

The Role of Multinational Companies in Dubai: Balancing Tradition and Modernization

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How do multinational corporations adapt to working in a broad range of countries with differing cultural norms? How is globalization affecting countries' traditions and culture? Focusing on the marketing and advertising of multinational corporations, we sought to answer these and other similar questions in Dubai, the city that has attracted the most international business and investment in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Advertising, as a communication tool, has the tremendous ability to change, shape, and influence the way people and countries behave and react. At the same time, corporations must be flexible and sensitive in the way in which they advertise as they seek to enter new markets. We began our research in Dubai by examining the scope of globalization—whether it is as pervasive as scholars claim—and the effects of globalization on the local culture of Dubai. We then focused on the marketing and advertising strategies of the multinational corporations, which are the forefront of globalization in Dubai.

WHY DUBAI?

When we decided we wanted to study the cultural implications of marketing, we knew that our research should be conducted in a city that combined a modern economy with traditional values. We wanted to experience the excitement of rapid modernization alongside the power and heritage of a deeply-rooted culture. From our readings and general knowledge, Dubai seemed to be such a city. Choosing Dubai as our center of research was significant on two levels. First, it is a rapidly growing city that is increasingly attracting diverse multinational corporations. In contrast to many of its

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neighbors, Dubai is seeking to diversify its economy and move away from its reliance on oil, which means that it is increasingly reaching out to businesses and investment from the rest of the world. Several important international organizations have also chosen Dubai as the host city for their annual meetings, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This prompted us to ask why and how this economic growth is happening, and what is it about the city that makes it so appealing. Second, the fact that Dubai is a Middle Eastern city adds an important political element to our research. Dubai is one of the more liberal cities in the region, even though it is surrounded by very conservative countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. We wanted to understand how Dubai was contending with globalization in the context of its culture and religion. To do this, we interviewed executives from a wide array of organizations and corporations, including the Pan Arab Research Center (PARC), which specializes in market research for products and services throughout the Middle East; the Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel & Towers; TNS/NFO WorldGroup, the leading market information group; AME Info, a leading Middle Eastern business information provider; Fortune Promoseven, advertising and public relations firm; MADCO/Intermarkets Advertising; and the Dubai Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing.

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Klaus Lovgreen, the CEO of AME Info, called Dubai the “mother of globalization.” While sounding like an exaggeration, upon closer examination, there is much merit to such a statement. After spending a week in Dubai, we concluded that the city does, in fact, represent a microcosm of globalization. In Dubai, there are numerous international businesses, many of which have been long established, and many more that

are relocating their regional offices there. Because of its central location, relatively liberal lifestyle, and its favorable investment and economic opportunities, companies continue to move to and do business in Dubai.

Dubai is increasingly becoming a global center of business because of the lifestyle it affords its residents and the willingness of its leaders and citizens to cater to a diverse clientele. There are considerably fewer rules and regulations in Dubai than in neighboring countries. For example, alcohol is permitted to be consumed, and there are entertainment centers, bars, pubs

and discotheques, which are banned in other Gulf States. Thus, despite Saudi Arabia's larger population and market base, international companies choose to locate their offices in Dubai so that their employees are not required to dramatically alter their lifestyles.

Dubai also attracts foreign investors and corporations because of the considerable economic opportunities offered to businesses there. The vision of Vice President of UAE and Prime Minister and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid al Maktoum is to create an open society where international businesses are invited to actively participate in building a better infrastructure and improving business relations. This is why Dubai's free trade zones, which allow companies to work in tax-free shelters, have attracted so many corporations. Furthermore, the latest technologies and modern facilities are available to companies, as the government in Dubai tries to stay at the forefront of most business and technology trends. As Kamal Khoder of Fortune Promoseven discussed with us, the leaders find out what businesses want and work on project after project to bring them to the UAE. This is how the world's first and only seven star hotel, the Burj Al Arab, a landmark of Dubai and the UAE with its unique location on a man-made island in the Gulf, was built. Dubai even formed a neighborhood called Emirates Hills, where non-citizens are allowed to own property. Moreover, relative to other countries, it is fairly inexpensive to live in Dubai. The government has made it a point to encourage businesses to come and take advantage of the city's unique opportunities.

51 PERCENT RULE AND OTHER OBSTACLES

There are some impediments to companies doing business in Dubai. For example, in order for a business to operate in the UAE, 51 percent of the business must be owned by a UAE citizen. This gives a great deal of control and revenue to local citizens and helps them to maintain their country's values and traditions. Foreign companies, usually take one of two approaches to the "51-percent rule". In the first approach, a new business can find a sponsor and give them 51 percent of their revenues. However, a second method, which has become more popular in recent years, is for businesses to find a UAE citizen that is willing to sponsor them. In exchange for this sponsorship, the company provides the citizen upfront with a bulk sum of money and then gets to keep all its future revenues. Khoder noted that being a sponsor could be a local's only profession. "All they do is sign some documents and receive money." There are no limits on how many companies a citizen can sponsor.

Another issue that initially posed difficulties was that expatriates were not able to “own” land in the UAE. However, the government recently passed a law that allows international and foreign citizens to buy land and own it for a period of 99 years—essentially a 99-year lease. Gaining citizenship in the UAE is also extremely difficult. One can live there his or her entire life and still remain an expatriate. Even UAE born children of expatriates are not considered citizens. The original law was enacted to protect the Arab traditions and culture of Dubai, as more than half of UAE’s population is foreign born. Foreigners who have spent much of their lives in Dubai consider this law an impediment. However, they are hopeful that the law will be changed, as many of other laws relating to commerce have been modified over the years.

THE ROLE OF THE LEADER

Critical to Dubai’s development has been the vision and role of the leaders of the UAE. Yahia Hammudi, the regional director of business development for Fortune Promoseven, talked about how the leaders of Dubai welcome globalization and the opening of their country to foreign investors. Khoder added, “The facilities that are offered here are amazing.” Dubai offers everything to everybody and welcomes foreigners so that they can feel at home. From IBM to CNN, all the big multinationals are in Dubai. Khoder believes that Sheikh Mohammed’s innovative mind has played a key role in building and changing the city’s character. For example, he created the Media City and the Internet City, enormous areas where only media and IT companies are located. This layout improves communication among businesses and the government, and makes it easier for the different companies to operate. Khoder said, “The leaders of this country add value to everything they do.” By opening up and providing opportunities for international companies to locate themselves in Dubai, the city has embraced globalization.

The role of the UAE leadership is also critical for the development and prosperity of the region as a whole. People outside of Dubai often speak of Sheikh Mohammed’s vision of transforming Dubai into a well-respected multinational commercial center and of his willingness to invest in and pursue the most innovative and modern technologies. This success is, in part, due to the Sheikh’s accessibility to the people of Dubai and his encouragement of public participation in the development of the city. Citizens can dialogue with the government through the Sheikh’s website. This website is widely used and allows the public to be involved in the social and economic directions of Dubai.

Dubai, in its own way, is turning into a multicultural city where people of all different nationalities are able to find something familiar. As Khoder explained, this developing cosmopolitanism provides a certain comfort level that makes for a contented expatriate business community while at the same time respecting the Emirati culture. Thus, in some ways, local culture is strengthened by the process of globalization. The skyscrapers might make the height of the towers of the mosques less impressive, but core values are kept intact. During our interview at Intermarkets Madco, Managing Director Saad El Zein said that globalization and the opening of markets “bring a positive impact to the country.” However, he added that for all to benefit, foreign companies need to avoid disseminating advertising that undermines local values. Thus, a number of advertising and research agencies, such as Intermarkets, are advising multinational companies to take local norms into consideration when they enter the Dubai market. These agencies aim to localize advertisements so that they appeal to the Dubai consumer and his or her beliefs and culture. El Zein is confident that the process of localizing is headed in the right direction.

The success of the leaders and the government of the UAE is evident. The people we spoke with were representative of international and local companies working in the midst of this process of globalization. They are actively participating in the building of a better, more productive, and prosperous society. All of them referred to Sheikh Mohammed with great reverence and appreciation and were impressed by his ability to steer Dubai into the 21st century when so many of his regional counterparts have not yet adapted to globalization and the new global market. Despite the achievements of Dubai’s leaders, however, it cannot be ignored that the government of Dubai remains largely undemocratic. One of our interviewees clarified that Dubai’s success should not be used to sidestep transition to democracy. Without democracy, the risk of having a totalitarian ruler is always present. Talks within the UAE regarding the future of democracy have been taking place, but it is unlikely that political change will occur soon. UAE citizens are content with the current system, which provides them with a comfortable life. Therefore, popular support for democratization is minimal.

WESTERNIZATION IN DUBAI

In recent years, elements of Westernization, along with the modernization that often accompanies economic success, have made their way to Dubai. According to Sunil Pilai, a senior research analyst at the Pan Arab Research Center, the prosperity of Western nations and their economic successes in

particular have caused many businesses and Emiratis to try to “ape Western nations.” Youth in the UAE wear jeans and buy American and European brands. Many drive SUVs, own cell phones, and listen to Western music. However, all of this is done in a way that is compatible with Dubai’s Islamic culture. The core Islamic values and local traditions remain in place, and continue to be respected and cherished.

However, Westernization and modernization have still been met with negative reactions. Dubai is largely built on the social ties of brotherhood. Khoder told us, “It is a collective society.” He further went on to say that the Gulf culture is a collective culture where family and friendship are the basis for very strong social norms. Thus, public sentiment is easily influenced and can often lead to boycotts of products associated with particular countries or issues. Pilai mentioned that during the American-led invasion of Iraq, people in Saudi Arabia and the UAE boycotted several American fast food restaurants. Women and girls who normally did not cover themselves also responded to the invasion by wearing *hijab* to demonstrate their respect for local culture and traditions.

Most of the other people we spoke to regarded this reaction against the US and the Western world as a temporary phenomenon. El Zein commented on the losses incurred by Estee Lauder after the Iraq war, and the heated debates around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He recognized that there are anti-American sentiments in Dubai, but noted that the government does not encourage it. Thus, these sentiments are not likely to affect businesses in the long run. “Of course...there is anti-American sentiment from time to time,” Khoder said. It is caused by the collective reaction of the society protecting its local values and beliefs. However, he argued that the way a company positions its brand plays a large role in how it is perceived locally and is affected by world events.

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Lovgreen also touched on this issue in his discussion of perceptions of economic and political realities among local residents. According to Lovgreen, often times when people boycott certain products, they base their economic preferences on their political sentiments. He believes that the US and the Western world’s economic and political policies should be perceived separately. However, this is difficult to achieve as economics and politics are closely interrelated in today’s globalizing world.

Furthermore, although locals may want to boycott a certain brand, they

might also realize that their boycott will not produce the change they desire. Khoder cited the example of Marlboro Cigarettes. Marlboro consumers have been smoking for more than 20 years and are unlikely to give up something that they enjoy simply to show their dissatisfaction with the way the US handles its foreign policy. Khoder discounted social pressure as a cause of widespread boycotts, arguing that kinship ties are too strong to be broken over a disagreement about the boycotting of an American brand of cigarettes.

ADVERTISING IN DUBAI

Before a company makes a decision on whether to advertise in a given region and on the type of approach it should take, it conducts a considerable amount of market research. In the US and the Western world in general, conducting this type of market research is relatively easy. All a company has to do is look up demographic data on the internet and organize a telephone survey targeted at a representative proportion of different demographic groups. However, the concept of market research in Dubai and the UAE is very different. Cultural differences, a lack of accumulated data, and social impediments are challenges that businesses and advertising agencies must overcome.

In his interview, Pilai remarked, “Local people do not know [about] the idea of research.” They do not understand it as a concept, and local corporations often do not have enough money to conduct it. However, as more and more multinational corporations begin to work in the UAE and the Middle East, more data is being collected. Companies that collect this information are working to address the challenges of providing more accurate market research. First and foremost, market researchers must decide how to design a study that takes the many cultures and ethnicities of the UAE into consideration. The population is comprised mainly of expatriates from Asia, Europe and the Americas, with less than half of the total population being local Arabs. The first comprehensive demographic report was compiled in the mid-1990s by NFO Worldgroup, the largest custom marketing research company in the Middle East, and Edwards Economic Research, a UK demographer. Their Gulf Corporation Council (GCC) demographics report is “now used as the Bible by market researchers,” said MK Raja, an Executive of TNS/NFO Worldgroup.

Once a company has the demographic breakdown of a region, it can start calling people to survey their opinions. However, this is not an easy task for companies in the UAE. The company has to create a sample that is both random and representative. The task is made more difficult by the fact that, in

the UAE, many residents do not publicly list their phone numbers. Moreover, Emirati cultural norms prohibit companies from conducting phone surveys with strangers. “One cannot knock on doors either, because you have no idea on whose door you are knocking,” Raja said. Finally, interviewers and interviewees must be of the same gender

Understanding these issues is very important to conduct market research in Dubai. The method used by the NFO Worldgroup in the Emirates is considerably more difficult than the manner in which research is conducted in the Western world. For example, if a company needs to survey a random sample of Arab men between the ages of 20 and 40 about a new product, an Arab man who works for the market researching company will go to a café and randomly pick one male who fits the description of the target group. He will approach this man and start up a conversation to learn more about him. If the man is seen to be part of the target group, the interviewer will collect the needed information, and then ask for the names of five other people who also fit this sample. The first man interviewed is called the “feed,” because he puts the interviewer in contact with an additional five people. The interviewer will then contact and interview two of these five, while asking the remaining three only for additional names. In this way, the sample population branches out in a random manner. As Raja pointed out, eventually companies are able to replicate random samples simply from experience. NFO has a number of teams that perform interviews and assemble data in this way. These include an Arab team and an Asian team, each split along gender lines. “This is the way market research works in most of the GCC countries,” Raja said.

Saudi Arabia has one of the largest populations in the Middle East (26 million). Its consumer market is the largest within the GCC community, and about 60 percent of the region’s market research is conducted there. This poses problems. First of all, interviews that are politically or culturally sensitive can be censored by the government. Secondly, the laws pertaining to male-female interaction are so rigid that companies cannot allow women and men to work in the same office. This very fact causes difficulties, leaving communication via phone and email as the only options. Raja used Unilever, an international manufacturer, as an example to show the difficulties of conducting marketing research in Saudi Arabia. When Unilever attempted to reach Saudi housewives with their new cleaning products, they were forced to create advertisements that were intended for women but that did not use their images, since women are not allowed to be shown in advertisements. To address this difficulty, NFO Worldgroup established the Women’s Research Center, the first of its kind in Saudi Arabia, where local and expatriate women are recruited to conduct marketing research among the female community.

So far, according to Raja, the research center has been very successful.

Qualitative data-gathering, as opposed to the above mentioned quantitative data-gathering, poses its own unique challenges. Qualitative data is highly sensitive to interpretation. Most of the people working with qualitative research at the Women's Research Center are Asians, as Raja pointed out, because local Arab women have a lower level of education. However, since none of the Asian women speak Arabic, a translator is often needed during meetings with respondents. The translator is relied upon to be very attentive to the nuances of both languages. To ensure accuracy, it has become common to allow a local Arab resident to act as a translator for the interviews, and then to later have both the interviewer and subject verify the information. Raja said that a recent promising development is that Arab women are increasingly joining the marketing strategy teams.

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES

The UAE, like all other countries, has laws that govern advertising. For example, ads that try to sell alcohol are banned, as are ads that pass judgment on the Sheikh or make any religious statements. Women who are scantily dressed or have their bodies exposed are also not allowed to appear in ads. "In Dubai, showing women is okay to a certain extent," Pilai said. In Saudi Arabia, however, this is unacceptable. In addition, Sheikh Mohammed must approve all advertisements before they are disseminated to the public.

In today's world, multinational corporations produce what can be called "global advertisements." These are ads that target a very eclectic group of people of different ethnicities, from different parts of the world. Such advertisements need to be localized to specific countries and cultures. For an ad to be localized, the slogan and the visual appeal of the ad are often changed. For example, in Dubai objects in an ad will be arranged from right to left rather than left to right, since this is consistent with the direction of Arabic script. Furthermore, advertisers must pay attention to translation issues. For example, phrases or slogans that sound witty and memorable in English may not work in Arabic. Therefore, agencies that work on localizing ads must create slogans in the local language that carry the same meaning as the original.

In Dubai, agencies use focus groups consisting of Asians and Arabs to help localize global advertisements. The agency will show a focus group an ad, and members of the group are asked to respond with their thoughts and reactions, as well as likes and dislikes. The agency also hires marketing designers who, based on the comments of the focus group, make changes to

the advertisement. After changes are made, the focus group members are again asked for their thoughts. This process continues until the advertisement provokes a strong positive response from both the Asian and the Arab participants.

It is difficult to target one specific segment of the population within the UAE because of the many different ethnicities who live there, and their limited access to radio and TV. Furthermore, NFO researchers have recognized that there are four additional divisions in UAE society. First, there is the “Us/Us” Group. These are people who believe in full conformity to societal rules, trust government institutions and strictly follow Islamic law. This group tends to be predominantly male. The second group is the “Us/Me” group. Members of this group believe in the importance of national and government institutions, and also tend to be conservative. However, they consider themselves, as individuals, to be an important part of society. The third group, the “Me/Us” group, tends to be comprised of more liberal members. However, the term “liberal” in this context does not carry the same meaning as it does in the Western world. It simply means “less conservative,” and in terms of the “Me/Us” group, refers to people who, while not rejecting government institutions, put their individuality and their personal beliefs before these institutions, religion and the collective good. The fourth and most “liberal” group of all is the “Me/Me” group. These people comprise a very small portion of the population of the UAE. They tend to be young people who are embracing aspects of modernization and Westernization, from music to clothes, to how they see themselves as part of Dubai’s society. They reject institutions, refuse social conformity, and put their individuality first and foremost.

ADVERTISING CASE STUDIES

Economic, political, and cultural issues often get tangled up in companies’ efforts to advertise effectively. An illustration of this problem is shown in the differing Middle Eastern marketing strategies of Coca-Cola and Pepsi. “Ten years ago, Coke was seen as a non-entity [in Dubai],” recalled Raja, who used to work on the company’s regional advertising campaign. Since then Coke had consciously tried to enter the UAE market on a value platform—more quantity for less money. He thought this was a smart move. Soft drinks are considered good for digestion in the UAE and, since alcohol is not consumed in the region, soft drinks commonly accompany the average family meal. Moreover, since families in the UAE are quite large, the “more quantity for less money” platform worked very well. Many previously saw Coca-Cola as

an Israeli company because it had branches that operated in Israel. With this marketing strategy, however, Coca-Cola effectively related to the cultural and traditional views of UAE residents, and was able to overcome the ban that had previously been put on its operations due to its connections with Israel. By depending on this strategy, Coca-Cola gained a 30 percent share of a market where it previously had none. Raja acknowledged that some people still view it negatively and call it the “the red Pepsi,” but it is becoming more and more popular within the community.

Around the time that it gained 25-30 percent of the market share, Coca-Cola rolled out a new advertising campaign. It came up with a more playful ad that Raja identified as “going the fun route.” The ad depicts four men

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sitting at a table in a local café discussing a beautiful woman, who is sitting at another table with her mother. All four men try to give the woman their phone numbers using their fingers, but her mother keeps turning and interrupting them. Finally, one of the men writes his phone number on a cold bottle of Coke, which a waiter is bringing to the woman’s table. The advertisement ends with the sound of a ringing phone

over the Coca-Cola slogan, indicating that the woman called him. Since it is a common practice in Saudi Arabia for men to give their phone numbers to women they do not know, many were able to relate to this commercial. Men typically write their phone numbers on a small piece of paper and throw it to women, hoping that they will call. This practice developed as a result of the lack of direct communication between men and women. Coca-Cola took this practice and effectively used it to market their product. However, the timing of the ad, as Raja noted, was not very appropriate because it ran during the United States invasion of Iraq. People were already boycotting American products, and this liberally minded ad caused even greater anti-American sentiment. The advertisement was shown only once. Nevertheless, the fact that people still remember it shows that it did effectively grab their attention.

When it comes to marketing skin care products and jewelry, it can be challenging to appeal to women without showing female bodies in advertisements. El Zein talked to us about the way skin care advertisements are localized according to the values of Muslim culture. He said that these ads are often edited to show a little more clothing, covering parts of the body that are considered too revealing. For example, sleeves are added to low neck

tank tops, and feathers and flowers are put on low necklines.

El Zein commented on the fact that Middle Eastern countries, especially those in the GCC, vary significantly in their local practices and traditions. Thus, certain advertisements are edited according to the country in which they will be shown. In ads intended for the UAE, women are allowed to have a slightly more revealing look than ads shown in a country such as Kuwait. The two extreme examples of this practice are Lebanon and Saudi Arabia—Lebanon being the most liberal and Saudi Arabia the most conservative. Another example of how advertisements use local culture to appeal to a consumer is illustrated by the Pan Emirates Furniture Company. The company uses important landmarks in Dubai and the UAE to convey its message. Some of its ads, for example, depict the company's furniture in a manner that reminds viewers of famous architectural sites, such as the two towers of Dubai's World Trade Center.

Khoder provided an example of an advertisement which was inappropriate for the region. The advertisement was for President Cheese, and it pictured Jesus reaching up to the sky in a pose similar to that of the Statue of Liberty and grabbing the cheese. Khoder said that the local Arab could not relate to the ad's religious context. "If you show them an angel, they do not know what to think. An image of an angel will not work here, not because people hate it, but because they cannot grasp the idea. It doesn't mean anything to them," he said.

El-Zein offered an additional example of an unsuccessful ad. This ad focused on a conversation between a father and his son. In the ad, the father becomes annoyed at his son's countless questions and was depicted as grumpy and somewhat ignorant. When the advertisement was shown to the focus group in Dubai, the respondents did not have positive reactions. This was a warning sign to El Zein. The advertisement was making a comment on the image of the father that was foreign to locals because it undermined the father's role in society as the protector of the family, a wise man, and a caretaker.

Pampers Diapers also launched a campaign which commented on the role of the father in society. He was pictured changing the diapers of his child, something a father does not usually do in a local Arab family. Pampers modified the ad by giving the father a more polished look and removing the part where he changes the diaper. While the father changing the diaper was not culturally acceptable, according to Raja, the father being together with his family was a positive image. Therefore, the ad eventually worked.

THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE OF DUBAI

There was a strong consensus among the people we interviewed that Dubai is still in its early stages of development. The slope of economic improvement and increase in revenue and business is almost vertical, according to Khoder. Considering the abundance of plans that the government has embarked on to advance Dubai's modernization and development, it will be a long time before a plateau is reached.

The intimidating height and overwhelming luxury of the Burj Al Arab, the vast number of tennis courts and golf courses, the Wild Wadi water park, and the multitude of other sightseeing locations are just the beginning for Dubai. The city recently constructed an island in the shape of a palm tree in the Gulf. The island is completely man-made and its size is more than spectacular. Sixty-two hotels are now located on the island. Khoder, in referring to this project, remarked, "These people [the leaders of Dubai] dream. [And] They do the work." Other ongoing projects are the construction of an island representing the map of the world, and the building of the world's highest tower, which will be called the Dubai Tower.

In Dubai, it is easy to forget that one is in the middle of desert, as the physical landscape of the city has also been altered. In addition to the construction projects, the government leaders support the artificial growing of many kinds of plants and trees. They want foreigners to feel like they are in a paradise. Khoder mentioned that an artificial ski slope is one of the other new projects in development. "It is not going to be the Alps but it is going to be big enough. Imagine a snow slope in the desert for Christ sakes!" Khoder said. Projects that are launched by Sheikh Mohammed begin immediately and are worked upon until completion. The consistency of the efforts of the leaders of Dubai to modernize the city, contributes as much to their successes as does the ingenuity with which the efforts are approached. "Today I decide to build a skyscraper. We start. Work does not stop until the building is finished," Khoder said. "There is [a] morning shift and [a] night shift, [a] morning shift and [a] night shift. Seven months and you have a skyscraper. It is quick and it is efficient."

The new ventures being undertaken surprise the local residents of Dubai as much as they surprise expatriates and foreigners. Five years ago, El Zein thought that the idea of building a supermarket that would employ 50 cashiers was insane. No one in Dubai could even imagine so many people shopping at the same time. The supermarket was, nevertheless, built, and soon became an archetype for others to follow. Now, tourists can see first hand how hard it is to find an empty cashier in a Dubai supermarket.

Each new project in Dubai seems more ambitious than the one before. In an interview with Klaus Christandl, the deputy general manager of the Sheraton Dubai Creek Hotel, we heard discussion about a plan to build an underwater hotel. We also heard about the construction of Dubai Land, a mirror of Disneyland. In the future, Dubai's trend of innovation will only increase. More and more projects are being undertaken, and the Department of Commerce and Marketing is working hard to bring new business to Dubai by publicizing the plentiful business and investment opportunities in the city. Overseas offices of the Department of Commerce and Marketing are also being created, two of which already operate in the United States. In El Zein's opinion, "most of the big names [and] large corporations are already here." He does not predict that new companies will enter the market, so much as they will specialize internally in order to increase efficiency and productivity.

The main purpose of one of the companies we spoke to, AME Info, is to provide information—be it economic, demographic or cultural—to foreigners who are looking to relocate their business or to invest abroad. "Not a lot of people knew about Dubai ten years ago," Lovgreen said, "but now with it flourishing so intensely, there is a larger part of the global community, which is familiar with the opportunities offered here." AME Info's goal is to make foreign companies more aware of the resources, facilities, and prospects in this part of the world.

CONCLUSION

Anyone who visits Dubai will refute the claim that Islam is inherently incompatible with modernity. In fact, Dubai has managed to sustain its traditional Islamic and Arab culture while continuing to experience modern economic and technological development. Multinational corporations play an important role in facilitating this economic growth. In order to be successful in this region, these companies quickly realized that they would have to find a model that is both internationally competitive and respectful of local culture and traditions. In essence, these companies are localizing globalization. Many of the multinational companies employ unique marketing and advertising strategies in order to accommodate and appeal to the diverse population of the UAE. Consequently, the majority of the citizens and the government of Dubai welcome the presence of these companies. The success of multinational companies in Dubai reveals that, if managed properly, Islam and modernity can coexist quite well and that these companies can contribute responsibly to the development of the region.

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