

GROWING NUMBERS OF YOUNG ARAB TRAVELERS



The Middle East is currently enjoying its popularity as a tourist destination. The region is home to 800 million young people between 15 and 29 years of age who increasingly start to travel.

Many countries in the Middle East may have suffered a lot of anguish from the political instability that they previously experienced, but the upcoming opportunities cannot go unnoticed. The region is a place that is well endowed with both natural and cultural tourist attractions, whose standards compete with many others around the world.

The World Bank in 2011 reported that the tourism sector in Middle East territories contributed a whopping 4.5 percent of the GDP in the territory, which was an estimated \$107.3 billion. In addition, the region has created over 4.5 million jobs and will continue to create more opportunities since the territories have the potential to make tourism the biggest earning industry in the economy.

This is despite the fact that the countries suffered a major blow due to the Arab Spring which brings with it devastating effects economically and politically. However, as the countries recover, the chance to prosper in tourism continues to become brighter.

One advantage of tourism is that it can provide a big portion of the income that most of the local communities receive. As they continue to open up the market, the economies are experiencing a new kind of traveler - the young and wealthy Arab voyager who has an interest in exploring the world.

Dubai for example provides a great attraction for young tourists because it presents itself as a cosmopolitan city, marked with a lot of lively activities - especially the night life. It is more of a holiday destination, where there is a lot of leisure and luxury, unlike Jordan, Egypt and other Middle East places which are more favorable for people with a desire to learn about history and tradition.

Countries that desire to attract the young Arab traveler must consider developing newer strategies that will broaden the historical, ecological and religious aspects of tourism. This is because most of the travelers in this age are students, who are looking for something more than just travelling for leisure. They are looking for a blend of historical sites, natural attractions and artistic offerings, all of which can add value to their studies and visit. Infrastructure also needs to be renovated if the numbers of visitors are to keep growing.

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