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2010

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/61382/>

MPRA Paper No. 61382, posted 16 Jan 2015 20:16 UTC

New Product Development in Tourism: A Middle East Experience

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Abstract

This paper is a modified version of an academic study conducted as part of a post graduate dissertation in Management during 2010. The researchers attempted to explore the potential of the tourism sector in Bahrain and to evaluate the feasibility of developing a new tourism product in the country. The study also attempted to conduct a project evaluation of the proposed product with regard to its financial feasibility, environmental sustainability and social acceptability and to identify appropriate marketing strategies for the promotion of the proposed product.

Key Words: Tourism, Product development, Bahrain, Desert safari, Middle East,
Nature tourism

Introduction

In the ancient and prehistoric days, tourism had an extremely restricted outlook in the eyes of a common man. It was usually confined to pilgrimages, or viewed as a source of relaxation or a method of imbibing knowledge on different cultures and heritages. However, with the dawn of the hybrid marketing era and as a consequence of globalization, which virtually melted down geographical and information barriers, tourism has acquired an entirely new façade, restructuring the tourism industry worldwide. Today, tourism finds room in almost every walk of life, be it education, sports, leisure, entertainment, adventure or the like. In schools and universities, we discover tourism in the form of student exchange programs or excursion trips, families plan big holidays to attractive destinations which are available at reasonable prices due to cut-throat competition between tourism marketers. Even business visits are often accompanied by some leisure activities to ensure utmost client satisfaction.

In the Middle East, the tourism industry has, of late, fired up in the past decade with primary focus on new island developments and conversion of desert lands into attractive tourist hot-spots. As Bahrain enjoys the unique topography of a desert island, the opportunities available for tourism promotion are massive. Tourism in Bahrain, has probably taken a backseat in people's minds particularly among its residents in light of the recent financial crisis. Bahrain, being a desert island, has the capability to attract tourists but it has been a casual observation that the tourism market has not been explored to its maximum potential with only a mere handful of tourism attractions such as the Tree of Life or island resorts sprouting up in a few corners. In view of this current state of affairs, developing a unique tourism product that would stimulate demand from both the local populace and foreign tourists would indeed be an astounding challenge. Our study aimed at the introduction of an attractive tourist product, namely a desert safari that has proved to be quite an illustrious undertaking in the neighbouring GCC countries but is nonetheless non-existent in Bahrain. The topographic panorama of Bahrain fulfills the requirements to conduct a full-scale desert

safari and its subsidiary attractions, and working on product development in this regard was very challenging.

Tourism service providers have an array of products to choose from and could choose to offer a combined package integrating aqua tourism and desert tourism in Bahrain. However, it has been recognized that tourism marketing is an activity, rarely exploited on this island. Although new product development in tourism is not a panacea for regional economic crisis, certain local resources can be built up to become world class attractions. New product development can be defined as the process of introducing a new product or service to market, comprising of various activities such as idea generation, product design, market research and marketing analysis. New product development in tourism aids a country in achieving global reputation as a tourist destination, and this, in turn, will contribute to the economic development of that region through its high growth and development rates, considerable volumes of foreign currency inflows, infrastructure development, and introduction of new management and educational experience, which dynamically influence various sectors of the economy. Tourism product development involves coordinating all the actions behind feasible, sustainable projects that will help to transform a location into a successful and sustainable tourism destination.

A short-term study was undertaken to explore the potential of the tourism sector in Bahrain and to evaluate the feasibility of the development of a new tourism product – a desert safari, for the promotion of tourism in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The study also attempted to conduct a project evaluation of the proposed product with regard to its financial feasibility, environmental sustainability and social acceptability and to identify appropriate marketing strategies for the promotion of the proposed product.

Review of Relevant Literature

The scope of this literature review has been to include any research that examines the important premises of the research, regardless of the specific scholastic subject area, that is, tourism product development in Bahrain.

Uriely (1997) describes the heating debate on the modern tourist experience to be a symptom of ethical debauchery, or in other words, a mere conquest to seek artificial experiences for pleasure, the opposing school of thought considers tourism to be a ‘modern tradition’ involving a pursuit to knowledge and happiness. While the main focus of the present research is on new product development in tourism, Uriely’s work on the conceptualization of tourist experience is supportive to our study.

Nature-based tourism is a new tourism arena which has seen significant development in recent years. Nature-based tourism offers significant profitable opportunities that support both conservation and employment across a geographical area. Potts and Rourke (2000) critically examine the factors that contribute to the success of nature-based tourism enterprises. They stated that the most important characteristic of nature-based tourism is that it is directly affected by the quality of the environment, which is both the product and the place where the tourism operations are carried out. McNeely (2007) focus on the risks associated with nature-based tourism. The study states that nature-based tourism poses risks to the natural environment, to local communities (especially indigenous peoples, who may be especially vulnerable in the more remote areas), to the tourism industry itself which suffers from fiscal fluctuations and, consequently, to the regional and national economy. Also, tourists themselves may face health and safety hazards as an indirect consequence of nature-based tourism. The authors identified four elements that are desirable for the successful management of risks associated with nature-based tourism - a favorable regulatory framework and

futuristic government policies; adequate financial support for conservation and nature protection; edification of all of the stakeholders; and intelligent and adaptive management at the site level management.

Wall (1982) furnishes a rich reservoir of information by focusing on the proactive aspects of tourism such as infusing a positive tourist experience so as to increase economic viability of tourism (source of foreign exchange flows and creation of jobs) while simultaneously conserving heritage sites and tourist destinations. Furthermore, the author brings to light the diverse challenges confronted by ecotourism which include, the absence of a well-defined base to measure change, ambiguity of tourism activities, multiplicity of environments in which tourism transpires and human-stimulated alterations. Liu (2003) investigates six issues that are often unnoticed but must be addressed in research: the role of tourism demand, the nature of tourism resources, the imperative of intra-generational equity, the role of tourism in promoting sociocultural progress, the measurement of sustainability, and forms of sustainable development. Haywood (1990) perceives marketing in tourism is a 'long-term commitment' to the satisfaction of travelers' needs and motives. Raige and Perry (1998) advocate a more strategic approach to marketing. They identified three strategic approaches that can be used in travel and tourism industry – the consumer-oriented approach, the competitor-oriented approach and the trade-oriented approach. Hassan and Zahari (2009) attempted to identify the underlying developmental phenomenon that created the pathway for the tourism industry to grow and flourish. According to their study, advancements in tourism were based on four prime development philosophies, to be precise, Modernization; Neo-liberalism; Dependency and Alternative Development. They also elucidated the effects of socio-cultural, economic and political factors on the emergence of the commercialized tourism. In the "Modernization" category, the authors talk about the economic contributions of tourism to a country such as tourism being a source of foreign currency inflows, employment generator and a GDP contributor.

Henderson (2006) explicates a series of factors and events that hindered Dubai's tourism sector, although tough, enabled the country to adopt international tourism standards to enhance economic diversification. The study discusses the development of tourist destinations, the various strategies involved, bottlenecks, economic and political dynamics and various other perspectives, with special emphasis on Dubai tourism. Middle East has been identified as one of the least developed tourism regions in the world, the main reasons being poor infrastructural facilities, lack of promotion and marketing, and above all, opposition by Islamic philosophers to westernized living patterns. Despite the innumerable blockages such as its small size, extreme climatic conditions and limited supply of cultural and natural attractions, Dubai has been adept in revolutionizing these bottlenecks into unique selling points. The same condition is of highest relevance to Bahrain. While pioneering a new tourism product, it would be just enough suitable to consider the same circumstances experienced by Dubai.

New product development in tourism enterprises has been a virtually overlooked subject in tourism marketing literature, even though product development is a prerequisite for satisfying the needs and shifting demands of tourists as well as ensuring the prosperity of the tourism business. Middleton (1989) pioneered the concept of total tourist product or the overall tourism product (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). He advocated that from the standpoint of a potential customer considering any form of tourist visit, the product may be defined as a bundle or package of tangible and intangible components, based on activity at a destination. The package is perceived by the tourist as an experience, available at a price (Middleton & Clarke, 2001). Kompulla (2001) attempts to understand how the small activity operators in the nature-based

tourism industry in Finland develop their product line and an analysis was conducted of what their new-product development process was like in reality. On the basis of his findings, the author developed a theoretical framework based on conventional new product development theory. New product development in tourism was proposed to be a five-stage process comprising of service concept development (including idea generation, core product screening, concept testing, concept development), service process development (including module creation, service blueprinting, prototype testing, business analysis, formal product blueprinting), market testing (including product testing and financial evaluation), commercialization (formal product offering) and post-introduction evaluation. The author concludes by stating that the more a company pays attention to its new product development procedures the better chance it has in succeeding with the product strategy in the changing markets.

There has been no mention of the use of sophisticated marketing research tools to develop new products in the tourism sector in past marketing literature. Panda and Panda (2005) proposed the use of a marketing research method identified as conjoint analysis and demonstrate the power and flexibility of this technique in developing new tourism products. Dalton and Lynch (2009) developed a conceptual model that embodies the specific characteristics and challenges of new service development in the tourism industry. The model collates the various activities of tourism service development into four phases: exploring opportunities, define service concept, define service system and launch service.

Study Methods

The study was mainly based on secondary data. Statistical information relating to tourism in Bahrain was collected from the Ministry of Information and Culture for the purpose of understanding the past performance of the tourism sector and to discover its future potential. In addition, research journals, related books, and working papers in the related field, publications and reports etc. formed a part of our data sources. Analysis of the data so obtained was done using various strategic tools such as SWOT analysis, environmental appraisal, competition review, distribution analysis and other strategic tools relevant to our research undertaking.

The process followed by Kotler, et al. (2008) in the development of a new product has been of great utility in our study. Based on their concept of product development, the following depict the sequential steps involved in new product development:

- Idea Generation and Screening
- Concept Testing
- Product Idea Screening by the Firm
- Market Testing
- Testing Component of the Marketing Mix

Socio-cultural impact of tourism in Bahrain

Just like other Middle-eastern countries, Bahrain is a Muslim country and follows the conservative traditions of Islam, although today, Islamic practices have become quite liberalized on the island, with local literacy levels increasing, and a large number of locals attaining post-graduate education. Bahrainis are known to be the best educated people in the Arab world. Moreover expatriates have accounted for flexibility and integration of different cultures with the traditional Bahraini culture. In the Islamic tradition, women have a lower status than men and are considered weaker and in need

of protection. Bahrain has been more progressive than other Arab nations in its treatment of women and in fact is known to be the most liberal GCC country. Because Bahrain is consistently one of the top Middle Eastern countries in the United Nations Development Program's (UNDP) annual index on human development, the tourism industry has opportunities to grow and flourish in this nation. There is also ample scope for ecotourism products to burgeon as Bahrain's government is on the constant move to conserve the kingdom's coasts and protect its prized biodiversity. Bahrain has issued formal decrees protecting its precious environment in addition to approving a number of international environmental conventions. Bahrain has always welcomed international cultures, customs and traditions in a hospitable and positive way, due to which it has always been a winner in the sphere of international business. International business, in turn, has paved an easy way for Bahrain's tourism industry to flourish by leaps and bounds. Thus its hospitable culture, greater degrees of flexibility and liberty concerning trade, business and labour has fostered positive growth in Bahrain's tourism sector.

Evaluation of tourism in Bahrain

The Ministry of Culture and Information is a key government agency that promotes tourism and maintains up to date statistical and related information on tourism through its department for Tourism Affairs. This department is responsible for tourism marketing, promotion, licensing, quality assurance, research and statistics as well as product development. The following statistical information has been obtained from the Ministry and represents the current status of tourism in Bahrain (for the year 2009):

1. **Total travelers to Bahrain by Purpose of Visit relating to Tourism :** Leisure-based travelers numbered to 55,62,757 while those on business amounted to 13,90,569. Those in transit included 5,91,127 while visits by journalists numbered nearly 1,94,706.
2. **Total travelers to Bahrain by Air, Land and Sea:**The largest number of travelers to Bahrain travel through air, and numbered exactly 23,27,497 while GCC nationals travelling by road from neighbouring countries such as Kuwait and Saudi Arabia amounted to 88,65,976. Sea-based travelers were least in number and amounted to just around 94,977.
3. **Total Visitors Arrivals by Nationality:** GCC Arabs are the highest in number, in context of their arrivals in Bahrain and numbered to almost 42 million approximately. South-east Asians rank second in visiting Bahrain and amount to nearly 11 million while nearly six million non-GCC Arabs were known to visit Bahrain in the year 2009.
4. **Total number of Inbound and Outbound travelers (by all routes):** The total number of inbound travelers to Bahrain by air, land and sea, exceeded the number of outbound travelers in 2009. (Inbound – 88,35,866 and Oubound – 87,45,595)

Major Tourist Attractions in Bahrain

Bahrain, with its historical past, rich cultural heritage and plethora of recent developments, is an appealing tourist destination for many a tourist. Some of the major tourist attractions that invite tourists to explore Bahrain are:

Archaeological and Heritage Sites

- *Arad Fort* - Arad Fort is one of Bahrain's most important fortified castles. The Fort was built in the style of Islamic forts at the end of the 15th and early 16th centuries. Due to its strategic location overlooking various sea passages of

Muharraq Island, Arad Fort was used as a defensive fortress throughout history, from the time Bahrain was occupied by the Portuguese in the 16th century to the reign of Shaikh Salman Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa in the 19th century. Arad Fort was most recently restored in the 1980's, a process which took three years.

- *Al Khamis Mosque* - The twin minarets of this ancient mosque are easily identifiable on the Shaikh Salman Road. It is considered to be one of the oldest relics of Islam in the region and the foundation is believed to have been laid as early as 692 A.D. An inscription found on the site, however, suggests a foundation date sometime during the 11th Century. It has since been rebuilt twice in both the 14th and 15th centuries when the minarets were constructed.
- *Qulat Al Bahrain Site (Bahrain Fort)* - The archaeological site of the Bahrain Fort is one of the largest in Bahrain and is located on the north coast of the island. The Qal'at Al-Bahrain site was inscribed on the UNESCO world Heritage list in 2005, based on its outstanding cultural value. As the capital of the ancient Silmun Civilization, the Qal'at Al-Bahrain site represents not only one of the most important ancient civilizations of the region, but also Bahrain's identity as a center of commerce and cultural exchange. An Islamic fort dating back to the 16th century A.D. dominates the site and may be the location of the old capital of Delmon.
- *Barbar Temples* – The Barbar temples to the north of Saar, were discovered in 1954. Its excavations were continued by a Danish expedition until 1962, by which time three superimposed temples had been investigated and dated around 2000 BC, at climax of the Dilmun civilization.
- *Bab Al Bahrain* - With a name that translates to "Gateway to Bahrain", Bab Al Bahrain is on the top of most visitors' must-see lists and ranks among the country's best-known and most visited monuments. designed in 1945.
- *Al Hajar Burial Mounds* - Excavations carried out at Al- Hajar site prove that Bahrain was influenced by Mesopotamian civilization in the form of cylindrical seals and pottery articles which date back to the period 2200-2000 B.C. The excavations also unearthed pottery and utensils made of soapstone from the Assyrian period of 800 B.C. Pottery shards, seals from the new Babylonian period of about 700- 600 B.C., and a 75 cm long metal sword with a wooden handle, the first sword to ever be discovered in Bahrain, were discovered. Also tools have been discovered from the Tylos period, including a beautiful glass collection (300 B.C.) as well as Delmonian seals, the first ever discovery of seals in the burial grounds. These burial mounds have added new information about the method of construction. They were originally designed as mass graves and found to have been fitted with entrances and steps to facilitate opening when needed.
- *Qanats (underground waterways)* - An extensive system of underground waterways and channels, known in the Kingdom of Bahrain as qanats, flows towards the fertile gardens of the west coast. A few of these channels are still flowing, like the ones in Saar and Hamad town. The Qanat system probably originated in Iran. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, these qanats originated probably in the Islamic period as their use has been traced back to the seventh century A.D., when they were used in a battle near Diraz.
- *Jebel Al Dukhan* - Jebel Al Dukhan is a hill in Bahrain which is the highest point in the country. It stands at 134 meters above sea level. The name in Arabic means

'Mountain of Smoke' because of the haze which often surrounds it on humid days. A number of caves of indeterminate type are in the vicinity of the mountain.

- *Saar City Archaeological site* - The archaeological site in Saar is an outstanding example of a well-planned city which existed in the region during ancient times and which dates back to 2300 BC. The main features of the site are a Dilmunite Town and a cemetery with interlocking graves called the "Honeycomb Cemetery".
- *Sheikh Isa Bin Ali House* - Shaikh isa Bin Ali Al Khalifa House is located in the center of the old capital of Bahrain (Muharraq City). It was built at the end of the 18th century by Shaikh Hassan Bin Abdulla Ahmed Al Fateh during the rule of his father, Shaikh Abdulla Bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa. The house is characterized by its huge walls and small doors designed to protect from the heat in summer and the severe cold in winter.
- *Tree of Life* - This well matured tree has come to be known as the Tree of life because of the mystery surrounding its existence in the middle of the desert without any known water source. The fact that it stands alone in this area has further raised the curiosity of visitors and specialist alike for many years. The tree, believed to be from the Acacia family sheds it leaves in the winter but grows yellow flowers, which reappear in both spring and autumn. This type of tree is able to withstand harsh environments and can live for many years.

Museums

- *Bahrain National Museum* - Situated at the junction of Al-Fatih Highway and Shaikh Hamad Bridge leading to Muharraq, the Museum was officially opened in December 1988 to become one of the latest and largest museums in the Middle East. The Museum consists of several exhibition halls covering the history of Bahrain from the stone age, through ancient civilizations and up to the pre-oil period.
- *Oil Museum* - Located a few meters from the first oil well discovered in 1932 in Sakhir, the Oil Museum was officially inaugurated in 1992. It houses old drilling equipment, samples of rocks found underground, topographical maps and some information about the companies that had participated in the exploration for oil.
- *Currency Museum* – This specialized museum is located at the premises of the Central Bank of Bahrain (CBB) in the diplomatic Area. Displayed in the museum are ancient Arab, Islamic, and Byzantine coins mined of gold and silver. The museum houses one of the nine rarest Islamic currency coins in the World. All Currencies circulated in Bahrain since the early Islamic dynasties are on display with full historical details.
- *Beit Al Qur'an* - ocated in the city of Manama's, Beit Al Qur'an or "House of Qur'an was inaugurated in march 1990. It is a typical specialized a Museum consisting of several floors and characterized by a most distinctly Islamic design. The Beit Al - Qur'an houses ancient manuscripts of the Holy Auarn, that have been, collected form there Islamic World, in general and from North.

Attractions and Excursions

- *Al-Jazayer Beach* - Al-Jazayer beach is worth visiting, especially, where the summer heats during the months of July, August, and September and is located near the Zallaq coast.

- *Al Dar Island* - This tiny man-made island resort was opened about 10 years ago and is very popular with young Bahrainis. Parasailing, waterskiing, fishing trips, banana-boat rides and pedal boats can all be done on the island.
- *Bahrain International Circuit* - The vision to build the Bahrain International Circuit was that of His Highness the Crown Prince Shaikh Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa. Its official opening was on March 17th 2004. The inaugural Gulf Air Bahrain Grand Prix, the third round of the 2004 FIA Formula One World Championship, took place on April 4th that year with the now memorable date of 04.04.04.
- *Lost Paradise of Dilmun* - Bahrain's US\$50 million Lost Paradise of Dilmun opened in September 2007. Set in 77,000 square metres of desert oasis, Lost Paradise features 14 of the fastest, newest slides, pools and fountains.
- *Al Areen Wildlife Park* - The Al Areen Wildlife Park has become an integral part of the development of the island and can be seen from the majority of locations. The park is perfect for families and animal lovers to explore at leisure and enjoy the opportunity of seeing animals in the wild. The wildlife sanctuary was built to protect rare Arabian species including the Oryx, Adax and Reem Gazelle. Today hundreds of other animals and bird species live contentedly in Al Areen Wildlife Park.
- *Hawar Islands* - The Hawar Islands group of islands situated off the west coast of Qatar in the Gulf of Bahrain of the Persian Gulf. In 2002, Bahrain applied to have the Hawar islands recognised as a World Heritage Site, due to its unique environment and habitat for endangered species. This site is home to many wildlife species and a very interesting place for birdwatchers and divers. Hawar Islands used to be one of the settlements of the Bahraini branch of the Dawasir who settled there in the early 1800s and on the main island of Bahrain in 1845 in the areas of Zallaq and Budaiya.
- *Adhari Park* - Adhari Park is a brand new visitor attraction in Bahrain. Spread across 165,000 square meters, it provides a complete leisure experience for the whole family, aiming to become the number one family attraction in the GCC, with 38 exciting outdoor and indoor rides for people of all ages, a Family Entertainment Centre, 10 food outlets at the Food Court, Dine in restaurant, Coffee Shops and a lot more.

Need for Tourism in Bahrain

The world today is indeed transforming into a “global village”. The concepts of globalization and elimination of geographical barriers through technology are some of the highly talked issues in today's times. With airline ticket prices becoming as low as taxi fares, emergence of online reservations and paperless air tickets, credit card payments, and the like, tourism has explicitly faced tremendous changes in the past decade purely on account of globalization. Bahrain too, has not escaped from the consequences of globalization.

Rationale for Bahrain Tourism: Bahrain holds the unique geographical feature of being a desert island. This gives the tourism industry ample opportunity to transform the kingdom into an exotic tourist destination. Although the neighbouring islands such as the Amwaj islands, Al Dar islands and Hawar islands are exclusive tourist resorts, there is a need for Bahrain to focus on main island tourist attractions to attract foreign folk. One of the main objectives to enhance tourism in Bahrain is to revolutionize the island

into the world's most sought-after tourism hot-spots. Some of the important motives necessary for tourism in the kingdom are as follows:

1. Enhance sustainability of economic activity

Bahrain is one of the first countries where oil was found to exist in the Middle East and the blaring threats facing the country is the depletion of oil reserves. Because Bahrain's economy thrives upon export of petroleum, it is quite obvious that alternatives sources of generating economic revenue would have to be identified. In this regard, tourism crafts a bright prospect of earning sustainable future economic revenues as it not only contributes to the generation of employment, but also induces foreign currency flows and strengthens the linkages between different sectors of the economy.

2. Uplift the face of Bahrain

Tourism bestows plentiful exposure from the international arena. By constructing appealing hot-spots, the face of Bahrain is likely to glow brightly. Moreover, the recent Formula 1 Grand Prix project has supplied ample international exposure uplifting the face of Bahrain.

3. Spread the fragrance of Bahrain's hospitality to other nations

Tourism offers an opportunity to the local Bahraini folk to express their warmth, hospitality and pride for their cultural heritage. Moreover, by introducing the Desert Safari as an eco-tourism product, the local people can express their support towards environmental conservation.

4. Multicultural Diversity

Tourism brings together people from different races, nationalities and cultures, thus offering a splendid opportunity to local residents to meet people from different ethnic diversities and learn about their lifestyles. In this regard, tourism proves to be an effective educational resource.

5. International contacts could increase opportunities for Bahrain's future investments abroad

Instances like the Grand Prix and Lost Paradise of Dilmun (zawya.com) have opened up marvelous business opportunities and investments on the island. This only signifies that by cultivating international tourist destinations, the world will definitely be at Bahrain's door. Tourism attracts foreign investments into the country and also imparts opportunities for Bahrain to do business abroad.

Tourism Marketing Plan

Mission & Vision Statement of the Programme

The Mission statement of the Desert Sands Safari Company:

“We are dedicated to providing quality service and by ensuring world-class customer satisfaction by providing them with an experiential learning opportunity with no environmental damage.”

The Vision statement of the Desert Sands Safari Company:

“To become the premier desert safari provider in the entire GCC.”

Environmental Review

The Desert Safari project in the Kingdom of Bahrain does require a detailed analysis of the possible macro and micro variables in the environment in which it is believed to operate in. The following text illuminates a brief review of the uncontrollable factors

that must be probed prior to transforming the project into a reality. These factors have been systematically categorized into the EPISTLE framework (abbreviation for Economic, Political, Information, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental):

Economic Factors

- **Deficient Demand** : Since the desert safari product is already well-established in neighboring GCC countries like Dubai, Qatar, Libya and Egypt as well as international desert zones like Australia and India, it is quite evident that capturing foreign tourists to purchase and experience the safari in Bahrain would be a major impediment unless prices prove to be highly competitive or intensive marketing is resorted to. It is obvious that deep-rooted safaris already operating at full swing in other parts of the world would be highly appealing to international tourists.
- **Economic Crisis Impact** : The year 2008-2009 has indeed shaken the entire world economy bringing down the sustainability and livelihood of many nations in the Western hemisphere. The impact of the current economic crisis has spread its symptoms to every possible field of business, and tourism too has not been spared. As a majority of American and European tourists have cut back largely on their leisure expenditures, it is not surprising that the proposed safari would not be capable of generating sufficient revenues.

Political and Legal Factors

- **Governmental Efforts in Tourism Promotion** : Despite international attractions such as the Formula One Grand Prix, Bahrain is a country that is still unknown in many other parts of the world, particularly as a tourism destination. Because tourism does not comprise one of the 'bread-earning' sectors of Bahrain's economy, the Government has not placed a great deal of importance to the promotion and advertising of the tourism industry. However, with oil resources depleting, the government is seriously thinking on alternative sources of generating economic revenue, some of which include shipping, banking and finance, construction, infrastructure and energy. Off late, the government has been pressurized by minority groups in the tourism industry to promote tourism as a national asset due to the availability of ample opportunity and the country's lack of identity in the international realm. Local travel agencies and tourism companies are persuading the government to issue directives and liberalize policies concerning tourism development such as establishment of collaboration between the national airlines (Gulf Air), major hotels, immigration authorities and travel agents. The government is seriously considering intensive promotion of Bahrain's cultural handicrafts and pottery, and the construction of a single location where all handicrafts and heritage products could be promoted and purchased under a single roof.
- **Stringent Legal proceedings** : Although Bahrain is known to be one of the most liberalized GCC countries, it still exercises a degree of stringency in matters concerning granting of licenses to tour operators, issuance of commercial registration certificate, setting up of a new travel agency, introducing a new product, compliance with Islamic laws and the like. The basic motive behind employing rigid legal formalities is to ensure systematic governance and to prevent individuals from taking undue advantages of the benefits of providing liberalized schemes.

Information Factors

For the reason that Bahrain is unknown in quite a few parts of the world as a tourism destination, it is only obvious that local tourists, resident expatriates and GCC nationals (which form about 70 percent of total visitors to Bahrain) would

have reasonable information on the various tourism attractions that Bahrain has to offer.

Social Factors

Apart from the economic perspective of a desert safari, there also exist other tourism aspects that indirectly affect this project. The major obstacle that could likely affect this project could be the dominance of well-known tourist attractions on the island such as the Lost Paradise of Dilmun, the Tree of Life, Bani Jamrah and Jasra village excursion, water sports and beaching, island resorts etc. However the supremacy of these attractions could also be transformed into a plus point, if these attractions supported the marketing of the desert safari. For instance, one could adopt a dual marketing strategy of collaborating the Grand Prix and Desert Safari venture by offering Grand Prix customers, the opportunity to try out the safari as well.

Environmental Factors

An environmental factor that could have a detrimental effect on the sustainability of the Desert Safari is extreme weather conditions. It is quite well known that a desert possesses abnormal weather conditions ranging from extreme day heat to chilly cold nights. Depending on the season, certain desert activities such as Camel rides and outdoor barbeques would not be preferred by tourists during extreme weather conditions.

Market Overview

The Desert Safari is a product meant for leisure and enjoyment and is mainly focused on attracting tourists from the national and international realm. The market overview will focus on the following categories:

- Market of entry
- Travel groups
- Market Demographics
- Market Needs

Market of Entry: The markets in which the product, that is, the desert safari will be marketed in the ***leisure tourism market***. Leisure travelers are classified according to the types of trips they take, income, or age. This market presents Bahrain with the largest opportunities to boost tourism revenues as leisure and relaxation is the very reason for individuals to opt for a holiday.

Travel Groups: The three primary leisure travel groups are:

- **Adventure, Special-Interest, Honeymoons & Sightseeing Trips :** The Desert Safari, as a product can be categorized into sub-products that would take the form of seasonal packages, honeymoon packages and the like. Special interest groups would include ecotourist, archaeologists, researchers and environmentalists, principally interested in studying the natural desert environment of Bahrain. Honeymooners, would like to spend quality time with each other, for which, the honeymoon safari package would suffice. Travelers interested in sight-seeing can explore and unravel the mysteries of Bahrain's desert.
- **High-Income Travelers :** This group of travelers covers the luxury high-earning class who are mainly interested in receiving five-star treatment. These travelers include business tycoons, successful entrepreneurs, celebrities and business executives, and

may be accompanied by their families too, unless they travel on purpose of business visits. It is also to be noted that these travelers could be further divided into international and GCC national travelers.

- Families & Students : This category forms the largest fraction of travelers comprising of middle and upper-middle income families that could be further sub-divided into locals and expatriates as well as school and university students. Schools organizing excursions and field trips could ideally consider the Desert Safari as an interesting and adventurous plan for high school students particularly the Dune Bashing attraction.

Market Demographics

Market Demographics refer to the specific characteristics of different traveler groups. In line with the traveler groups briefly explicated above, the following are the unique characteristics that should be considered while attracting target audiences:

- Special-interest groups and Honeymooners : Special interest groups such as eco-tourists and environmentalists can be categorized based on their purpose of visit, study undertaken (if any, occupation and nationality. With regard to honeymooners, their age, nationality, and income level should be given adequate weightage.
 - High income travelers : The main demographic to be considered would be Income levels, which could be further subdivided into different categories ranging from premier to status customers. Also gender, occupation, age and nationality should be highly regarded
 - Families and Students : Families can be categorized and targeted based on one demographic variable, namely, income level which includes:
 1. High-income
 2. Middle-income
 3. Low-income

Students can be categorized based on their age, gender and educational institution. In the initial stages of the safari development, it would be feasible to consider only local schools and universities due to limited capacity.

Market Needs: For the reason that the Safari is an entirely new product proposed to be implemented in Bahrain on the Government's initiative, it is a known fact, that there would be no competition of any sort. This would imply a huge challenge in accurately identifying market needs. The only solution available is to employ extensive marketing and promotional campaigns along with discount facilities, to educate consumers, as well as persuade them to try the product by offering discounts or complimentary gifts. No doubt, the Bahrain Government who owns the Desert Safari Company has to have a strong tie-up with tour operators as well as spend large expenditures to create a market for the safari. Another way of identifying customer needs is by conducting a full-fledged research on Customer perceptions, by distributing questionnaires, however, time and cost considerations in this regard cannot be ignored. The basic need of a tourist, particularly a leisure tourist, is to enjoy an undisturbed and a quality relaxation holiday. These include services such as, pleasant flight/road trips, high quality meals, good accommodation, hospitable and courteous service personnel and the like.

Market growth: The tourism sector in Bahrain has witnessed a year-on-year growth of 10%-15% as seen by the number of visitors. The Economic Development Board (EDB), an agency responsible for proposing and formulating Bahrain's economic strategy has intensified its efforts towards developing Bahrain's tourism industry. One of its main

objectives is to attract foreign investments, promote high-performing economic sectors and develop sectors of potential growth. The tourism sector is expected to contribute 25% to the country's GDP by 2016.

Market Segmentation Review

The tourism market can be segmented on the basis of the following variables:

- **Origin** : On the basis of origin, the tourism market can be segmented into local tourists, regional tourists (from within the GCC) and foreign tourists.
- **Family Life cycle** : On the basis of the family life cycle stage, the market can be segmented into singles, couples without children and couples with children.
- **Age** : On the basis of age, the tourism market can be classified in to the age groups 12-19 years, 20-34 years, 35-49 years, 50-64 years and 64 +.
- **Social Class** : On the basis of social class, the market can be segregated in to the lower class, middle class, upper middle class and the upper class.
- **Purpose of visit** : On the basis of their purpose of visit, the tourists can be divided into the following categories – leisure, MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences, and events), education, special interest or business.
- **Income** : On the basis of income level, the tourists can be segmented into high-income, middle-income and low-income groups.

Critical Success factor Review

The factors that could determine the success or failure of the tourism product, that is, the Desert Safari in the Bahrain market are:

- **Stability** : Stability in economic, social and political domains is essential for tourism as severe disturbance and volatility will deter many tourists, investors and the industry of tour operators and travel agents in generating countries. With regards to economic stability, the 2008 Economic Freedom of the World (EFW) Annual Report by Gwartney et al. calculates a score of 4 (out of 10, with a higher value signifying greater economic freedom) for the factor "Government Enterprises and Investment" as a percentage of total investment for Bahrain. In relation to the social scenario, there is the ever-present prevalence of Shi'a-Sunni conflict in public discourse.
- **Government Tourism Policy** : Although, the tourism industry has the potential to thrive in destinations under the control of political regimes that have no clearly defined tourism agenda, restricted interest and resources, the government has a crucial role to play in initiating and sustaining tourism development. The government of Bahrain plans to revamp its tourism sector and a new tourism policy to this end will be implemented in the near foreseeable future. The Bahrain tourism ministry recognizes that in order to market Bahrain to international tourists, it is vital to develop the tourism products of the Kingdom, irrespective of whether it is in the sphere of culture and heritage or leisure and entertainment.
- **Accessibility** : The close association of the growth of the tourism industry and advances in transportation is evident and ease of accessibility is a pre-requisite for any country striving to become a leading tourist destination. Bahrain has the necessary transportation infrastructure to ensure easy entry for tourists in the country. Bahrain is aiming to become the transcontinental aviation hub of the Gulf and Middle East region in the next few years.

- *Promotion* : For the new tourism product to be successful, it is essential that it must be promoted aggressively in the target market. The marketing plan for the product should clearly define the marketing objectives, strategies and methods of implementation of the same in order to ensure the success to the product in the market.

SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- **Market leader:** Since the Desert Safari will be the first of its kind in Bahrain; it will be the market leader and can gain a large share of the target market during its first year of operation.
- **Experienced Drivers:** The Desert Safari will hire drivers that are professional, licensed drivers who will undergo a training course in the administration of First Aid to assist clients in case of emergencies.
- **Customization:** The Desert Safari can be customized according to the needs of the customers.
- **Quality:** The main focus of the Desert Sands Safari Company is on providing the customer with the best possible experience in accordance with their needs.

Weaknesses

- **Start-up costs:** The initial investment in the product will be high as the Desert Safari requires the purchase of several 4x4 sports utility vehicles which are very expensive.
- **Lack of marketing expertise:** Since the company is in its nascent stages and the product is new and innovative, there is uncertainty with regards to how to market the product and there is difficulty of developing brand awareness.

Opportunities

- Participation within a growing industry
- The ability to leverage other industry participants' marketing efforts to help grow the general tourism market.

Threats

- **Competition:** The product may face potential competition from other tourist attractions in Bahrain such as the Bahrain International Circuit, Al- Areen Wildlife Park and the various amusement parks present in Bahrain.
- **Economic threats:** A slump in the economy such as the economic crisis of 2008 could have a negative effect on people's spending of discretionary income on leisure and tourism products.

Financial Objectives

The main objective of any business organization, whether manufacturing or service oriented, is to maximize profitability in monetary terms as well as goodwill. The Desert safari is a service-based tourism product and is expected to reap huge revenues to tour operators if properly planned and marketed. Some of the financial objectives of creating a desert safari attraction from the view point of a tour operator are as follows:

- To supplement total net earnings from all tourism activities provided by the tour operator
- To economize on service costs including infrastructural costs (such as the cost of acquiring and maintaining heavy vehicles for dune bashing), staff costs, food and beverages costs, fuel expenses and the like.
- To increase the contribution of the tourism sector to Bahrain's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- To create employment opportunities for the local populace, thus increasing their standard of living and purchasing power.

Marketing Objectives

The marketing objectives specify the goals that the company hopes to achieve in the foreseeable future. The following are the general marketing objectives for the product – Desert Safari:

- To achieve an annual growth rate of at least 5-10%.
- To become the market leader of Desert Safari in the Gulf region and to successfully position the product as such.
- To develop brand awareness through the use of effective advertising, marketing communications and promotion.
- To create such an unforgettable experience that encourages the customer to repeat the purchase and spread a positive word of mouth about the service (viral marketing).

Marketing Strategies

Target Markets

The Desert Safari's target market segments are the middle, upper middle and upper class tourists between 12 and 49 years of age. The target market includes local, regional and foreign tourists visiting Bahrain for leisure purposes. This segment was chosen because these individuals will be interested in participating in the desert safari activities and will have the earning capacity to pay the fee of the desert safari.

Value Proposition

The Desert Safari will be the first of its kind in Bahrain. It is quite palpable that this product would establish a monopoly in the local tourism market. The USP (Unique Selling Proposition) of this service product is its 'one of a kind' and unique existence on a desert island. Moreover, the Formula 1 Grand Prix attraction gives Bahrain an edge over all its GCC competitors. Tourists arriving from different parts of the world to attend the F1 races can easily be attracted to the Desert Safari, provided it is effectively marketed and packaged. Customer satisfaction portrays a crucial role in the success of any service product. Moreover, in tourism it is the top most priority as tourists leave their home country, and maintain elevated expectations concerning hospitality and warmth in a host country. The Desert Safari carries a range of sub-activities. It is a service that provides leisure, adventure and relaxation to a customer under one roof.

Positioning Strategy

The Desert Sands Safari Company will be positioned as the premier desert safari company in the GCC. This positioning will be achieved by leveraging the company's competitive edge: passion for quality and customer satisfaction. No other tourist

attraction in Bahrain provides adventurous experiences except the Bahrain International Circuit. The Desert Safari will bridge the gap created by the lack of adventure-tourist attractions. The tag line of the Desert Safari will be “Pure Adventure”.

Marketing Mix Strategies

The most important objective is to position the Desert Sand Safari Company as the premier desert safari experience provider, serving the domestic market as well as the international market. The marketing mix strategy will seek to first create customer awareness concerning the product.

Product Strategies

The desert safari is "a major service with accompanying minor goods and services" (Kotler et al, 2008). For example, barbeque meals, sheesha and the camp sites are accompanying minor tangibles, while what customers actually buy is leisure-the luxurious desert experience. The desert safari service includes different packages to cater to a wide variety of market needs. All packages will include traveling to the desert, spending time at the campsite, food and other entertainment activities such as dune bashing, sand skiing, quad biking and camel trek.

- **Dune Bashing :** Dune bashing is a form of off-roading, using an off-road vehicle to explore sand dunes in the desert.
- **Sand Skiing:** Sand skiing involves finding a dune, hill, or mountain, climbing to the top of it and skiing down it.
- **Quad Biking:** It involves exploring the desert in four-wheeled bikes called quad bikes.
- **Camel Trek:** Another popular activity in the desert is the camel trek. It is a more personal way to experience the desert environment, and get a glimpse of the desert vegetation and fauna.

The various packages that will be made available to the customers are:

1. Morning Desert Safari (9:00 am -12:00 am daily)

This safari is done in the morning and is perfect for clients who don't have the evening available or are more interested in the dune bashing and adventure than having dinner and relaxing at the camps.

The following activities are included:

- Pick up in the morning around 9 a.m and drop off at 12 a.m.
- Dune bashing (20 minutes)
- Camel ride (15 minutes)
- Sand Skiing (15 minutes)
- Quad Biking (available on request and at extra cost)

Water and soft drinks are included in the package. The entire package has duration of two hours excluding pick up and drop off. A minimum of 4 people are required to avail of this package. No Camp and meals are included in this safari.

2. Evening Desert Safari (3:30 pm to 9:30 pm daily on weekdays)

This tour departs in the afternoon with several photo-stops during an exciting dune drive across the desert. The tour stops to watch the beautiful sunset before reaching

the campsite where the customer has the opportunity to have a camel ride, do sand boarding and try out henna painting. After working up an appetite, the customer can enjoy a delicious barbecue dinner and shisha (the famous Arabic water pipe) after which the customer can watch a belly dancing performance around the campfire by starlight.

The following activities and amenities are included:

- Pick up by 4x4 wheel drive from any point in Bahrain between 3.15pm to 4.00 p.m.
- Drive through the desert - Dune Bashing (20 minutes)
- 20-30 minutes Dune Driving
- Sunset Photography
- Camel Rides
- Belly Dancing (Not during Ramadan)
- Bar (Not during Ramadan)
- Henna Painting
- Hubbllee Bubblee (shisha)
- Arabic Coffee (gahwa) and Fresh Dates
- Traditional costumes
- Unlimited soft drinks, tea coffee and mineral water
- Buffet Dinner and Barbeque (vegetarian food also available on request)
- Departure at 9.30 pm
- Sand Skiing (available on request and at extra cost)

There are no minimum people required for this package; even 1 person can avail of the package. A group of 6 people get a complete car and don't have to share it with other guests.

3. Dinner in the Desert (7:00 pm to 10:00 pm daily)

This package is suitable for people who do not want to do the dune bashing but do not want to miss out on the dinner at the desert. This is suitable for older people and people with medical conditions that prevent them from participating in dune bashing. The following activities and amenities are included:

- Pick up by 4x4 wheel drive from any point in Bahrain between 3.15pm to 4.00 p.m.
- Camel Rides
- Belly Dancing (Not during Ramadan)
- Bar (Not during Ramadan)
- Henna Painting
- Hubbllee Bubblee (shisha)
- Arabic Coffee (gahwa) and Fresh Dates

- Traditional costumes
- Sand Skiing
- Magic Show (on request)
- Unlimited soft drinks, tea coffee and mineral water are available
- Buffet Dinner and Barbeque (vegetarian food also available on request)
- Departure at 9.30 pm

A minimum of 4 people are required to avail of this package.

4. Overnight Desert Safari (3:30 pm to 9:00 a.m. the next day)

A minimum of 6 people are needed to avail of this package. This includes all the activities included in the evening safari and is an extension to it.

The following activities and amenities are included:

- Pick up by 4x4 wheel Drive from any point in Bahrain between 3.15pm to 4.00 p.m.
- Drive through the desert
- Dune Bashing
- 20-30 minutes Dune Driving
- Sunset Photography
- Camel Rides.
- Belly Dancing (Not during Ramadan)
- Bar (Not during Ramadan)
- Henna Painting.
- Hubbllee Bubleee (shisha).
- Arabic Coffee (gahwa) and Fresh Dates.
- Traditional costumes.
- Unlimited soft drinks, tea coffee and mineral water
- Buffet Dinner and Barbeque.(vegetarian food also available on request)
- Overnight stay at camp site
- Sleeping bags and blankets
- Breakfast - Tea/Coffee, toast, butter/jam, egg and juice.
- Departure at 8.30 am next morning
- Sand Skiing (available on request and at extra cost)
- Magic Show (on request)

5. Private Safari

Customers have the option to hire a complete car exclusively for themselves and don't have to mix with other guests at the camp. This is perfect for honeymooners, couples and friends who want to have a blast at the safari.

This is also advisable for people who cannot handle the dune bashing but do not want to miss out on the fun. They can hire the complete car and the driver can take it easy over the dunes. The cars can take up to 7 people. The Private Safari can include any of the activities of the other safari packages. This will include the pick and drop from the customers' place of residence from anywhere in Bahrain.

Pricing Strategies

The Desert Sands Safari Company aims to be the product-quality leader in the market and hence, it strives to become an "affordable luxury", that is, it must be priced just high enough not to be out of the customers' reach. Since the Desert Safari is a new and innovative tourism product in Bahrain, it will have monopoly over the tourism market for a while and hence, can charge premium but affordable prices for its various packages.

After analyzing the prices offered by competitors such as the Dubai Desert Safari and the Bahrain International Circuit, the following prices were set for the various packages (BD: Bahrain Dinar; USD 1 = BD 0.38).

1. Morning Desert Safari – BD 20 per person
2. Evening Desert Safari – BD 25 per person
3. Dinner in the Desert – BD 15 per person
4. Overnight Safari – BD 30 per person
5. Private Safari – BD 40 per person

Optional activities in the packages:

- Quad Biking – BD 10 extra
- Sand Skiing – BD 5 extra
- Magic Show (on request) – BD 20 extra

Promotion Strategies

Kotler and Keller (2008) describe the major tools of promotion to include, sales promotion, advertising, sales force, public relations, direct marketing. Since the safari is an entirely new product that would be introduced in Bahrain, it is intended to heavily promote this product through the following modes:

Promotional pricing: The company will use the techniques of special event pricing to draw in more international customers during exclusive events such as the Formula One track races. On the three race days, the nominal charge of BD 25/- per person for the evening desert safari, would be offered at a discount of BD 20/-, and the overnight safari price would be offered at a rate of BD 31/- instead of BD 36/-. Profit margins would be compensated by increase in the number sales during these days.

Promotional alliances: This is a technique in which one company agrees to carry a promotion for another company's product or service (Kotler et al, 2008). If the safari is promoted by well-established attractions such as the Lost Paradise of Dilmun, Wahoo and Formula One as well as departmental stores and hypermarkets, the safari can easily capture a large market share in its initial years. The price of promotional alliances with these companies could range from BD 500/- to BD 1000/- per year and includes contracts for the distribution of brochures and video presentations

Newspaper Advertisements: Newspaper advertisements will be used as a key medium to educate customers before the safari is actually launched. It is proposed to advertise the

safari in the Gulf Daily News, due to its excellent coverage, and based on the following terms:

- As per the 2010 GDN Rate Card, the rates for a half page coloured advertisement (18 cm x 6 columns, 28 cm) is BD 1,404/- per month and a small sized coloured advertisement on the corner of a page, (10 cm x 3columns, 12.7 cm) costs BD 390 per month.
- Using this data, we intend to use a half page coloured advertisement every day for a month prior to the launch of the safari, costs totaling to BD 1404/-
- Once the safari is launched, it is proposed to use a small sized coloured advertisement every alternate day for a month, which means 15 days on an average, costs totaling to BD 195
- For the remaining 10 months of the year, the small sized coloured advertisement will be used once every week, costs totaling to BD 520/- for 10 months(BD 390/ 30 days = BD 13 x 4 days x 10 months)
- Total promotion cost = 1404 + 195 + 520 + 500 promotional alliances = BD 2619/-

Distribution Strategies

The Desert Safari Company is proposed to be established in Bahrain, by the Ministry of Culture and Information, a key government agency involved in the promotion of tourism and dissemination of tourism research information. As the service product- the Desert Safari, is the first of its kind, it is bound to create a monopoly in the market. Once the Safari product is formally launched by the tourism ministry, it would be attempted to utilize the following distribution channels for effective service delivery:

- Well-recognized tour operators in the Kingdom will be granted permission to promote the same as part of their regular tourist packages
- Travel agents specialized in air transport and hotel/resort bookings
- The Al-Areen Park (an addition to their existing service activities)
- Formula 1 Grand Prix management (as a seasonal attraction)

People Strategies

An essential ingredient of any tourism service is the use of appropriate staff and people. Recruiting the right staff and training them appropriately in the delivery of their service is essential if the organization wants to obtain a form of competitive advantage. Staff should have the appropriate interpersonal skills, aptitude, and service knowledge to provide the service that consumers are paying for. The tourism industry, in particular, is quite labor intensive and hence, appropriate strategies must be formed to manage people.

The Desert Sands Safari Company will hire drivers cautiously only after thoroughly assessing their driving skill in the desert and their ability to perform mechanical repairs on the SUVs in case it breaks down in the desert. After the selection process is complete, the drivers will undergo intensive training in the field of dune bashing as it is a key activity in all the packages. Also, the drivers will undertake courses in First Aid in the eventuality of medical emergencies during the Desert Safari. Apart from the drivers, staff will be hired to attend to the needs of the customers at the camp sites. The staff and drivers will be paid premium salaries to ensure that they are motivated and focus on providing ultimate customer satisfaction.

Process Strategies

The following explicates the sequential steps involved in the process of delivering the safari product to the customer in the most efficient manner. It is to be noted that these apply for all safari packages:

- The customer will be picked up from his location in an SUV with an experienced chauffeur. In order for the service to be efficient, the chauffeur must pick up the customer on time and make sure that the vehicle is functioning properly.
- Several photo-stops will be made on the course of the journey to the desert. Here, it has to be ensured that no too many stops are involved, as the customer might lose interest and not enjoy the safari to its fullest.
- The drive continues in the desert and into the dune bashing activity. The highest priority in this activity is customer safety. Highly experienced drivers should be hired and it must be ensured that the vehicle is not damaged. Any defects in this process, will prevent the company for attracting more customers due to negative word-of-mouth.
- After some dune bashing, the customers will be taken to the main camp site where they will be provided with meals and refreshment. High quality, and ready-to eat meals and refreshments should be available, as the customer would suffer from a certain degree of fatigue and would be irritated if he doesn't receive his orders on time. Well-trained and efficient staff play an important role in this regard.
- Next, the customer can opt for camel rides, sheesha, or henna painting. Each of these activities requires skilled local labour.
- Customer is then given a period of relaxation. The ambience of the tent, cozy couches to rest on, unlimited drinks and refreshments play an important role in enhancing the value of the service provided.
- Towards the evening, the customer is served with traditional Arabic coffee and dates. Quality and freshness of these food items, is extremely crucial.
- The next main important item on the safari agenda is the Buffet Dinner with barbeque (in the case of evening and overnight safaris). Again, in this case, skilled and efficient labour, and quality of meals is important to enhance value.
- Lastly, chauffeurs must ensure that customers safely reach their destinations.

Physical Evidence Strategies

The physical evidence aspect of the desert safari comprises of the camp sites and the vehicles employed in the desert safari. The camp sites include large bedouin tents and huts with all basic amenities. The campsites are different for each package and are located at a distance from each other in the Sakhir desert. Each camp site can accommodate up to 200 people. The cars used for the Desert Safari are 4x4 wheeled SUVs such as Nissan Pathfinder or Nissan Xterra. The capacity of each car is 6 persons.

Implementation & Control

Action Programme / Schedules

The Desert Safari operation will take approximately 4 months to launch. The following milestones identify the key activities and marketing programs. It is important to accomplish each one on time and within the budget.

Milestones	Plan		
	Start Date	End Date	Department
Marketing Plan completion	15/6/10	17/6/10	Marketing
Acquisition of Physical Evidence	18/6/10	30/6/10	Production
Website Completion	1/7/10	14/9/10	Information Technology
Recruitment and Selection of employees	1/7/10	31/7/10	Human Resources
Training of employees	1/8/10	14/8/10	Human Resources
Advertising Campaign #1	15/8/10	14/9/ 10	Marketing
Product Launch	15/9/10	N/A	Marketing
Advertising Campaign #2	15/9/10	14/10/10	Marketing
Advertising Campaign #3	15/10/10	Indefinitely	Marketing
Development of the retail channel	1/7/10	30/6/11	Sales

Budgets

The budget will provide an overview of the allocation of the financial resources of the company. The budget will address finance requirement, sales revenue forecasts and expenses forecast.

Finance Required

The capital required to launch the product, that is, the desert safari, is estimated to be approximately BD 850000. The capital will be raised in the following manner:

- Partial investment by the owners
- Obtaining long-term loans from banks to finance the Desert Safari.

Expected Revenues

The sales forecast figures have been estimated based on the number of leisure-based travelers who visited Bahrain in the previous year 2009 – approximately 5.5 million (exact figure being 5,562,757) . The assumption is that for the year 2010, the number of tourists visiting Bahrain would be approximately the same and at least 5% these tourists will undertake the desert safari. The sales objective is to increase sales by 10% annually. Keeping this in mind, the sales forecast for the first three years of operation is as follows:

Projected Sales Volume and Revenue (in BD)

Year	Sales volume	Sales Revenue
2010	275000	6,875,000
2011	302500	7,562,500
2012	332750	8,318,750

Expected Expenses

The expense forecast will be used as a tool to keep the company on target and provide indicators when corrections/modifications are needed for the proper implementation of the marketing plan. The initial setup cost is BD 250,000 which is inclusive of recruitment and selection costs, administrative costs, training costs and other

miscellaneous expenditure associated with the startup of a new company. The expense forecast for the year 2010 is as follows:

Forecast Expense for the Year 2010

Commodity	Quantity	Price per unit(BD)	Total (BD)
Sport Utility Vehicles (SUVs)	20	1500	30000
Quad Bikes	10	1300	13000
Tents (Rentals)	10	570	5700

Projected Monthly and Annual Expenses

Expenses	Price per month (BD)	Annual Price (BD)
Motor Insurance	16500	200000
Advertising (refer promotion strategies for break-up of costs)	-	3000
Camel rides	200	2400
Fuel expenses	25000	300000

The aforementioned expenses will lessen considerably in the second year due to the absence of startup costs, recruitment, selection and training costs and reduced advertising costs.

Evaluation and Control

The purpose of this marketing plan is to serve as a guide for the organization. The following areas will be monitored to gauge performance:

- Revenue: monthly and annual
- Expenses: monthly and annual
- Customer Satisfaction

Exit Strategy

In the extreme event of non-viability of the programme, business cannot support itself keep on going. In this case the infrastructure or intellectual capital should be liquidated to cover liabilities to an extent.

Thus, the formulation of the marketing plan is a positive stride towards the development of the new tourism product, namely, the Desert Safari. It summarizes what the company has learnt about the market place and indicates how the firm plans to reach its marketing objectives. This marketing plan has drawn inputs from all the organizational functions and is highly customer and competitor-oriented, better reasoned and realistic.

Conclusion

The study indicates that the desert safari promises a very bright future for Bahrain's growth and development. After having conducted a detailed analysis and review of the various organizational aspects governing the potentialities of the safari product, it appears that the desert safari would add to Bahrain's tourism growth and place Bahrain on the international tourism map. Also since this study is a replication of the Dubai Desert Safari, there are ample opportunities for the success of the product in this region based on its success story in Dubai. Because, our study is based on the concept of ecotourism, it is likely that the desert safari will create new waves across the local tourism industry and fire up the country, contributing to Bahrain's GDP and overall development.

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