, where fine flint arrowheads have been discovered. Evidence from these islands, as well as other important sites, notably Dalma, Akab and Jebel Buhays, indicate that by the late sixth or early fifth millennium BC the people had begun to settle in permanent or semi-permanent communities, capable of organizing extensive fishing and herding domestic animals. Finds of pottery sherds at some of these sites of the type known from the 'Ubaid culture in Mesopotamia show that they had extensive trading links to the northern Gulf --- evidence of the early beginnings of the country's tradition of maritime commerce. Pearls were being harvested and could have been an important export commodity from early times.<sup>5</sup>

Throughout the history of the UAE, men found two ways to survive - one was the trade in pearls and the other was

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<sup>5</sup> United Arab Emirates, Yearbook, 1999, London: Trident Press, Ltd., 2000, p. 33.

trade-using caravans that crossed the desert of Arabia. Copper implements have also been found which tells us that there were copper mines and smelting. In some areas there was sufficient rain to grow a variety of crops such as wheat, barley, sorghum and dates. This tells us that at some time these lands were very fertile.<sup>6</sup>

There is also evidence that the country was heavily influenced by the ancient Greeks from around 300 BC. At al-Dur near Umm al-Qaiwain, an ancient temple dating to around 100 BC to 100 AD has been uncovered, as well as more evidence of substantial international trade --- pottery from India and Mesopotamia, glass and coins from the Roman Empire. Trading continued to characterize the lifestyle of the people for thousands of years.<sup>7</sup>

It was not until the 19<sup>th</sup> century that extensive changes began to take shape. The British established themselves in the Gulf at the beginning of 1820, signing a series of agreements with the Sheikhs of the individual emirates that later, augmented with treaties on preserving a maritime truce, resulted in the area becoming known as "The Trucial States." The treaties meant that the 7,000-

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 37.



year-old pearl fisheries of the lower Gulf could be exploited without interruption, and fine pearls from the emirates were exported, not only to India, but also the growing market in Europe. The pearling industry thrived during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing both income and employment to the people of the Arabian Gulf coast.<sup>8</sup> The First World War, however, dealt a heavy blow while the world economic depression of the late 1920s and early 1930s coupled with the invention by the Japanese of the cultured pearl, threw the people into poverty.<sup>9</sup>

Times were very hard following the collapse of the pearl trade. Although unknown at the time, relief was on its way with the discovery of oil, both onshore and offshore. Oil was first discovered in Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The first cargo of Abu Dhabi crude oil was exported to the world market in 1962. By the time Sheikh Zayed was elected as Ruler of Abu Dhabi in 1966, and as president of the UAE once the federation was established in 1971, the tide began to turn.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

In 1971 the country's population was only around 200,000 and there were substantial differences between the individual emirates in terms of size, population, economic resources, and degree of development. The use of oil revenues has brought economic prosperity and massive development to all of the seven emirates and the country's unique level of political stability stands as a testimony to the wisdom of federation.<sup>11</sup>

#### Tourist Attractions

The tourism market began to develop in the early 1980s with the completion of the main infrastructural projects. By then, the country had its modern airports, harbors, well equipped hospitals and schools, connected by one of the finest road networks in the Middle East. Their completion coincided with the onset of a depression in the oil market and a consequential downturn in the economy of the Gulf. Suddenly, hotel operators found they had plenty of rooms but not enough visitors to fill them. Tourism was identified as one answer to the problem.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> The United Arab Emirates 1993, Abu Dhabi: Ministry of Information and culture, December 1993, p. 131.

The local tourism industry developed a character consistent with the uniqueness of the country. The first visitors were the oilmen and businessmen for whom, principally, the hotels were built. Several of the hotels are outstanding examples of modern architecture offering both glamour and grace. They have most of the things that an experienced traveler expects - ballrooms, swimming pools, health centers, tennis and squash courts, Jacuzzis and the like. Entertainment is also an integral part of the food culture and hotels vie with each other to stage the best shows.<sup>13</sup>

#### Climate

The Emirates lie in the arid tropical zone extending across Asia and northern Africa; however, the Indian Ocean has a strong influence on the climatic conditions in the area, since the country borders both the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman. Because of their location, high temperatures are experienced in summer accompanied by high humidity along the coast. Variations in climate occur between coastal regions, the deserts of the interior, and mountainous areas. Between November and March the climate is moderate, slightly cooler at night. The humidity tends

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

to rise in the summer months between June and August. Prevailing winds, influenced by the monsoons, vary between south or southeast, to west or north to northwest depending on the season and location. Average rainfall is low at less than 6.5 centimeters annually and more than half of the average rainfall occurs in December and January. Summer is at its peak in July and August, with climate turning cooler in September. Winters are pretty cool until mid-March. Light jackets and sweaters are recommended.<sup>14</sup>

The best times to visit the UAE are in December, March, and April. These are the cooler months, a good time to explore the UAE.<sup>15</sup>

### The Emirates

The UAE consists of seven Emirates, each with its own unique features. They are each limited in size as well as resources.

### Abu Dhabi

Abu Dhabi is the largest of all seven emirates with an area of 67,340 square kilometers, equivalent to 86.7

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> UAE, "Tourist Guide," <http://www.uae.org/ac/tourist/tips.htm>, 6/17/2002, p. 1.

percent of the country's total area, excluding the islands. It has a coastline extending for more than 400 kilometers and divided for administrative purposes into three major regions. The first encompasses the city of Abu Dhabi which is the capital of the emirate and the federal capital. Sheikh Zayed, President of the UAE resides here. The government buildings, foreign embassies, broadcasting facilities, and most oil companies are located in Abu Dhabi. The emirate is also the home of Zayed University and the Higher College of Technology. Major infrastructural facilities include Mina (Port) Zayed and the Abu Dhabi International Airport. The city has extensive cultural, sport, and leisure facilities, as well as places for walking cycling, jobbing, and roller blading along the seashore. The city, architecturally, includes older buildings such as small mosques which have been preserved and sits quietly in the shadow of modern skyscrapers.<sup>16</sup>

Abu Dhabi's second region, known as the Eastern Region, has as its capital Al Ain city, blessed with substantial groundwater reflected in its rich greenery with plenty of farms, public parks, and important

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

archaeological sites. There is a leisure park at Al Hili, the Al Ain zoo and the Al Ain Museum. This is the cultural and educational center and site of the first university.

The Western Region is mad up of 512 villages and has as its capital Bida Zayed, or Zayed City. It contains some 20 million evergreens. The country's main onshore oil fields are located here, as is the country's largest oil refinery, at Al Runways. Main offshore oil fields are also located on the islands of Das Mubarraz, Zirku, and Arzanah.<sup>17</sup>

The country's largest hotel company, the Abu Dhabi National Hotels Company (ADHNC) supervises, the day to day running of seven hotels managed by international chains and directly runs four of it own. The ADNHC group include the Sheraton, Hilton, Intercontinental, and its own Gulf and International Hotels. The hotels form part of well established resort complexes such as the long established and high standard facility at Jebel Ali where magnificent beaches side hotel is set in fifty acres of lush watered grounds with a private marina and mile upon miles of unspoiled beaches nearby, not to mention the world class game fishing offshore. The ADNHC group also developed a

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

very impressive resort hotel in the form of the Al Jazira Hotel, close to the coast, northeast of Abu Dhabi, built on its own islands, created by dredging a six-kilometer channel from the Arabian Gulf. It has fifty main rooms and fifty chalets at the waters' edge. The hotel complex is surrounded by impressively landscaped gardens.<sup>18</sup>

Tourist development is ongoing and many new projects are under way. One plan is the Al Futaisi Golf and Country Club's plan to transform Al Futaisi Island off Abu Dhabi into one of the UAE's most popular tourist resorts. The Club already has a restaurant, a tent village, 18 hole golf course, horse riding track, beautiful beaches and a swimming pool. Forty luxurious chalets are being built and the island, which covers 45 square kilometers, is to have several species of local and migratory birds, sand gazelles, turtles, and horses, and is a haven for nature lovers.<sup>19</sup>

### Dubai

Dubai is located along the Arabian Gulf coasts of the UAE for approximately 72 kilometers. Dubai has an area of

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<sup>18</sup> Vine and Casey, op. cit., p. 148.

<sup>19</sup> "Tourism in Abu Dhabi," <http://www.emirates.org/tourism/auh.html>, 6/29/02, p. 1.

3,885 square kilometers, which is equivalent to 5 percent of the country's total area, excluding the islands.

To attract business from around the world, Dubai set out to create a life style for expatriates which would not only be acceptable to them, but would actually be regarded as highly desirable. Miles of golden beaches, lapped by the rich blue waters of the Arabian Gulf, provide a natural asset of which Dubai has taken full advantage. With the arrival of five star hotels came squash and tennis courts, swimming pools, saunas, and Jacuzzis, all of which are an established part of the life in Dubai. Also, scattered about the city, are a cluster or sports complexes and clubs offering variety in leisure to a community that works hard and values the importance of leisure time.<sup>20</sup>

In Dubai's central business and shopping area, modern boutiques nestle in the shade generously provided by offices of high finance. Thirty minutes away by cars and perhaps the most vivid testimony to the city's will to succeed. The largest manmade port in the world dresses a wide body of coastline fronting the village of Jebel Ali, currently enticing a flow of global business. The creation

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<sup>20</sup> Vine and Casey, op. cit., p. 126.



of the Jebel Ali Free Trade Zone has attracted a stream of companies, all eager to take advantage of the concessions now readily available. Dubai's mega ports at Jebel Ali and Port Rashid underline the vital role the sea has played in Dubai's history and development. The emirate, taking in seventy-two kilometers of gulf coastline, has its capital adjacent to Dubai creek upon which stands the ancient city of Dubai and the commercial center of Deira. On the shores are offices of the ruler, banks, customs, broadcasting and postal headquarters, along with the International Trade Center, a thirty-nine-story building, and the tallest in the Gulf. Deira, located on the northern bank of the creek, is the main market center and has the distinctive feature of numerous large trading dhows tied alongside the creek road, underlining the traditional role as a center for trade and commerce.<sup>21</sup>

Dubai is the second of the UAE's oil and gas producers like the other emirates it too has felt the effects of the dramatic fall in the price of oil from time to time. However, the emirate is high in hydrocarbon resources, which have helped to fuel a thriving local economy. Dubai, heavy industry project with both

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 127.

government and private shareholding produces high grade aluminum from Western Australia bauxite utilizing the abundant supply of cheap energy to fuel the process in one of the most energy efficient aluminum smelters in the world. Dubai also boasts one of the largest dry-docks in the world.<sup>22</sup>

Leisure facilities in Dubai include a well designed eighteen hole golf course, four 20,000 seat soccer stadiums, six sports complexes, two ice skating rinks, camel and horse racing tracks together with a go-cart circuit, a zoological park, and a mountain retreat at the Emirate's small, isolated enclave of Hatta. Dubai is also host to the Dubai International Car Rally, part of the Middle East Championship and the Emirate's Dubai Powerboat Race, both among the richest of the class worldwide. A sports complex has been completed which holds 22,000 seats for cricket games and a 9,500 hockey capacity stadium. Dubai has 255 hotels with a total of 17,253 rooms.

Because of these facilities, Dubai hosts the largest international horse show in the region, known as the "Hickstead of the Middle East."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 128.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 129.

Dubai is blessed with warm, sunny winter climate like the other Emirates and hopes to widen its economic base by encouraging tourism, capitalizing on its comprehensive range of high class facilities and uniquely individual attributes.<sup>24</sup>

### Sharjah

The Emirate of Sharjah extends along approximately 16 kilometers of the Gulf coastline and for more than 80 kilometers into the interior. In addition, there are three enclaves belonging to Sharjah situated on the east coast, bordering the Gulf of Oman. These are Kalba, Khor Fakkan, and Dibba al-Husn. The emirate has an area of 2,590 square kilometers, which is equivalent to 3.3 percent of the country's total area, excluding the islands. The capital city of Sharjah, which overlooks the Arabian Gulf, contains the main administrative and commercial centers together with an impressive array of cultural and traditional projects including several museums. Distinctive landmarks are the two major covered souks, reflecting Islamic design, a number of recreational areas such as public parks such as Al Jazeirah Fun Park and Al Buheirah Corniche. The city is also notable for its many

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

elegant mosques. Sharjah has an International Airport and a port called Khalid.<sup>25</sup>

The Emirate also encompasses some important oasis areas, the most famous is Dhaid where a wide range of vegetables and fruits are cultivated on its rich and fertile soil, Khor Fakkan provides a major east coast port. Two offshore islands belong to Sharjah, Abu Musa, which has been under military occupation by Iran since 1971, and Sir Abu Nu'air.<sup>26</sup>

Sharjah has capitalized on its cultural strengths and build a new Cultural Center, including a large library, theater, art gallery, and other facilities. Sharjah, headquarters of the UAE Arts Society, hosts a very successful book fair and its National Theater Company has received international awards for plays performed there. It is also known for its elegant and innovative buildings, including some architecturally superb souks. The main seaport Mina Khalid is augmented by the strategically valuable port of Khor Fakkan, where the Portuguese were sacked in 1506. There has been rapid expansion in recent

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<sup>25</sup> United Arab Emirates, Yearbook, 1999, op. cit., p. 26.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

years.<sup>27</sup> According to the Sharjah and Tourism Development Authority estimates that today the number of tourists visiting the emirate has reached 250,000.<sup>28</sup>

### Ajman

Ajman is the smallest Emirate covering only 259 square kilometers - 0.3 percent of the country's total area, excluding the Islands. It has a beautiful 16-kilometer stretch of white sand beach. Masfut is an agricultural village located in the mountains 110 kilometers to the southeast of the city, while the Manama area lies about 60 kilometers to the east.<sup>29</sup>

Ajman has a strong maritime tradition and the local dhow-building yard, the largest in the Emirates continues to operate despite being dwarfed by modern developments such as the major dockyard. Although no oil has been found in Ajman, it has achieved considerable beautification, impressive city parks, and attractive new buildings.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Vine and Carey, op. cit., p. 129.

<sup>28</sup> "Planning your trip to Sharjah," <http://www.sharjah-welcome.com/Tourism/planning/index.htm>, 6/19/2002, p. 1.

<sup>29</sup> United Arab Emirates, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

<sup>30</sup> Vine and Casey, Op. Cit., p. 131.

Recent archaeological discoveries show that Ajman was once an important Bronze Age settlement more than 4,000 years ago, although it was long a relatively quiet backwater. Since the establishment of the UAE, Ajman has benefited from their neighbors, Dubai and Sharjah. Many people working in these Emirates, chose to live in Ajman with its slower and quieter pace of life. They also benefit from the tourist industry.<sup>31</sup>

For tourists, the Ajman Kempinski Hotel and Resort, a new 200 room 5 star beachfront property, was opened in October 1998. With extensive leisure facilities, including deep sea fishing and wreck diving from the hotel's own boats, waterskiing, parasailing, windsurfing, bowling, tennis, fitness center, and spa, Ajman offers a range of business and conference facilities.<sup>32</sup>

#### Umm al-Qaiwain

Umm al-Qaiwain is also a small Emirate, with about 777 square kilometers - or about 1 percent of the country's total area, excluding islands. It is located adjacent to Ajman on the shores of the Arabian Gulf. Its inland border lies about 32 kilometers from the main

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

coastline. It lies between Sharjah to the southwest, and Ras al-Khaimah to the northeast. The capital city has the same name. The city contains administrative and commercial centers, the main port and a Mariculture Research Center where prawns and fish are reared on an experimental basis, are located here. The city also has preserved an old fort, its main gate flanked by defensive cannons. Falaj al-Mualla is an attractive natural oasis, located 50 kilometers southeast of the city. Recreational facilities include a wide range of sports complexes, horse and camel tracks as well as a cultural center and excellent hotels.<sup>33</sup>

#### Ras al-Khaimah

Ras al-Khaimah is the most northerly emirate on the UAE's west coast. Its coastline is about 64 kilometers on the Arabian Gulf, backed by a fertile hinterland, with a separate enclave in the heart of the Hajar Mountains to the southeast. Both parts of the emirate share borders with the Sultanate of Oman. In addition to its mainland territory, it possesses a number of islands including those of Greater and Lesser Timb, occupied by Iran since 1971. The area of the Emirate is 168 square kilometers, which is

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 132.

equivalent to 2.2 percent of the country's total area, excluding islands.<sup>34</sup>

Although oil has been found on the emirate, the emphasis on development is the farming area which is viewed as being most important today. The economy is based on natural resources including agriculture, fishing, rock quarrying, and oil. Masafi is well known for its orchards and natural springs and Wadi al-Qawr, is an attractive valley in the southern mountains. It has grown at a slower pace than other emirates, mainly to ensure long-term stability. It is an interesting emirate because it has preserved past history along with modernization.<sup>35</sup>

#### Fujairah

The Emirate of Fujairah is in many ways the odd man out among the seven that make up the UAE. Its coastline is on the Gulf of Oman, outside the narrow and strategic Strait of Hormuz, and its hinterland is mainly mountainous with a narrow coastal strip, rather than plains and desert. It makes up only 1.5 percent of the country's total area, excluding islands.<sup>36</sup> It never had a

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<sup>34</sup> United Arab Emirates, op. cit., p. 30.

<sup>35</sup> Vine and Casey, op. cit., p. 130.

<sup>36</sup> United Arab Emirates, op. cit., p. 32.



significant pearling industry, since the oysters thrived only in the shallow waters of the Arabian Gulf and not in the deeper and cooler Gulf of Oman. The Hajar Mountain range divides the UAE in two. It was not until 18 years ago that a road was constructed that took one through the mountains making it possible for Fujairah to be connected to the rest of the UAE. Today it also has its own international airport.<sup>37</sup>

The Emirate is blessed with dramatic scenery. It is well placed to continue building on its tourism trade. Attractions include some excellent diving sites, the natural beauty of the mountains and coastline, cultural and historic attractions and, reliable winter sunshine.<sup>38</sup>

The facilities at the UAE have been given worldwide recognition. The UAE has been chosen by the World Bank to host the annual conference in 203 of the bank and the international Monetary Fund. The high profile international conference will be attended by 180 member countries.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The United Arab Emirates 1993, op. cit., p. 125.

<sup>38</sup> United Arab Emirates Yearbook 1999, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 292.

## Sports and Leisure

Although the UAE offers visitors many interesting activities and many sites to see, sports and leisure are the main attractions offered. Sheikh Zayed gave the highest priority to the building of sports facilities for the youth of the UAE. Sports clubs have been formed with government support, stadiums built and football has become the national game. First class government and private sports and leisure centers have been established throughout the country. The citizens of the UAE now participate at home and abroad in a wide range of modern sports and leisure activities, from basketball and bowling, to golf, cricket, and ice hockey. Heritage sports continue to have a strong following. These include camel racing and racing. Various events have attracted world-class sportsmen which has encouraged a wide participation of sports in the Middle East. Horse racing has also become very popular; Dubai has hosted the world's richest horse race since 1991.

Marine sports have also attracted a lot of sportsmen. The Abu Dhabi International Marine sports Club was opened in 1998. This was a gift from Sheikh Zayed to the youth the UAE to make sure that suitable training facilities are available for marine sports. Boat racing has long been

traditional in the UAE. This includes powerboat racing, sailboat races. Other activities include jet skiing diving and snorkeling.<sup>40</sup>

Other sports of interest include golf, tennis, snooker, motor sports, bowling, and cricket. Many of these activities involve international participants. These games, particularly those that are international, attract thousands of men and women of all ages to the UAE on an annual basis.

#### Exhibitions

The UAE has become a major world center for a wide range of exhibitions and conferences that cater to virtually all major interest groups, from farmers to military advisers and from commercial trades to medical specialists. Well-equipped exhibition centers and conference facilities are present in each of the major cities. In addition to the big shows such as IDEX, TRIDEX and the Dubai Air Show, there are many other annual shows that attract thousands of visitors to the UAE, not all of which are for members of particular trades or professions: the Dubai shopping Festival, for example, brings large

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., pp. 286-288.

numbers of ordinary shoppers to the Emirates and it is a great boost to local commerce. New exhibition centers are being built.<sup>41</sup>

In Abu Dhabi the General Exhibitions Corporation (GEC) was recently established to supervise all exhibitions and conferences held in the emirate, defense related or otherwise in order to maintain a unified international standard for all events held in Abu Dhabi.

Exhibitions are planned at least one year in advance, sometimes even more. This is because full attention is given to each exhibition, but there may be more than one conducted at the same time. All exhibitions are directed at countries and organizations that have worldwide visibility and interest, which results in thousands of people coming to the Emirates on an almost continuing basis except during the months of June, July, and August. Every exhibition has its own web site and Email address.

The UAE has become a much sought after venue for conferences, regional and international exhibitions and major sports events such as the Dubai World Cup, the Dubai

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 285.

Desert Classic Gulf Tournament, and polo and cricket competitions.<sup>42</sup>

The next chapter is a review of marketing strategies being used by the tourist industry in the UAE.

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<sup>42</sup> UAE Tourism,  
<http://www.emirates.org/tourism/index.html>, 6/19/.2002, p.  
1.

## CHAPTER THREE

### TOURISM IN DUBAI

Due to the location the UAE has been able to act as a connecting link between Europe and the Indian subcontinent, the Far East and Africa since time immemorial. It is still playing the role of intermediary between these vastly different cultures, the only difference being that air travel has increased the number of visitors who come to the UAE. The Internet has also significantly increased the UAE's opportunity to make contact with the outside world. Every continuing activity has its own web site. UAE web sites are kept up to date on a monthly basis. Exhibitions and other events are heavily promoted. Information regarding flights, hotels, etc., is freely available.

Dubai has set an example for the other Emirates in the way that it pursues tourism as an industry. In 1989, the Dubai Commerce and Tourism Promotion Board (DTCPB) established a marketing office in Dubai. Its main role was to concentrate on promoting Dubai's commerce and tourism interests internationally. The DTCPB has two main areas of responsibility, promoting tourism and commerce. The Dubai Tourism and Commerce Department was established in 1997.

The department is responsible for carrying out all the functions of the former DCTPB. It is the principal authority for planning, supervision, and development of the tourism sector in the Emirate of Dubai.

Today, Dubai has Tourism and Commerce Marketing Department (DTCM). In 1997 it took over the Tourism and Trade Promotion Council. Since that time there has been a renewed focus on worldwide promotion of Dubai as an ideal tourist destination and a thriving commercial center. The DTCM has 14 offices located in Philadelphia (North and Central America), Los Angeles (Western USA), London (UK and Ireland), Paris (France), Frankfurt (Germany), Stockholm (Nordic Countries), Milan (Italy), Moscow (Russian Federation), CIS and (Baltic Countries), Nairobi (East Africa), Johannesburg (South Africa), Mumbai (former Bombay, India), Hong Kong (Far East), Tokyo (Japan) and Sydney (Australia and New Zealand).<sup>43</sup>

DTCM plans and implements an integrated program of international promotions and publicity activities. The program includes:

- Exhibition participation
- Marketing visits

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

- Presentations and road shows
- Familiarization and assisted visits
- Advertising, brochure production
- Media relations and inquiry information services

The administrative responsibilities of DTCM are to license hotels, hotel apartments, tour operators, tourist transport companies, and travel agents in Dubai. Its supervisory role also covers all archeological and heritage sites, tourism venues, conferences and exhibitions, the operation of tourist information services, and the training and licensing of tour guides. The increase in number of visitors to Dubai were estimated at three million by the end of the year 2000, increasing every year after that.<sup>44</sup>

The UAE is placing more emphasis on promoting tourism in the course of lessening its reliance on the traditional oil industry and diversifying the sources of its national income. The UAE has exerted a great deal of effort to attract tourists, especially among people visiting for conferences and exhibitions, and within a short span of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., p. 158.



time in the life of the country, it has become a central stopover and a significant attraction for businessmen and participants in conferences. This extensive promotion has yielded positive results. The number visiting the Emirates increased significantly from 1.67 million in 1993 to 1.92 million in 1994. Sixty-five percent of these tourists, or 1.24 million, came to Dubai, where they spent 3.37 million nights at its hotels, compared with 352,987 tourist, or 18 percent visiting Abu Dhabi and spending 1,138,222 bed nights. Sharjah hosted 252,398 tourists, spending 960,112 nights and accounting for 13 percent of the total number. Statistical studies show what 33 percent of the tourists visiting the UAE in 1994 were Europeans, 28 percent were from the Gulf countries, 26 percent were Asians, 9 percent Arabs and 4 percent came from the Americas.<sup>45</sup>

During 1995, Germans were the number one European nationality to visit the UAE, followed by the British, French, Swiss and Scandinavians. The number of South African visitors is also on the rise while a substantial number of Finnish tourists are coming to the Emirates. Americans have also shown an interest in visiting the

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<sup>45</sup> Al-Zarouni Marwan, The United Arab Emirates 1996, Abu Dhabi: Trident Press, Ltd., 1995, p. 4.

country and a number of contracts have been reported between UAE and American tour operators. Over 600,000 CIS tourists visited the UAE during 1995, spending over \$1.5 billion to buy electronics, electrical appliances, and automobiles.<sup>46</sup>

In the next chapter strategies are proposed for the various events and attractions that bring in the largest number of tourists.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### STRATEGIES

Since the establishment of the Federation in 1971, the seven emirates comprising the UAE have forged a distinct national identity through consolidation of their federal status and now enjoy an enviable degree of political stability even though there is unrest in the Middle East from time to time.

Since the formation of the federation, the government has been relatively stable and therefore able to make the progress that the leaders had planned. The new federal system of government included a Supreme Council, a Cabinet or Council of Ministers, a parliamentary body, the Federal National Council, and an independent judiciary, at the peak of which is the Federal Supreme Court.<sup>47</sup>

The rulers of the seven emirates agreed to be a member of the Supreme Council, the top policymaking body in the new state. They also agreed they would elect a President and a Vice President from amongst their number, to serve for a five year term of office. The Cabinet is made up of 21 members, 17 ministers and four ministers of

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<sup>47</sup> United Arab Emirates, Yearbook 1999, op. cit., pp. 58-59.

state, appointed in 1997 according to the Constitution. The Federal National Council made up of 40 members drawn from the emirates on the basis of population, with eight for each of Abu Dhabi and Dubai, six each of Sharjah and Ras al-Khimah, and for each for Fujairah, Umm al-Qaiwain and Ajman.<sup>48</sup>

When the Rulers of the seven emirates met to agree on the forms of government for their new federal state, they chose to not copy government patterns from others. They worked towards a society that would offer the best of modern administration while at the same time retaining the traditional forms of government that with their inherent commitment to consensus, discussion, and direct democracy, offered the best features of the past. It is evident that they chose the correct way to govern the federation while at the same time permitted the different emirates to have considerable autonomy as they had for centuries before.<sup>49</sup>

Each of the seven emirates has its own local government. Although all have expanded significantly as a result of the country's growth over the last thirty some years, these differ in size and complexity from emirate to

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 62-63.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

emirate, depending on variety of factors such as population, area, and degree of development. Each Emirate has its own Tourist Bureau. However, because some of the Emirates do not have oil revenues and small in size, they are not able to allocate millions of dollars to promote tourism. In fact, Aljam, for example, depends a lot on attracting tourists that have been attracted to other emirates such as Sharaja, Dubai, and Abu Dhabi. Every emirate has participated in the tourism industry to the degree that they have resources. Sharjah, for example, increased its efforts to promote itself as a tourism destination and recorded a significant rise in traffic through its international airport, as well as road travelers form Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. The Emirate continues to take steps to preserve its local heritage by building more museums.<sup>50</sup>

Abu Dhabi and Dubai have the largest tourist organizations in their local government. They have also made the greatest investment in building hotels, entertainment centers, parks, golf courses, stadiums, trade centers, and other tourist attractions. As an example, Abu Dhabi spent Dh180 million in a golf course to

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<sup>50</sup> "Tourism," op. cit., p. 3.

attract visitors from Japan and Europe who enjoy golf. More coastal resorts are also planned such as the Lulu Island project which is one of the largest and most impressive tourist projects in the region. Dubai has also spent billions on luxury hotels, golf courses, tennis courts, a variety of land and water sports activities, etc. Most of the other emirates have also had positive experiences with tourism and are looking for increased interest to the point that the industry will significantly reduce their dependence on oil revenues and provide non-oil producing emirates revenues. They too are continuing to build hotels, museums, stadiums, etc., often spending millions of dollars that they do not have but hope to recoup from the tourist seasons.

The UAE has been successful attracting regional and international sporting events, land, water, and air. Most of the sporting events are promoted by Abu Dhabi and Dubai as they have the facilities for supporting the different events. In many cases, the facilities have been duplicated so the emirates are at time competing with each other to attract those events which draw thousands of people every year, or every two to four years. As an example, camel racing takes place during the winter seasons, October to March. The Wathba Racetrack is about 45km east of Abu

Dhabi. Al Ain Racetrack is situated approximately 25km from Au Dhabi. The Nad al-Shjeba camel track is located on the outskirts of Dubai city behind the Metropolitan Hotel. Sharjah, Ajamn, Ras al-Khaimas, and Fujairah also host camel racing but the camel racetrack, located between Fataj al-Mualla and Umm al-Qaiwai is one of the more simple and attractive racetracks.<sup>51</sup>

Each sporting event, trade center, hotel, etc., all have their own web sites. Information regarding events including sporting events, trade shows as well as exhibitions is readily available on the Internet. Information can be easily obtained regarding travel agencies, hotels, events, flight schedules, etc., within minutes.

#### Recommendation

It is the view of some that the success of the UAE as a federation has been due to the fact that the individual emirates have had relative autonomy and have been able to continue their way of life and government rather than being totally governed by a national entity. However, with the tourism industry growing so rapidly it is believed

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<sup>51</sup> "Sports Events," <http://www.emirates.net.ae>, 6/20/02.

that the entire country would benefit if the leaders of the country would create a Ministry of Tourism and direct the efforts of all the emirates. In this way, all of the tourist attractions could be supported. At the present time there are many luxury hotels in most of the emirates, some of which are full only for certain events, while remaining empty at other times. They also continue to spend millions of dollars to build golf courses and other attractions to encourage tourists. Many "tourists" are attracted to the country to see trade shows, special exhibitions, and regional and international sporting events. Many of these attractions are geographically within a short distance from each other.

It is believed that the tourism industry would grow more rapidly if a Ministry was created with a separate department for the various events such as trade shows, exhibitions, fairs, sporting events, and one for creating tours for those interested in ancient archeology and museums, camping in the desert, mountains, etc. In this case, interesting tours can be arranged which would be of interest to those, perhaps older people, that would have no interest in the other tourist attractions.

The benefits of this plan would achieve the following:



- Reduce the need to build more five star hotels;
- Reduce expenditure for attractions that currently exist in the various emirates;
- Duplication of effort to attract tourists;
- Reduction in costs to attract tourists so that profit margins will be higher.
- Different activities could be better coordinated so that all of the facilities would be used in the various emirates.

Dubai has the most advanced tourist organization within the local government. The DCTPB has made significant progress expanding marketing on a worldwide basis. They have been successful in establishing offices in different countries, as well as attracting a growing number of overseas tour operators to promote Dubai as a tourist destination. These efforts have been rewarding to Dubai as they have won prizes for having the best destination in the Middle East from the World Travel organization. It has also won silver medals for the third

consecutive time for the best tourism and conference center in the Middle East.<sup>52</sup>

Instead of Dubai promoting only Dubai tourism, it would benefit all the emirates if they were all promoted so that the facilities that have been built will be used and can at some time have a return on the investment. It would be too costly for each emirate to have an office in the different countries. With separate departments being organized to deal with the various tourist attractions, the greatest benefits would be derived from some activities could be promoted when others are dark with events to be scheduled later. As an example, the DCTPB developed a program to attract the Scandinavian market, participating in travel trade fairs in Norway, Sweden, and Finland for the first time (in 1996), and new hotels were planned to be build to support the increase in tourism they expected.<sup>53</sup> A better plan may have been for the Scandinavian plan to be promoted from the UAE with all the emirates participating rather than just Dubai. This would have placed the UAE more on the world map, not just one tourist attraction.

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<sup>52</sup> "Tourism," op. cit., 6.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p. 7.

Together the emirates could continue to explore archeological sites and continue to restore building and forts of the past that would be of interest to many people and greatly benefit tourism for something "different" for people to enjoy.

Uniting the emirates under one ministry would be beneficial to the industry and better promote tourism for the benefit of all the emirates. It would also be the better use of finances. Duplication of effort would be minimized. As an example, better use of existing hotels would be made instead of the various emirates building more and more. Each department would be managed by a marketing expert, one that is familiar with the industry as well as the industry worldwide.

### Marketing

It is marketing that will continue to make tourism successful in the UAE. The Internet has served as a valuable tool for bringing information about the UAE to the world. Every hotel, every emirate, every exhibition, every sport, etc., have their own web sites as well as their own e-mail address.

In addition, marketing must be done from a global perspective, designing the strategy that promotes each type of event as the target market for each event differs.

For trade shows and exhibitions, for example, the target market would be business and industry. Jewelry exhibitions would be directed to those in the industry. Fortunately, Dubai has done a lot of work in this area and has been successful in marketing programs that can serve as a model. The most important thing is to promote all of the UAE, not just one emirate. In this way, the country will be given greater recognition, and more tourists may be attracted to the area to see the UAE as an oil producing country as well as a beautiful place to spend a vacation.

The existing literature on Impression Management (IM) offers several tactical approaches to promote tourism. IM, also known as "self-presentation" or "self monitoring" is concerned with directing or manipulating behaviors toward others to create and maintain desired perceptions of themselves. Using this definition as a guide, the united UAE tourism ministry should select those activities which they expect will make the most desirable impression. The potential success of the ministry's tourism presentation is generally influenced by the degree to which the ministry's marketing plan is perceived as being congruent with consumers definition of desirable tourism activities. Thus, if congruence is high, the ministry's marketing plan is more likely to create the

desired impression and elicit a favorable response. Conversely, if the marketing plan and tourism activities are perceived as inappropriate, such as an oil industry ploy, negative or defensive undesirable impressions by potential consumers are more probable.

Two assertive IM tactical approaches seem warranted in a united UAE tourism ministry marketing plan.

The first approach is already in place. That is, self-promotion, or positive statements and advertisements to describe the tourism activities in the UAE. The second IM approach requires ingratiation activities designed to evoke attraction and liking by tourism consumers. Ingratiation operates on the principle of reciprocal attraction, i.e., tourists are attracted to countries, tourism activities and/or people who seem attracted to and similar to them. This approach requires establishing a marketing plan that begins with endorsements that depict similar attitudes and values of the UAE and targeted consumers.

The next chapter is a summary and conclusion of the study.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The UAE was little known as a country until the discovery of oil in the Middle East. Before 1971 the area was nothing more than seven very small countries called the Trucial states. For many years the states, along with other gulf nations, were under the military protection of Great Britain. In 1971, Great Britain brought an end to the protectionism in the Middle East mainly because the nations were now able to protect themselves, and it was too costly as the kingdom struggled with financial crises. They encouraged the seven states to unite, making them one nation. This was achieved in 1971 when the Trucial states became the United Arab Emirates. Each emirate, however, retained its history and traditions.

By this time, oil revenues were large enough to modernize the country and make the desert bloom. The successes achieved in the last thirty years are unequaled in the history of civilization. In addition to the reserves of oil and gas, the leaders recognized the beauty and historical significance of the country should be shared with others, and the UAE should become the Hong Kong of the Middle East. As an industrial and financial

center, it reins number one in the Gulf. As for tourism, it also ranks number one in the entire Middle East. As a result, it has become a nation not only contributing the needed oil to the market, but also offering people all over the world the opportunity to experience events and see places they have never seen before.

This study briefly reports on tourism, as it exists to day in the various emirates. It is proposed that the federal government create a Ministry of Tourism to coordinate the efforts all the emirates and promote the UAE rather than individual emirates. This would more effectively utilize the tourist attractions and facilities that currently exist rather than building more while some may lie in waste. To ensure that tourism will achieve its forecasted goal of adding more to the GNP than oil in the future, a ministry is needed so that all of the effort made to date will be utilized and made profitable.

There is no doubt that effective marketing strategies can and will continue to increase the number of visitors to the UAE every year. With marketing strategies that involve all the emirates and all of the various events, and involves impression management tactical approaches in the marketing plan can serve as a model for other nations

in how to use resources that they had never considered before.



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