The Value of Authenticity in Heritagization: An exploratory case-study on Dubai Historical District (DHD)

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1. ABSTRACT

Authenticity of cultural heritage stands as a controversial debate in creating exceptional cultural experiences. This research aims to analyze the current situation of safeguarding cultural heritage in Dubai, while understanding the government’s role in renovating heritage. Dubai Historical District (DHD) is the focus of this study, which features Emirati’s cultural heritage rejuvenation. Exploratory case-study method is adopted to identify perceptions and contributions among cultural heritage decision-makers. Data will be collected through interviews, interpretive content from the DHD concept, and PESTEL analysis. Employing safeguarding cultural heritage strategies within the cultural tourism industry is recommended as it offers integrity to good heritagization.

Keywords: exploratory case-study, socio-cultural impacts, authenticity, heritagization, cultural heritage, Dubai Historical District.

2. INTRODUCTION

Diversification of cultural identities at the presence of recent trends in innovation is one of the key attractions of travel (OECD, 2016). In this context, heritage is positioned to an extent that fears are being expressed it will leave the sphere of values and dissolve into experience economy of organized leisure for tourism engagement purposes (Hayes & MacLeod, 2007).

Such approach combined the values of both culture and heritage into the forms of cultural heritage, known as tangible and intangible, also considered being a world market for tourism. Both forms can be found in terms of architecture, artifacts, norms, attitudes and way of life. Given the conservation value of the latter, complications occurred when such materials were damaged, destroyed, or removed from its context.
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This approach raised controversial issues such as authenticity and renovating heritage. As a result, governments and communities within the tourism industry, work extra-hard to maintain a unified national standard of the destination’s cultural heritage that creates authentic cultural experiences and tourism products (Staiff, Bushell, & Watson, 2013).

2.1 Problem Statement

Emirati identity, particular in the emirate of Dubai, tensions between change and sustainability, and the conflict between development and preservation objectives may be reconciled with defined socio-cultural tourism strategies (Stephenson & Ali-Knight, 2010). The latter leaning towards emerging of socio-cultural impacts such as appropriation and commodification of Emirati cultural heritage. Such impacts occur when tourism brings changes that jeopardize the true identity of both tangible and intangible assets of a cultural heritage in a destination.

In the context of tourism in Dubai, gaps in safeguarding cultural heritage such as documentating Dubai’s cultural heritage or retrieving authentic presentation of the old buildings has encompassed contemporary solutions such as heritagization – defined as expansion of heritage-making process that nourishes the production of alternative heritage (Sánchez-Carretero, 2013).

Undeniably, utilizing the latter has happened in Shindaga Historical District (SHD), where the authentic buildings that existed within the same location 100 years ago, has been completely reconstructed into replicas in the 1960s. Rebuilding material heritage for the sake of preserving a cultural identity might create a positive perspective within the local community where the tangible symbols and figures are still on ground. However, not clarifying the act of heritagization within the one and
only historic district in the city as a fact, provoked issues of integrity and transparency when it comes to preserve and publicize the authenticity of Emirati cultural heritage.

Thus, negligence of such knowledge results in implementing decisive images of Emirati identity to the local community, not to mention also the international tourists who travel specifically for cultural experiences and purposes. In the long term, projecting unreal images continuously become a statistic form of truth from a generation to another who believes it’s the real deal. The latter makes the undoing of heritagization even more difficult, especially if you seek for the local community involvement.

Paying little attention to preserving true cultural heritage, and isolating local people from certain facts about their own heritage eventually leads to the loss of their national pride, and more importantly, their trust. Thus, employing effective strategies of safeguarding Emirati cultural heritage is an essential characteristic of both authentic cultural experience and conservation of heritage. The latter needs to expand its debate to integrate honest and open communicative competencies.

2.2 Purpose & Objectives

There is a specific need to research safeguarding in relation to cultural heritage tourism explicitly, as distinct from broader conservation or cultural heritage conservation research. Hence, the purpose of this case study is to analyze the current situation of safeguarding cultural heritage in Dubai. The SHD in Dubai is currently facing cultural rejuvenation which is turning the area into a ‘heritagized’ tourism product followed with appropriation of cultural heritage to meet the tourist’s expectations.
SHD is by all means, the only location that represents outstanding heritage fabric of Dubai, hence, the latter is facing challenges of modernity opposing to authenticity, specifically with the emergence of Dubai Historical District (DHD) as a literal demonstration of Heritagization, but at the same time, a live documentation of Dubai’s history. Employing quantitative and situational analyses will assist to understand how the process of heritagization of the SHD is presented to the community. Thus, this study aims to identify the value of preserving cultural heritage as an asset that operates the cultural market-gear, and demonstrate the potentiality of the Dubai’s tourism industry and the heritage development management working in parallel as instruments of cultural productivity.

2.3 Scope & Limitations

The DHD development plans are mainly a renovation of the oldest part of the city centered around Dubai Creek. The joint initiative between Dubai’s cultural corporates, will transform the area into the leading culture and heritage hub in the region. The project is focused around the SHD on raising awareness of Dubai's rich history - particularly around trade, crafts and pearling. The project is ongoing and the estimated completion slated for 2019 (DTCM, 2017).

A definite limitation of this research will be the constant changes of deliverables of the DHD readiness plan due to the fact it is an ongoing project and it can change the course this study findings. Other limitations including the time consumed in gathering relevant data, and biased views that will influence the direction of the findings which will need further investigation for accreditation. To minimize subjectivity in the findings, structured interviews employed, keeping the
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independency of each participant as possible Finally, composition and analyzing the findings will construct this research to its purpose of conduct.

3. Literature Review

Values of cultural heritage matters to individuals, nations, and the international community and they vary between historic, symbolic, aesthetic and economic. There is an increasing role in promoting cultural heritage supported in Tourism Trends and Policies Report (2016) emphasizing a number of strategies to encourage sustainable tourism have been embraced by governments, including promoting cultural heritage for tourism business (OECD, 2016).

To achieve the necessary level of cultural heritage sustainability in a destination, several researchers argued that tourism was the reason for the conservation of heritage with high levels of awareness and financial support (Barthel-Bouchier, 2013). The latter ought to raise the government’s attention to heritagization, also defined by Harrison (2013) as an outcome of an overwhelming growth in objects and places exhibited as heritage that led to new forms of materialized cultural heritage (Harrison, 2013), as an innovative motion of cultural revival with generous funding. The previous strategy resulted in drawing emerging trends of investments in the name of Emirati cultural heritage with the risk being increased to controversial issues of authenticity.

In this context, Murzyn-Kupisz, & Dzialek (2013) findings revealed that the perception of culture is recognized tangibly; however, its cultural revival of establishing a niche tourism product failed to emerge in the absence of local’s awareness of the direction their heritage is taking (Murzyn-Kupisz, & Dzialek, 2013).
Hence, tourists with different backgrounds who travel specifically for cultural purposes struggle with the remaining knowledge of heritage sites and the stories behind UAE’s heritage due to the lack of safeguarding cultural heritage strategies within the local tourism sector.

As for the community, such rapid change expressed a fear of emerging alternative cultural heritage concepts such as heritagization, taking away from the inherent culture. However, offering the local hospitality that is at the core of Emirati culture, manages to maintain authenticity in which tourists can experience the genuine treat of the local community. In the area of cultural commodification, it’s expected to create an artificial touristic attraction opposite to preserving its authentic nature which tends to be overpriced (Maccarrone-Eaglen, 2009).

Such approach can match perfectly with renovating a historical district to meet current cultural trends and tourism standards. In the case of DHD, there is no doubt it is an aspiring project because it’s not just simple “heritagized” concept on a building. It is breaking space boundaries for the first time as the district will have a real mural in a public space and tangible and intangible aspects of cultural heritage, including educational institutions to learn Emirati culture. Here, the primary purpose is to educate and engage the community with adding a modernity flavor to Emirati heritage (DTCM, 2017).

The scattered efforts in the way cultural heritage is communicated and presented can lead to the change in decisions of re-visiting the cultural aspects of the city. The UAE government recognized the significant circumstances gap and hence, the Safeguarding Cultural Heritage Conference that took place in Abu-Dhabi emphasized on practical approaches to safeguard tangible and intangible heritage
recourses, as well as creating a network to protect threatened cultural assets (UNESCO, n.d.).

Some facts were showcased on how heritage is endangered, particularly with the emergence of political instability such as regional conflicts and wars. The awareness that’s been demonstrated of owing to its inherent vulnerability has resulted in issuing Emiri Decrees of safeguarding cultural heritage in the emirates of Abu-Dhabi and Sharjah.

Thus, it’s essential to define and explain related terminologies to the subject of investigation in order to identify groupings that linked cultural heritage and tourism together within broader conceptualization of authenticity. These terminologies include culture and heritage as both terms are distinctive, the difference between authenticity and staged authenticity, heritagization, renovating cultural heritage, and experience economy that are representatives of the subject.

3.1 Culture & Heritage: In context of Tourism

There is a thin line of differentiation between culture and heritage in terms of meanings, purposes, and outcomes. The concept of ‘culture’ is wide which includes many practices and interpretations. It’s defined as the arts and other manifestations of human intellectual achievement regarded collectively (Oxford Dictionaries, 2015). An essential explanation of culture is defined as the arts, beliefs, customs, institutions, and other products of human work and thought considered as a unit, especially with regard to a particular time or social group (The American Heritage Dictionary, 2017).

Boyd (2002) argues that this expanding movement of the cultural consumption of tourists, as well as an increasing tendency not to differentiate between tourists and other visitors, makes the definition of cultural tourism or culturally-motivated tourism
increasingly difficult. Boyd (2002) stresses on the term ‘culture’ in tourism has come to mean not only cultural assets passed on from one generation to another, but also those which can be portrayed for marketing as tourism products, specifically the way people lived in different geographic areas of the local land, the story of the people, their traditions and crafts, beliefs, and other elements that helped shape their lifestyle (Boyd, 2002).

In the case of heritage, its legitimate perspective is always associated with inherited tangibles. Indicating a concept of personal things, comes a broader concept of heritage as its gradually starts to be taken into consideration. Heritage as a national treasure, has a more social meaning related to the ownership of heritable things in which was for the locals as much as for the community (Wanda George, 2010). In the sense of larger dimension, heritage enabled its inheritance form to encompass more than just a simple tradition.

A Definition of heritage is given: “Imbued with a message from the past, the historic monuments of generations of people remain to the present day as living witnesses of their age-old traditions” (Li, 2003). Therefore, individuals are becoming more aware of the unity of their ancestry values as a common heritage. This conciseness provokes responsibility to safeguard them for future generations and created a sense of national duty to hand them on in the affiliation of their authenticity is found. As the latter increasingly shifts away from its original purpose, culturally-driven tourists become more involved in consumptions of images and ideas associated with particular destinations. People prefer going to destinations that are correlated with particular influential strikes, ideas, including the desire to experience the authentic cultural heritage of a destination (Vecco, 2010).
3.2 Evolution of Authenticity’s Value: Authentic or Staged?

What makes a cultural destination unique and appealing to travelers is authenticity. It is the natural setting that draws tourists’ decisions positively, and enables maintaining a local sense of place (Olsen, 2002). In the framework of cultural heritage tourism, authenticity works as an effective marketing tool due to the credibility the word ‘authentic’ lends to the cultural assets and provides direct connection to a special history or location (Wang, Huang & Kim, 2015). Authenticity is usually sensational and related to the local community and not merely built material. Driven by the need to meet tourists’ expectation of a cultural destination, socio-cultural impacts have emerged and consumed the real stories of the people.

In attempt to sell authenticity to tourists, this necessity created cultural assets deceptions that lead to the materialization of staged authentic experiences that are frequently frowned by local community as well as by cultural tourists (Reisinger & Steiner, 2006). MacCannell findings suggests that while authenticity validates the historical value of a specific site which is the reason for placing it on a tourist route, staged authenticity puts a demand on tourism which forecasts authentic values of a heritage asset and therefore it is the real deal for attracting more travelers (MacCannell, 1973). It’s not an existing trend that culturally-driven tourists are seeking to revisit heritage attractions, however; the way tourists decide to travel can be considered a new phenomenon by which they’re more aware and educated in sense of their chosen destinations.

To elaborate on the term ‘authentic’, the definition has been theorized by Bendix (1997) and Chhabra, Healy & Sills (2003) in which it has developed from the basis of the objective terms and accelerated to void for use in tourism studies. For example, Bendix (1997) argues that compound meanings and definitions of
authenticity exist in association of cultural tourism and consumer trends. Whilst Chhabra, Healy, & Sills (2003) believe that the quality reconstructed built material opposite to its authenticity is feasible. Researchers advocate further that most authenticity theorists have come to define authenticity through other terminologies in order to explain a particular cultural destination (Cohen & Cohen, 2012). This is demonstrated in several case studies of attempts to avoid manipulating authenticity and their connection with heritagization while safeguarding cultural heritage. These case studies took place in the UAE – Sharjah, Bahrain, and parts of Asia and Europe.

In Sharjah, evidence of cultural heritage restoration was the first result of globalization in the UAE. Sharjah as a historical identity of the UAE, has continuously managed to develop and enhance heritage identity. The identity of the city has been authenticated due to the availability of raw materials of the old heritage buildings (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah & Al Mutawa, 2006). At the question to what to be preserved and enhanced to recreate the authentic community, governments in the gulf encouraged the cultural heritage educational niche to fit within the wider gulf regional bloc and with the linkages to the wider world beyond. Recent restorations of the heritage sites in Bahrain are set in opposing to the direction of the original form of the piece which was crucial in damaging the authenticity value of the site. These restorations are existed evidences of staged heritage spaces to create a possibility of bringing back Bahrain’s history (Alraouf, 2010).

Within the interpretation of cultural heritage, Im & Lloyd (2012) reflected a number of factors that require consideration for the management of heritage places. These include modification of intangible heritage forms for tourism consumption including standardization, commodification, and appropriation of cultural heritage. For instance, heritage managers at Angkor, Cambodia are left with a puzzle of how to
incorporate meaningful and appropriate contemporary cultural heritage within the tourism experience, leisure mass tourists and how if they wish to incorporate this heritage element, to ensure that tourism operators transmit such knowledge appropriately within their products. This is a demanding challenge in mass tourism at heritage sites (Im & Lloyd, 2012).

While the term authenticity vividly captured the philosophical orientations concerning preservation around that time, its use also pointed towards a chain of serious fears of losing the irretrievable. Winter (2013) points at a period that is over than 20 years, traditions have apparently become a language of cultural heritage and have been forged by the broader contexts of European modernity. The discourse of authentic heritage to the emergence of heritagization reflected fears about the social and environmental changes of modernity and globalization. Also, there was fear of how scattered forces of capitalism would occur the loss of that authenticity. Industries such as tourism, has been consistently perceived as the threatening of authenticity of sites and landscapes, this resisted and kept at a safe distance (Winter, 2013).

3.3 Emergence of Heritagization

If we carefully examine definitions of culture or heritage, as mentioned above, the basic tourism offerings of both definitions combined are absent to incorporate wider tourism segments. For instance, the right to authenticate culture, the idea of safeguarding cultural heritage assets, and recent trends of cultural commodification such as heritagization. It is very difficult to define competencies of cultural heritage, because the definition is limited by language, or the way of describing heritage development knowledge, and changes in current market niche values. In general, it is challenging to cover a cultural phenomenon entirely, especially at the level of
individual or community experience, while it often happens that forms of cultural heritage also embraces another one or many other forms.

The concept of ‘heritagization’ is theorized as an innovative trend to alternative heritage that formats the strategy of heritage management. According to Bernbeck (2013), this trend in the conceptualization of heritage is inadequate since heritagization is presumed to be a tourism production (Bernbeck, 2013). A cultural object, knowledge or practice can now be asserted through a slow change and recognition to become ‘heritagized’.

We live in a world that is driven by a general responsibility to preserve the past for the future. But when heritage is threatened, a strong drive for heritagization develops to inherently attribute heritage (Timothy, 2014). This heritagization process leads to the creation of built material replicas, adding additional layers to the original cultural heritage asset during enough period of time for the consumer to memorize its ‘unauthentic’ look and feel. Therefore; the process of heritagization can’t be undone easily, not even by deconstructing especially if its current state of image has been sold as authentic to the local community, as well as tourists (Alonso González, 2014).

3.4 Renovating Cultural Heritage: an Emirati Perspective

Renovate came from the definition, to restore or refine an old tangible object (Ashworth, 2002). However, in cultural heritage, Barker & Langham (2016) explained its renovation is employed to a good state of repair of the contemporary use of culture. For Emiratis, the complex restoration potentially offers the opportunity to renovate their past-evoking memories of their heritage. For instance, maintaining cultural folklore performances is primarily for themselves, not travelers, and with time has become living symbols of their memory. The collective consciousness of
Emiratis is strong; and such nostalgic discourse is idealistic and practical to overcome challenges of modernity and draw tools of safeguarding cultural heritage in the UAE, which are strongly politicized as well (Barker & Langham, 2016).

The fast leap of change in the UAE conserved Emiratis memories of their way of life, which is completely different from what young Emiratis are today. Since the Union of the Emirates in 1971, this urging need to safeguard culture and heritage was not a priority on the local agenda due to the fact tangible heritage such as the households were functional and intangible heritage including the traditional customs and Emirati cultural habits were practiced as an everyday way of life. However, the UAE became aware of the rapid change of globalization which forced the need to preserve and exhibit the past since the historical and national traces of the social life is transforming gradually and quickly. (Fox, Mourtada-Sabbah & Al Mutawa, 2006).

However, recognized challenges of innovation and industrial developments were addressed that resulted in the launch of the UAE National Agenda a few years ago leading to the UAE Vision 2021. The latter points at a significant cultural deliverable, quoted: “The UAE’s distinct culture will remain founded on progressive and moderate Islamic values and endowed with a rich Arabic language, to proudly celebrate Emirati traditions and heritage while reinforcing national identity” (UAE Vision 2021, 2017).

This lack of deliberation for authenticity led to a believe that since memory changes, authenticity can’t be historically linked to the past and arguably, there is no such thing as an authentic Emirati cultural heritage (Picton, 2010). As a result, issues of culture preservation have gradually come to the fore introducing a new appreciation of heritage as a vehicle for Emirati integration and consolidation. For example, the oldest parts of Dubai – such as the Creek – reveal true cultural identity
where a visitor can taste ideal Emirati life as it was long before the UAE was unified or Dubai became a destination of interest.

Also, Dubai’s heritage industry worked on affiliating the historical narratives of the tribal characteristics and cultural variations of the city, as well as the significance of local community, culture and social hierarchy (Boussaa, 2003). According to Boussaa (2014), visitors are not looking for historical evidence. This culturally-driven segment is looking for an experience, a new reality based on both tangible and intangible remains of the past and for them this is the essence of the cultural heritage experience. Hence, visitors are seeking their own subjective selves through authenticity which is nowadays irrelevant facing the challenges of modernism (Boussaa, 2014).

3.5 Adaptive Reuse of Cultural Heritage: Experience Economy

Taking into account the presented terminologies in this study, experience economy need to be identified in order to test the significance of its added-value notion in cultural heritage. It is a foundation for outlining a situational analysis with the aim to draw explicit thoughts that have led to its appearance in the cultural arena. Goulding (2000) examined the ways in which the concept of cultural experience has been viewed by a variety of disciplines, distinguish between consumer perspectives which pull social aspects to explore the emotional and symbolic significance of the experience. There is on the other hand decision-making perspectives which focus on how tourism industries deliver experiences as part of an added-value proposition (Goulding, 2000).

The notion of cultural heritage, when applied to collective items, refers to sets of elements came from the past and handed over from generation to the next, either on
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the basis of explicit and voluntary procedures or by norms (Geser, 2012). In the first case, these are deliberately conserved in the present because they are considered to embody a specific value (cultural, economic or social) capable of producing amenities for the present and the future. In the second case, they contribute to social life and lastly as a result of a process of self-reproduction – which may turn into a process of dissolution). Even where they are informal, they result from a selection. Only some elements of the past pass through time. Those that have a particular value, justifies their transmission from generation to generation as well as their preservation.

The ‘experience economy’ is not only portrayed in cultural products and services. While the focus of cultural heritage on the importance authentic themes and assets, this includes high-value local identity related to the cultural domain included turning historic buildings into office spaces for creative communicating the unique cultural heritage and national identity to tourists (Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel, 2009).

Finding the perfect collaboration of cultural heritage experts, creative artisans and consumer trends developers is a major challenge in the local cultural corporates. As a result, building a comprehensive view of the cultural heritage values in a city such as Dubai will eventually raise questions on the consequent loss of authenticity of cultural heritage practices and the contextualization of heritage for the tourism market.

4. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Aspects of heritage models have the ability to convert locations into destinations where the latter has the potential to create experience economy.
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However, number of facts that’s been found led to build and develop the research questions of this case study. According to the Heritage Conservation Literature Survey that has been conducted by ICCROM, only 0.6% of heritage related publications is associated with the Arab States. Figure 01 demonstrates the intangible type of Heritage trends is valued less than 0.5% in comparison to the total number of records (ICCROM, 2017).

![Figure 01: What Types of Heritage Receive Attention in Literature 2008-2012?](source: ICCROM, 2017)

The little attention to heritage conservation within the Arab States is noticed while searching on also the Emirati studies. The latter indicates a limited number of
research studies on the material culture of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Emirati history of social sciences and the legacy of local ancestries.

However, empirical studies on tourism impacts, interactions, and practices on Emirati cultural heritage are unavailable except in sets of personal journals, articles or questionnaires in the benefit to a particular cultural happening (Stephenson, 2014). Fortunately, the cultural sector under the government of Dubai have a number of systematic studies and ongoing research that’ll help in the production of this investigation (Zaidan, 2016). However, this collective content reflects quite an unstructured perspective of the subject which can be explained due to the change that has been so rapid in the city which created a struggle to conduct cohesive socio-cultural studies.

Placing the issue of safeguarding cultural heritage in a contextual process requires a conceptual framework that will integrate perceptions of the project’s committee members – both Emirati and expat – who play a vital community role in thriving the city’s cultural scenery. The framework poses to investigate whether the decision-makers – from the community and the government – have initiated an agreement to sustain the genuine nature of cultural heritage assets. To achieve this, policies to limit cultural commodities that are tailored to meet the tourists’ expectations is required.

The latter is justifiable as the UAE’s government built and launched initiatives to safeguard Emirati cultural heritage. In this context, three main variables will be the focus of this study, the first is cultural heritage safeguarding status as a dependent variable, the second is the cultural corporates’ attempt in preserving cultural heritage as an independent variable, and the third is the level of interaction between the DHD subcommittees as an intervening variable. As a result, building a comprehensive study
of the cultural heritage position in a fast-growing city such as Dubai will foster questions as follows:

*RQ1*: What are the characteristics of cultural heritage rejuvenation of the DHD in relation to sustain its authenticity?

*RQ2*: How is heritagization of Emirati cultural heritage affecting the level of safeguarding cultural authenticity for the DHD’s future niche market of cultural heritage tourism?

Authenticity and heritagization are key concepts of the DHD’s development as the cultural destination in Dubai. Curated cultural heritage is widely seen through the idea of conservation and the goals of development make unlikely a matched pair. In agreeing to collaborate the latter, “Heritage as a Driver of Development” theme was validated by both ICOMOS and UNESCO in 2011. Heritage experts works on ensuring the authenticity of the cultural material while the creative team are eager to explore innovative enterprises aligned with technical capacities (Barrère, 2016).

The shared vision encouraged governments, investors, and visitors and rehabilitated cultural heritage is a narrative in which remains of the past are seen as a path of economic rebirth for developing nations including heritagization to possibly generate and simulate experience economy. Figure (2) illustrates the conceptual framework in this study of the DHD real-life context. The conceptual framework will provide guidance to the structure of methods that are employed to this case study allowing to understand the approach and the nature the DHD project.
5. RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

According to Riley & Love (2000), the qualitative research methodology is best convenient when pursuing an in-depth understanding of a particular situation (Riley & Love, 2000). The use of qualitative research methods limits the findings from being generalized, however; quantitative data alone would not have provided an immense amount of information, specifically in a real-life situation such as the DHD project. This is a fact also for the interview and content analysis discussion.

This paper's research design will lead to conducting detailed qualitative stories, not only to explore and describe the data in real-life context but also to help explain the complexities of real-life situations which may not be captured through experimental or survey research (Yin, 2011). The following is dedicated to an outline
of the case-study research, structured interviews, and collected dossiers on the DHD concept. Discussion and findings are based upon analysis of the interview transcripts and the available secondary data.

5.1 Adapting Exploratory Case-Study Method

An exploratory case-study (Starman, 2013) is employed as this method will serve the purpose of understanding perceptions and contributions among cultural heritage decision-makers towards authenticity on the DHD case. This translates into similar phenomena in the international and local context of cultural heritage tourism that have been mentioned earlier within the literature. To ensure that this approach meets tests of validity and reliability, a research design is needed and acts as a plan to make sure the evidence collected addresses the initial research questions by focusing on data collection methods and ways to interpret the findings.

5.2 Structured Interviews

According to Bogner & Menz (2009), interviewing experts is applicable to generate in-depth accounts of a person’s beliefs, understandings, experiences and practices in the corporate context the person is employed in. The status of an expert is assigned by the researcher, depending on the specific research focus. In general, it is argued that experts are those who have a privileged access to information as well as contextual knowledge about a certain topic or process (Bogner & Menz, 2009).

Total of eight face-to-face structured interviews with 12 questions included: role of the participant in the DHD project, background knowledge on cultural heritage in the context of tourism, issues on heritagization, commodification, safeguarding status of cultural heritage, personal and general perspectives on the project,
limitations of deliverables, and future recommendation based on experience. Only one interview was conducted in Arabic, and later on translated into English while transcribing its content. The remaining interviews were communicated in English. The participants were notified with an outline of the main questions to meet the expectations of the preciseness and value of their responses.

Research ethics were defined to all participants who agreed for the interview to be digitally recorded, enabling a later transcription of the interview. The estimated time of each interview approximately took between 15 to 60 minutes that followed a thematic coding process in order to categorize data, enabling unbiased and systematic procedure of both content and situational analysis. The aim of this approach is to have in-depth discussion of the mentioned research questions. Ease of engagement with proper networks and cultural heritage experts working within the DHD project will increase the chances of collecting relative and valid data which are valuable source of information for the scope of the mentioned research questions.

5.3 Conceptual Studies of the DHD Project

Collecting background research of the DHD project for evidence is a practical method to draw implicit and explicit data while the latter is related to the research questions presented in this proposal. The DHD inspires the practices and preservation of Emirati cultural heritage within a cluster of restored buildings of the Shindaga which reflected in phase one of the project. The other advanced phases will include AlFahidi located in BurDubai, all the way to AlRas in Deira. These facts remain vague to the investigation of the heritage tourism landscape; however, the implemented research on the DHD development may provide means to escalate the modest efforts of safeguarding cultural heritage in Dubai. The latter demonstrates the
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value of its preservation that can be considered as a vital asset to the social, economic, and tourism sectors as well. This approach will enhance the validity of analyzing the data collected through content and situational analyses. The DHD discourse materials will help create a situational analysis (PESTEL) as the latter will improve the quality of decisions liaised for the project and demonstrate key factors that influences cultural heritage safeguarding in Dubai (Clarke, 2005).

5.4 Population & Sampling

The general population is individuals who work in cultural corporates based in Dubai, and the sample targeted is the staff who’s working – direct or indirect – within the scope of the DHD project. According to Ashworth & Tunbridge (2014), heritage tourism is also related to personal and emotional experiences. The ability to engage in real-life presentation of the past may increase the overall sense of responsibility for localized cultural heritage (Ashworth & Tunbridge, 2014). Hence, this small choice of population is to encourage the larger local population to become couriers of their own cultural heritage as their records are important for this study to be valuable. This call-for-action supports crucial situation of cultural heritage and how it is valuable on its terms and conditions whilst tourism industry can indicate significant support to heritage as an authentic medium of the cultural sector.

6. DATA COLLECTION & ANALYSIS

This part is dedicated to the findings of the interviews and the DHD conceptual studies. Both are guided in relation to the research questions that have been developed earlier, which are base of the research methodology of this paper. The
identified terminologies in the literature review helped in the process of coding and analyzing the data collected from the conducted interviews for this case study. A number of findings have been supported by a thematic coding tree extracted from the interviews and are based on their relevance for each interpretive aspect. Thus, the interpretation of the findings is built upon quoting the connectivity between the methods of the data collected, in addition to relevant pieces of information that relates to the research questions.

Attempt of continuous revision has been taken to ensure a substantial variety of evidence to provide sense of objectivity to the overall analysis as possible. In this way, the socio-cultural issues in cultural heritage described in the literature earlier are challenged on their practical relevance for the DHD. As the current situation at the DHD are depicted, the objective of the following analysis is to move forward with interpreting and discussing the findings with possible answers to the two research questions proposed. Subjective evidence on the latter is to be demonstrated through the PESTEL situational analysis and overall competency framework.

Interpretation and implication of results are presented in the following section as well the discussion and conclusion of the findings. The ultimate purpose of the results is to build them consistently to support this paper’s recommendations for further action given in the final chapter of the work. Indeed, there is no claim to generalize the findings for the reason the participants are not entirely a representation of the whole target population. However, the core advantage of this research paper lies in having a supporting study that explores current key issues of Emirati cultural heritage.
6.1 Coding Tree & Table of the Structured Interviews

According to the Bogner & Menz (2009), structured interviews are an established and accepted research technique for qualitative explorations of opinions, perceptions, motivations and constraints (Bogner & Menz, 2009). These interviews are conducted within chosen number of participants, depending on the information you receive, they range from eight to ten people. Participants are interviewed at length of selected guidelines, allowing to the participant to answer according to their position and experience throughout the project.

Each guideline has four follow-up questions in order to increase their understanding and a possibility of longer interaction. LeBlanc (2010) argue that “individual interaction” is the distinguishing feature of a one-to-one interview, in terms of depth of the participant focus, engagement and flexibility. Its use as a research methodology is further justified by the possibility to collect precise information, to create an in-depth understanding of a situation (LeBlanc, 2010).

According to Comi, Bischof & Eppler (2014), the role of visualized thematic coding extracted from a sufficient number of interviews is crucial for the results to be in parallel with the overall direction of the case study. Also, to ensure the discussion remains within the designed factors and rather becomes the discussion’s enabler than its direct motive (Comi, Bischof & Eppler, 2014). This leads to grouping of competencies, allowing to expose valid and consistent evidence.

The reasoning for including a thematic coding tree comes from considering issues of authenticity and heirtagization, as there is a specific need to look at the characteristics of demand and expectations, as well as the value of authenticity in this heritage-making process. As stated in the literature review, the tourist experience is crucial to the success of any offerings. Interviewees argue according to their long
experience in the tourism industry, that the experience economy equals the tourist experience (Interview, April 04 & April 09, 2017).

![Thematic Coding Tree of the Interviews.](image)

**Figure 03: Thematic Coding Tree of the Interviews.**

*Source: Author, 2017*

On one hand, the thematic coding findings serves as a tool to explore these characteristics and the basic needs of potential visitors to cultural heritage attractions such as the DHD without compromising valued authenticity. On the other hand, unitizing this approach is justified by discussing all the issues that have been identified in this case study. Therefore, the analysis of the interviews has allowed to elaborate a thematic coding process in order to classify diverse pieces of data. The list of codes is a result of deploying the key guidelines that were addressed during each interview, enabling a reasonable and systematic procedure of content analysis.
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(Rowley, 2012). For this purpose, figures (3) & (4) incorporate key statements that are addressed to a specific category which have been constructed for its purpose.

### The Case of Dubai Historic District (DHD)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Statement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>• Cultural issues due to traditional customs or norms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Difficulty to communicate the terms “culture” and “heritage” to the variety of segments in Dubai.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Heritage Characteristics</td>
<td>• Tangible and intangible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High-level combination between culture, heritage, and values.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Emirati identity diluted within other nationalities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Cultural and social collective memories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supported Systems of Preservation</td>
<td>• Attempt of preserving the historic district was recognized in 2014 by identifying the district’s boundaries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encourage conducting background research and conceptual studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recourses &amp; Commitment</td>
<td>• Documenting valid content and archiving.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Timing and support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Availability of cultural heritage experts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Positive involvement of the Community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand &amp; Expectations</td>
<td>• Decisive factor for visiting cultural heritage attractions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Conflict under the impacts of mass tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Meeting the demand of Different types of visitor segments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital Approach &amp; Controlled Growth</td>
<td>• Adding distinguished value to the offerings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Focus on Emirati authentic products.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Quality in opposition to quantity of the offerings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Dialogue between traditional and modernity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educating &amp; Training</td>
<td>• Encourage conducting background research and conceptual studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Explore and exploit heritage for Emirati interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Laying out a roadmap for Dubai to implement the right educational and training programs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Value of Authenticity in Heritagization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience &amp; Creative Economies</th>
<th>Transfer the proper knowledge of Emirati cultural heritage.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Safeguarding Interpretation</td>
<td>Focus on experience and alternative income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Consideration of the different interests in the visitor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Important for a bridge from past to present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create an authentic image of product and experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Experience design and storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sustain the heritage ambiance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Preparation and presentation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Issues of protection and conservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Governance &amp; Stakeholder Influence</td>
<td>DHD committee/stakeholder’s effective collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>DHD’s renowned brand internationally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Funds from tourism sector to be raised for protection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build a central management of preservation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective Site Management</td>
<td>Combination of past and present influences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Authenticity and preserving the soul of the district.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presence on the market.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable Development Framework</td>
<td>Cycle of three pillars: environment, economic, socio-cultural.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Captivating interest: encouraging repeat visits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus on being interactive and creating value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Integration into the local surroundings/population.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Remain faithful to one’s core product or offering.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 04:** Codes & Key Statements Table of the Interviews.  
**Source:** Author, 2017

### 6.2 The Dubai Historical District: Definition & Position

When the idea of the DHD came into the surface, there was over than 150 conceptual studies conducted between the years 2014 and 2016 that are related to the development, improvement, and activation of the historic district of Dubai which includes over than 40 cultural projects spread between AlFahidi, Shindaga, all the way to Deira on the other side of the Creek. Total of 8 conceptual studies are collected focusing in the overall master plan of the DHD, inception reports,
educational competency frameworks development and the museology approach to activate the district.

The master plan for the DHD provides high level recommendations in order to focus and capitalize on the heritage, tourism and commercial values of the DHD and preserve and promote vibrancy in the urban spaces in this area (Halcrow, 2015). This fact was supported by E. A. (2017) where she emphasized to have a balance between producing authentic expressions and still maintain authenticity when promoting it to the tourists (E. A., Interview, April 20, 2017). Given that the DHD’s main proposition is culture and heritage, the related projects can be seen as anchors to attract visitors to the site and to extend their length of stay which adapts the concept of the experience economy. Three imperatives guide the DHD cultural projects:

1) Preserving unique positioning of heritage, the DHD is the only authentic district of Dubai. An active commitment and investment to keeping built and intangible heritage alive is an important positioning to maintain and support through marketing and programming activities on site.

2) A place for the community, tourists and residents, in order to be continuously vibrant. As such, interventions are at a pedestrian scale, activated throughout the year. There are a mix of uses throughout the site commercial, cultural, residential and civic and there are ongoing opportunities for participation, volunteering, new businesses and employment.

3) Positioning of a cultural destination, the district will become a recognized landmark in Dubai which will diversify the existing tourism offerings and extend the length of stay of visitors. It will look closely at how to attract new markets such as business tourists, families, and international tourists.
Several cultural projects are defined as those that have a mission dedicated to public education around culture and heritage, interpret both tangible and intangible expressions of cultural heritage, can be expressed as a public institution. Key characteristics of governance model and effective management allowed freedom of operation including, respected charismatic leadership, clear focus on authentic and innovative offerings and introducing international brand identity (Halcrow & Lord Cultural Recourses, 2014). All in all, expected added-value of the authentic historic district summarizes in enhancing Dubai’s position as a global city by connecting residents and visitors to its historic identity and culture, inspiring contributions to the future.

6.3 PESTEL: Situational Analysis of the DHD

Strategic situational analysis is one of the contemporary tools to construct a comprehensive value with different sources of data, particularly for emerging strategic managements or projects that include cultural, economic, social, and political pillars of success. According to Baxter (2010), one of these tools is the PESTEL analysis for building value through data. Baxter (2010) stresses that within a heritage management, the planning for a strategic project took into account the competitive environment in which it exists, as well as lessons from comparable best practices world-wide. The number of heritage and culture themed developments being planned for a city, pose a real threat to the perceived authenticity of its heritage fabric which include: satisfaction of the stakeholder or visitor engagement and the adaptive reuse of existed heritage assets.
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The latter requires a strategic management approach that fits the theoretical construct of an emerging project. This planning can be explored using the basic management research tool, PESTEL analysis (Baxter, 2010). The conceptual studies of the DHD, and the content collected from interviews with the DHD committee members, both have helped building the DHD PESTEL analysis in Figure (5).

The proposed thematic coding process identified similarities to the studies that has been developed by external consultants as a result of effective and efficient...
governance in Dubai. Such model exploited a sense of shared vision and operation within the cultural industry among public and private sector; proving high levels of quality professional outcome. The identified key statements and themes collected successfully developed a PESTEL analysis within its pillars which include: political, economic, socio-cultural, technical, ecological and legal.

7. INTERPRETATION & IMPLICATION OF THE FINDINGS

The following four subdivisions relate to the main findings from the interviews and the DHD’s studies together. Along with a practical discussion of the issues that were introduced during the interviews, this approach was useful for this research since the findings are to be built for (1) valuing the characteristics of demand in cultural heritage, (2) the value of authenticity in heritagization, (2) indicators of safeguarding cultural heritage, and (3) expectations on cultural heritage implementations. In the following, each interpretation is given a separate headline with its related implication.

However, based on the collected data, as well as the strategic PESTEL analysis, general components have been identified as key competencies of the DHD:

- The Royal Family has been governing Dubai through Shindaga since the mid 19th century, which created a great deal of sensitivity and value to the historic district. Such influence reflected on the visionary of the country to preserve cultural heritage.
- The nature of the historic district is a perfect layout for a distinguished experience design flow. It enables both non-linear and non-directed visitation methods; that is, there can be no start and no end for this type of meta-narration experience which provides a high level of flexibility.
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- Storytelling and the passing down of knowledge from generation to generation by oral means is the ground-base for each of the cultural experiences that are rather applicable and understandable. It includes the main themes and overall communication messages of the DHD.

- Increase of the economic impact of the DHD by enhancing the brand’s name and providing a ‘must visit’ components for those living or visiting Dubai, creating vibrant neighborhoods, a sense of place-making based on cultural identity with good management and maintenance of the area’s post development.

- Networking initiatives to open up for other cultural heritage tourism activities, enabling Emiratis to connect with their heritage, conserve tangible and intangible cultural heritage, recognize the contribution of other cultures, improve Dubai’s profile on the list of the world’s cultural cities.

7.1 Characteristics of Demand

The demand for cultural heritage tourism attractions and offerings are developing continuously. The findings from literature argue that authenticity validates the historical value of a specific site which is the reason for placing it on a tourist route, and staged authenticity puts a demand on tourism for attracting more travelers. Also, outdated market segmentation systems, such as purpose of travel segmentation, or the classification of tourists, no longer apply towards cultural-driven visitations. This is excluded according to official statistics conducted by DTCM’s tourism and statistics report in 2014, the latter indicate that there was a total of 911,000 visitors to Dubai individual museums in 2012.

The overwhelming characteristic is that visitors are dominated by individual travelers (rather than organized groups) and that 87% of visitors are adults of cultural
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interest with a low share of children visitors (DTCM, 2014). The same report indicates further analysis of visitor levels to individual museums in the historic district suggests that the 911,000 visitors represents the total number of people rather than actual visits, and that this number also visited a number of different museums on their trips.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attraction</th>
<th>TripAdvisor Review Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shk Mohammed Centre Cultural Understanding</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai Creek Abra Ride</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deira Gold Souk</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai Creek</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dubai Museum</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Fahidi Quarter</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daira Spice Souk</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage Village</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naif Souk</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gold and Spice Souk</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hamadia Heritage House</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shk Saeed House</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al Fahidi Fort Museum</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Al-Áhmadiya School</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s Museum</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>XVA Gallery</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textle Souk</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frying Pan Food Tour</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 06**: Trip Advisor ratings, July 2014. **Source**: DTCM, 2014

To illustrate this, the total number of visitors to each of the museums in the historic district equates to 1.5 million visits in 2012. The most visited museum is Dubai Museum with over 1 million visitors in 2013. This museum is a key focal point for organized tours to the area and it arguably the most identifiable asset in the area. Visitor numbers have increased significantly since 2009. All other heritage sites receive just over 100,000 visits between them (DTCM, 2014).

These statistics can be an enhancement of some unstated cultural heritage attractions with low review ratings in Figure (6), which was a spark for initiating the DHD in the first place in order to meet high level touristic demands. What is interesting in respect of seasonality of visits to the historic district, is that over the last
five years it has become more marked. The number of summer visitors has remained fairly static but outside of the core season, the number have increased.

To improve this increase without seasonal exceptions, areas of enhancement within the historic district are shown in the map on Figure (7), which describes briefly the development plan of the complete district between Fahidi, going through Shindaga to Deira. Projects in Shindaga are more advanced in terms of planning than those in the other areas. The visitation routes and how they’re corresponding to the map, each of these concepts will be further elaborated during final landscaping execution, and fabrication phases of the project, which recommends implementation.
management of the projects from the district wide structure plan to opening in the first quarter of 2019 (Halcrow & Lord Cultural Recourses, 2015).

Indications of physical alterations to the urban fabric will revitalize the existing public squares, alleys, and streets to promote the heritage aspects of the heart of Dubai. Also, establish an efficient circulation network for vehicles and pedestrians, including open spaces that filled with social activity. These developments will paint a complete picture of Emirati, especially its connections to regional heritage, in economics, business and industry, day-to-day life, religion, handcrafts and traditional skills, and politics and government with Dubai’s heritage in particular. Visitors will understand that this is a living heritage; the themes are not located only in some distant past, but actually connect directly with the way things are still done, in many cases, today as a characteristic of demand.

There is a major theme transecting the main themes – the story of those who built Dubai. This connecting theme will manifest itself to a first-person approach for delivering the content, whether through oral histories and stories delivered by multimedia techniques, by in-person re-enactors or interpreters, or by volunteers who will demonstrate skills and provide public learning programs around such skills or techniques (Lord Cultural Recourses, 2016).

7.2 The Value of Authenticity in Heritagization

The process of heritagization is a dominant factor of the DHD masterplan which has been defined in one of the interviews as: “A live documentation of Dubai’s history” (Interview, April 04, 2017). Similar to previous projects such as the Heritage and Diving Villages as cultural heritage attractions in the historic district, both succeeded to create a 20 years’ image of a living Emirati cultural heritage. However,
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when this humble notion of authenticity started to take shape because of their long existence, both were demolished due to the emergence of the DHD project. This act of repetitive heritagization cannot be undone easily as the image of each heritagization process becomes a permanent image at a certain point to the consumer. Agreed upon in practice, authenticity is a key operator in its development framework, as the results from the interviews have shown along with the collected dossiers.

Significant authors in the field, such as MacCannell (1973), argue that authenticity withdraws in terms of subjectivity in its nature, meaning it is socially constructed. However, Bendix (1997) and Chhabra, Healy & Sills (2003) argue that, since cultural heritage attractions are often in continuous state of alteration, renovation or re-adaptation, strategy of selling value needs to be marketed to tourists. This is arguably subjective, since the determination of authenticity relies on different social and cultural values, also much can be said on the aspect of cultural heritage commodification in the process of heritagization.

Findings from the collected DHD data as well as the interviews have confirmed the importance of authenticity in cultural heritage tourism, especially when the latter is forced to meet certain socio-cultural expectations. In the context of the DHD, the first attempt to preserve its authenticity began in 2014 where it was, and still, officially recognized by the Royal Family. The historic district boundaries were identified, and therefore, any act of rehabilitation, restoration, or demolishing, goes through a detailed process. Self-conducted studies were made by heritage specialists within the borders of the historic areas. The categorization was based on plots system; hence, it was easier to apply preservation regulations according to these plots. The latter controls approximately 60% of the original characteristics of the historic district (Interview, April 10, 2017).
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One of the interviewees found the word heritagization interesting and I quote: “Heritagization is a very interesting concept! However, I don’t think we’re trying to produce alternative heritage, we’re trying to preserve and represent heritage in a modern way”. This statement indicates clearly the challenge of modernity opposing to preservation authentic values is the continues loss of authentic fabric while developing the DHD.

Some interviewees argued that the DHD initiative is basically collective elements of staged cultural heritage. Others argue that the value of the district is related to the social process and the authenticity of use while maintain the history fabric according to the uniqueness of the place. The identified number of attempts to preserve heritage and culture themed developments being planned for Dubai, the other Emirates and the Gulf in general, pose a real threat to the remained perceived authenticity of the historic district.

In order for the district to preserve its proposition as the only authentic historical district of Dubai, it would need to preserve and celebrate all marks of this authenticity. The latter includes the cultural diversity, heritage fabric, and a living active community of the old Dubai. In addition, every effort should be directed to ensure the cultural experiences in the district are of superior quality as those being built elsewhere.

Lessons from trends and best practices in cultural and heritage districts worldwide prove that authenticity, identity and experience are the hallmarks of successful cultural destinations (Halcrow, 2014). It is these three elements working together that make one place more memorable than the next, that attract tourists and residents and that create an enduring sense of belonging, happiness and well-being.
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What is missing in the current situation that would enhance the interpretation of authenticity that distinguishes the history and heritage of the city, is the collective social memories. It’s a different kind of authenticity which is a definite long-term social process that has been supported in literature by Barker & Langham (2016), and also through the findings in the interviews. Several participants agreed that the main aspect which characterize cultural heritage in the UAE in general, is the collective memory that shifted the focus from tangible to intangible cultural heritage (Interview, April 20, 2017). This specifically motivated delivering audio-visual material within the DHD’s cultural experiences, illustrating traditional life and Emirati heritage. Also, objects owned or used by the Ruling Family, or in day-to-day governance or matters of state, are rarely seen but would enhance the interpretation.

7.3 Indicators of Safeguarding Cultural Heritage

It can be seen that there will be opportunities for visitors to experience the living heritage of Dubai in either formal or informal settings. As mentioned in the value of authenticity, the first attempt to preserve cultural heritage is when the boundaries of the heart of Dubai were set officially on the map as a preserved location. National identity and the symbolic value of built heritage and habits are by far, seen the most important reasons for justifying the safeguarding of cultural heritage.

Other indicators are demonstrated in the value that has been stressed by the Royalty, leadership and government. Moreover, an interviewee stresses on the topic of identity has been the eternal discussion among scholars and renowned academics in the country which led to a common understanding that cultural heritage of the UAE in all its forms constitutes the national identity of the UAE (Interview, March 30, 2017).
The second highest reason for supporting the concept of cultural heritage safeguarding is the correlation with the collective communal memory and the meaning of place. This fact is supported by the findings of an empirical research conducted in 2016 that concerns conservation and reconstruction in Dubai. The survey was based on the understanding of the context the community’s involvement in various cultural heritage activities, as well the heritage built material development in the city.

Aslan & AlAssi (2016) in their findings, emphasize on the meanings and memory of the place are much more personalized, community driven values that complete the missing pieces of protecting national identity values which creates a far more sustainable identity for the nation (Aslan & AlAssi, 2016). The latter has been emphasized by a number of interviewees as well and I quote: “The main aspect which characterize cultural heritage in the UAE, to have more focus on the intangible and the cultural collective memory” and “Locals adore their history and get attached to their past, they wish to see a resemblance or memories of the past” (Interview, April 10, April 20, 2017).

When memory and stories are seen as a key way of reconnecting the community to its past, there can be a celebration of an interaction with the physical presence of the heritage fabric in the DHD. The latter developed the concept of oral histories which are useful once there are stories attached or identified to particular individuals or events. In the DHD’s current situation, an authentic oral history program to gather and document these stories can be delivered spontaneously by individuals about their lives or experiences.

Most communicating methods are informal – that is, it is driven by personal interest and constructed by visitors out of their own personal contexts and past
experiences. However, through the DHD museums and heritage institutes, informal learners are driven to learn about those things they are most interested in; also, through their visit, they may develop an enthusiasm for the subject matter and become interested in learning more.

Museums work best when they facilitate this type of learning and keep visitor needs front and center. There will be some opportunity for more formal kinds of learning. Programs in auxiliary components of the Shindagha Museum such as the Heritage Community Centre (HCC). The HCC is a first of its kind institution that inspires the practice and preservation of Emirati cultural heritage, with a specific focus on traditional craft skills. Nevertheless, the latter should still encourage a self-directed approach, to offer teachers a type of learning that they cannot provide in the classroom. In this sense, the staff who deliver the more structured or formal types of experiences will be “guides on the side” rather than “sages on the stage”.

7.4 Expectations on Cultural Heritage Tourism Implementations

Dubai has increasingly turned its attention to its cultural offer, especially with the win of the World Expo 2020 and in keeping with its explosive urban growth. It seeks to distinguish itself from the other Emirates and adopt a cultural tourism positioning in keeping with its unique and cosmopolitan urban character. At the same time, as the city grows, Emiratis are creating and seeking more cultural and heritage activities and experiences, while still looking to preserve their heritage.

An interviewee stressed over the fact that “The DHD will surely enable us, Emiratis, to remember and bring back these dying values and using it at the same time to market our identity through tourism” and “The government seeking to lead the future generations of Emiratis a preserved authentic record of the past, where they
can get learned, inspired, and understand where Dubai came from” (Interview, April 04, 2017). Thus, there is a high expectation on the cultural heritage offerings from the tourism sector, and the mechanism of implementing of the latter must be in parallel with the city’s vision.

A submission to UNESCO to have a section of the historic district identified as a World Heritage Site has further strengthened the commitment of the government to ensure that Dubai’s heritage and culture will continue to be a powerful force for the Dubai of the future. From a tourism point of view, the development and positioning of the district provides an additional reason for visitors to visit and stay longer. Creating a comprehensive and integrated destination that appeals to cultural tourists, families, business and MICE tourists, and general leisure tourists supports the Emirate’s aspiration to double annual visitor numbers from 10 million in 2012 to 20 million in 2020, triple tourism’s contribution to Dubai’s GDP and increase the length of stay from the current 3.89 nights (Halcrow, 2015).

In order to create a vibrant historic district that meets such high expectations of the sector, as well the residents and tourists of a city that prioritizes the heritage and culture, adopting and combining the principles of forward-looking urban planning seems to be a necessity such as (1) the creative clusters, the (2) place-making of cultural heritage, and (3) urban tourism. These three principles, supported in literature with the adaptive reuse of heritage, and the experience economy where Morgan, Elbe and de Esteban Curiel (2009) stressed on the importance of cultural heritage themes and assets that adds value to the local identity in relation to the cultural tourism sector (Morgan, Elbe & de Esteban Curiel, 2009).

1) Creative clusters are an approach to planning that recognizes the role of artistic and cultural resources and clusters for economic development- and seeks to
develop the creative industries within a city or neighborhood. It is based on the idea that creative enterprises are more innovative within each other’s company and therefore the key objective is to bring together diverse creative businesses- some small and some big- with technological and economic support in a specific, visible area (Rivas, 2011).

2) Place-making emerged as a response to the perceived failure of traditional top-down urban planning which resulted in urban spaces that were planned for cars or business but were unsustainable, alienating and uncomfortable for people and communities. It’s an approach to planning that seeks to place people at the center of urban planning and aims to shape an environment which facilitates social interaction, high quality public space and improves a community’s qualify of life (Project for Public Spaces, 2017).

3) Finally, an urban tourism approach has grown from the explosion of urban tourism in the last decade, as well as developments in social media, the sharing economy and the transformation of the tourism industry. This approach seeks to explore how tourists can contribute positively to the sustainable growth and experience of cities- particularly in the way tourists and residents interact. This approach seeks to encourage cities to create a culture that produces attractive places that visitors are also motivated to seek out, beyond the more obvious mass attractions. It recognizes that visitors have a vital role in creating new urban experiences and identifies opportunities for them to do so, as well as to act as ambassadors for a particular place (Maitland, & Newman, 2014).

8. DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION
To summarize, this research identified the following visionary principles, which guides the development of the cultural heritage experiences of similar initiative as the DHD:

- Generate a feeling of national pride amongst Emiratis create reasons for people to return; focus on increasing visitation and revenue which enhance a destination’s experience.
- Diversify experiences to cater to a wide range of audiences that leads to more engaging and enjoyable cultural experiences through the introduction of a variety of experiential based, rather than didactic.
- Historical and ethnographic collections should primarily be utilized as a means of communicating or enhancing a story, or showing how a cultural offering works.
- Opportunities for collaboration with schools and universities over the curriculum should be developed as well.
- Creative and responsible use of technology, keeping in mind operational realities and visitor comfort levels, as well as the means to explore content.
- Finally, provide sense of freedom and flexible options for guided and self-guided visits, multiple intellectual entry points tailoring various levels of knowledge that layer’s content for visitors to explore further relevant Emirati personal stories focusing on ideas, debates and meanings.

All the main points that have been treated over this study, either in the theoretical or the exploratory part, have had a chance to be critically examined in the course of the research, whose major merit has been a substantial variety of different opinions and conceptual studies. Nevertheless, as has been identified earlier in the research design, the main objective of conducting this study is to identify the value of
preserving cultural heritage, and demonstrate the potentiality of the Dubai’s tourism industry and the heritage development management working in parallel as instruments of cultural productivity.

It is important to state that the findings not to be generalized with regards to the entire population, since they are limited to an expression of attitudes and beliefs of the sample involved throughout gathering the data. However, the findings extracted a range of challenges for a sustainable development, and also a number of limitation are identified along with future research recommendations.

8.1 Challenges for the DHD Sustainable Development

At some point during collecting the data, sustainability development issues for cultural heritage were identified as a challenge. In the case of DHD, the experience of other comparable districts also pointed to some challenges to be guarded against with the development of the historic district. These include commercial development pressures, urban encroachment erasing the character and heritage of the place including the Creek, inauthentic reconstruction resulting in a lack of interest from visitors and a threat to the heritage status of the area, and the focus on tourism only leaving the area vulnerable to seasonality and over commercialization. This is more of a threat for mass tourism rather than niche tourism as cultural tourists look for authentic, unique and meaningful experiences which the district can provide:

- Gentrification, forcing local resident communities out resulting in the disappearance of the cultural character of the place.
- Lack of community ownership, leading to lack of care over private assets and lack of participation in heritage and cultural offerings.
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- Poor urban maintenance, leading to unattractive and unnavigable streetscapes, and eroded or lack of pedestrian walkways, preventing enjoyment of public space and trails and compromising the settings of the heritage resources.
- Intolerance among community, Dubai residents and tourists leading to cultural silos rather than exchange and social cohesion
- Irrelevance of stories and experiences, misleads the new generations of residents and tourists.

Traditionally, key words concerning sustainable development in cultural heritage tourism are known as authenticity, interpretation, dialogue, and a governance approach between management and visitors in order to educate and foster respect towards the heritage resource presented in the DHD. Findings from the exploratory part of research have concerned these aspects on sustainability in cultural heritage tourism, being mostly related to the creation of networks and partnerships, the involvement of the Emirati community in order to create long-term awareness on behalf of locals and visitors to cultural heritage. Number of interviewees have furthermore argued that value needs to be created for the tourist, enabling a meaningful, personal cultural experience (Interview, April 10, April 20, 2017).

In the case of the DHD, sustainable development of its cultural heritage resources is intrinsically linked to the development of both products and offerings for tourism. It is important to define the core values that are to be transmitted in order to remain faithful to the initiative and to encourage sustainable development now and in the future. There is an opportunity to initiate an awareness concerning cultural heritage issues towards Emiratis. Authenticity is a key issue in this context, which its value and employment continues to echo throughout this case study. An interviewee
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points at the unique case of authenticity in Dubai: “For the locals, even when they go back to the reconstructed houses in Shindaga, it’s authentic for them because it’s in their memory. It’s a different kind of authenticity which is a definite social process” (Interview, April 20, 2017). Thus, there is a miscommunication to feed this lingering belief that authenticity necessarily equals to sustainability, which is also supported in the findings. A single action or development plan is inscribed in the major goals of the destination or attraction it is placed in, then, one can decide about its outcome and responsible action.

8.2 Limitations & Future Research

One of the limitations this research has faced is the non-generalizability of its findings, which is a direct result of the qualitative research methodology. This is certainly true of the case studies, whose results have been based on the review of relevant sources available to the author at the time of their preparation. The research bias has been reduced by using a substantial variety of sources from different persons or organizations.

The same principle applies to the results of the interviews, whose statements are based on each individual opinion and belief of the participants at the time of the interview. However, the development of the interpretation and implications earlier has followed conclusive evidence from literature and data collected. As a consequence, the quality of the findings has been enhanced. Suggestions for further research naturally move in the direction of quantitative research in order to generalize the nature of the findings. This is actively suggested in the case of DHD. Recommendations for further quantitative studies can be given in conjunction with the opening of the DHD.
After some time, the findings may be used to stimulate further qualitative research, especially with regards to the issues that have been treated over the course of this research. Encouraging advanced Emirati cultural heritage studies will ensure creating an in-depth research on the various dimensions in the value of authenticity, cultural heritage interpretation, cultural products development and sustainability are encouraged. Moreover, studies on consumer behavior and satisfaction are considered valuable in the future.
9. REFERENCES


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10. APPENDIX | Guidelines of the Interview Questions

Introductory: General knowledge

Q01) According to your position in the DHD project, could you tell me what is the actual scope of your work? And what is your personal definition of the DHD?

Q02) Based on your work and experience, what are the main characteristics of cultural heritage today, the UAE in general and Dubai in specific? Are there any empirical studies you can refer to?

Q03) How are these characteristics related to the DHD project?

Q04) Based on how far you worked on the project’s deliverables, what are the limitations? If any existed, what are the best actions/procedures to overcome these challenges?

Cultural Heritage Tourism Interpretation

Q05) Since when did you have an interest on cultural heritage? Explain the nature of that interest and how did you implement it in the context of tourism?

Q06) In your opinion, why has cultural heritage tourism become so popular in Dubai?

Q07) According to your work and opinion, what is the “right” tourism market for cultural heritage sites? (i.e. Al Shindaga Historical District where the DHD project is located) And why?

Q08) Since the demand for such cultural ‘district’ or ‘products’ is on the rise again, how does the DHD initiative recognize this increased demand for authenticity in relation to personalized experiences?

Issues of Socio-Cultural Impacts, Authenticity & Heritagization

Q09) As you may know, Abu Dhabi and Sharjah took the first steps to protect threatened cultural heritage by issuing Emiri Decrees of safeguarding cultural heritage. Within the Emirate of Dubai, what are the existing processes/procedures for preserving cultural heritage in the absence of that decree?

Q10) With the emergence of the DHD as an inspiration of Heritagization – which is heritage-making process that cultivates the production of alternative heritage – what is
the process of Heritagization that has been conducted in this project? And what are the challenges you have faced to meet certain expectations to deliver ‘authentic’ products?

Q11) According to your opinion: Is providing authenticity to tourists’ experiences, in the most natural way, linked to being sustainable?

Q12) How do you see the evolution of the safeguarding cultural heritage with a view to the DHD initiative? Will there be a change of state towards less commodification of cultural heritage?

Interview 1): Fatma Lootah | Director of Heritage Development Department - DCAA | March 30th, 2017

Q01) At the beginning, we didn’t work on the project as it is. There was an initiation of reforming 53 houses located in Shindaga area into museums and some houses left out without utilizing. Thus, the team thought of turning them into “The Fronds House”, and this idea was on the table since 2012 that produces 100% products only from the palm. Fifteen houses were the total of what’s left, and the idea of scattering the craftsmen in these remaining houses in order to revive authentic Emirati handcraft was appealing. The crafts were not concluded to be from the palms only, there was the traditional braiding, perfume making, burqa design and so on. The main aim of this idea is to restore and re-live Emirati traditional handcrafts. We’re talking here about the Tangible cultural heritage only.

Q02) The main two characteristics of cultural heritage today are twofold forms: tangible and intangible cultural heritage. The focus here in our work is the tangible aspect, basically working in traditional handcrafts. Just recently, the government started to pay attention to cultural heritage in Dubai especially in this unique area of Shindaga. There was a number of empirical studies conducted in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi in the days of Sheikh Zayed, in which he put his efforts personally and also through the government to preserve cultural heritage. Part of these efforts is documenting everything that is related to cultural heritage in both aspects. Such efforts resulted in the evolution of many institutes based in Abu Dhabi that works fully to preserve heritage such as Sogha, where heritage is preserved and developed as well. This program looked for the remaining master craftsmen, put them under the institution care by providing monthly wages, in return these craftsmen produce authentic products and they can sell them through a trade system the program has tailored especially for that purpose to maintain their income.
Q03) To revive tangible cultural heritage, the DHD is very broad but the part we’re working on is purely heritage where the mentioned 15 houses will function to embrace the craftsmen, teach the new generation and produce genuine products of the traditional crafts that are close to be instinct. This simple process can invite tourists or residents to want to know how this particular craft is made originally, how it can be developed and he’s also welcome to learn through defined curriculum.

Q04) Many challenges, I’ll mention quite a few. Because the project is a shared one between three entities, unnecessary involvements and disturbance is always there. According to each entity specialization, one is focusing only on urban development without taking the sensitive nature of the area in consideration, the fact that the place is historic, the fabric, what’s in it, does it serve the development they’re seeking as it should be (ex: the 15 houses that’s giving for the handcrafts, regardless of the bad conditions, this entity still seek to utilize it). The other entity aiming to grow their revenue and profit through this only historical district without looking at the authenticity of the place or the potential outcome that could be authentic in one way or another. Also, other unexperienced parties are involved to work on this project, and what I mean by unexperienced is they have not studied or worked on cultural heritage what-so-ever. Because of the lack of specialized experiences, the project’s deadline always changes, almost like unstable chart, eventually it loses its cultural heritage flavor.

Q05) This interest came from my 26 years of working in culture and heritage environment. My specialization is history of archeology and heritage. I transferred this knowledge to others when I was working as a history teacher, and this transmission developed when they signed a group of people by the ministry of culture to document history and heritage from Emirati elderly, including myself. In the context of tourism, we worked on unlimited number of heritage events and festivals.

Q06) Simply because it represents the essence of the country. Dubai is an extensively growing fast in modernity where the identity is lost and having the smallest representation of the local land makes it popular be default. I’ll give you an example, when you travel to any country, the first thing comes into your mind is where their culture or heritage, and the last thing you will carry is a souvenir which reminds you of their cultural heritage. The other reason of this popularity is that the government started to realize the value of preserving cultural heritage and maintain its authenticity as an essential component of national identity.

Q07) The right market is always related to the proper marketing tools that promote twofold areas: history and heritage, both are complimenting the other if you promoted them in the right sequence. Promoting cultural heritage in specific will attract a huge number of tourists since its based-on experiences and enhancing this journey with validated historical information which supports the different aspects of cultural heritage.
Q08) Through inviting the master craftsmen, and the latter keep treating the new generation to master the crafts in the most natural proper way. For example, if we have a heritage community center, any visitor whether residents or tourists will be curious to learn how such simple materials could turn into functional products.

Q09) We did work on the basics of that decree, a while ago maybe 5 years back, it was stopped for uncertain reasons that I have no access to. One of what I have come across is because the capital is working on similar decree and it was supposed to be active in the seven emirates, not just Abu Dhabi. However, in Dubai, there are unstoppable efforts such as the continuous cultural heritage events and festivals, the DHD, creating a fingerprint to preserve what has been remained in our cultural sites. There are also number of TV documentary shows specialized in cultural heritage, also 6 heritage development centers in schools that work like an activity club which encourage to live, revive, and preserve heritage through lifestyle and also heritage production. All what I have mentioned are humble efforts to preserve cultural heritage.

Q10) First, since my focus of traditional handcrafts, the houses that was provided should be based on studies, not just utilizing leftovers. Once that is considered, human recourses which serve the purpose will definitely enhance the quality of deliverables. Challenges, summarizes in the lack of master craftsmen. These craftsmen I’m talking about are either too old, or already passed away. The remaining suffer from illness, or absence of memory, where is even harder to document anything. The current generation doesn’t obtain the quality for the craft nor the patience of the elderly, which effects the desire and also, the way you work on that particular craft that involves nothing but skills, primary equipment and materials. Focusing on technology and modern tools left no choice for the crafts but to be forgotten, and slowly disappearing. The least what we can do to preserve what’s left is to teach these crafts by making extra effort to find the proper master craftsmen, and also attract the youth to realize the importance of preserving these crafts.

Q11) No. this area and any other historical area can change according to many condition such as the economic and political atmosphere that keep changing nonstop. The Shindaga area wasn’t the way you see it now, even the heritage village wasn’t there, and due to the emergence of the DHD its now demolished after 20 years of reviving heritage even if some elements were staged. The only attraction that represents Shindaga s it was is Sheikh Saeed House the first ruler of Dubai, even that symbol wasn’t safe from minor restorations.

Q12) I don’t think there will be that kind of evolution even through the DHD initiative, because whenever there is a reason of change, it’ll change regardless of preservation situations, especially of it has to be coincide with a bigger vision for the country. These constant changes always related to commodification which eventually lose the authenticity aspect of cultural heritage.
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Interview 2): Moza Suwaidan | Director of Events & Projects Department - DCAA | April 4th, 2017

Q01) Basically I’m the leader of the development DHD within Dubai culture team. the scope of work is focused on the content and operation that is aligned with the cultural entity. Accordingly, there are different scopes for the other entities who are involved in this project. In term of our focus, is covers the gathering and display of items (historical or artistic) in the different thematic museums as well the community centers. In addition to the education programs and activities and also the operational sides of both which includes the staffing, training. Personal definition of the DHD would be, a live documentation of Dubai history.

Q02) A combination between the city’s culture, heritage and values, in addition to the other cultures that coexist within the city, which is the case of Dubai that is very unique of having different nationalities, different cultures, different values, in the same demographic space, sharing different lifestyles in Dubai. The latter leads to implicit cultural exchange. No empirical studies that I can refer to right now for this subject, however, the DHD initiative encourage conducting background research and conceptual studies that has been approved from our leadership is an evidence of how we embrace our culture and we do want to share it with other nationalities that live in Dubai.

Q03) It is directly in relation to the project because we do embrace our cultural and heritage and we’re proud to share it locally and internationally through the DHD which is going to be a rich environment full of experiences and we do want people to engage and understand how the old Dubai was many years back, how it became the way it is today. Thus, the SHS is very much aligned with the vision our leadership to show case Dubai the modern and the history combined.

Q04) The deliverables are divided into 7 sub-projects, each of them has different scope of work, however, all are related to the content and the overall strategy that unifies these categories. Due to the overwhelming dimension of the project, limitations are in the recourses when it comes to the execution of the project. Content wise, there is always a struggle to find the “right” content, not only the right but also the validated content to be shared with the public. We have to be very careful of our display content due to the nature of Dubai as a cosmopolitan city. We have to make sure that it represents the soul of Dubai, resonate with the different backgrounds who plan to visit Dubai and experience the DHD. These limitations are challenges we put all our efforts to overcome through a comprehensive research as well an expedient consultation throughout the process. It is a long-term project and we take these challenges seriously not to back us down.

Q05) My interest came when I was hired by Dubai Culture, which has a noble direction within their scope of work or mandate, basically to preserve the heritage of
Dubai. In addition to enhancing the art scene and cultural activities as well. How my interest is implemented is the way I see DHD, it’s no longer just a way to share our heritage with others, but also those others who come specifically seeking such districts in Dubai, this is where the tourism aspect comes from. We’re not only having a historical district to showcase the old Dubai factuality, but also to the global audience. Tourism plays a vital role in marketing Dubai as a cultural destination throughout the DHD. We’re aiming to accelerate the DHD to be one of the biggest cultural destinations in the world.

Q06) Even without the cultural heritage aspect, tourism has been a major contributor to the economy of Dubai and having the element of cultural heritage made it even more valuable in terms of experiences that Dubai offer to visitors. The combination of cultural heritage and tourism is a component Dubai can offer, and this offering comes to personalized experiences as well.

Q07) Cultural heritage sites built to be catering different needs and different types of market. It represents Dubai in different angles but also tailored to fit these differences and perceptions. For the right tourism market, its not something we limit ourselves to, but it’s a representation of Dubai to the global audience regardless of their origin or religion.

Q08) Because of the fast developments and how the communities are growing to the point one city can refer to the map of the world, the rapid exchange of technology and pace of life, these aspects are the foundation to preserve the city’s heritage and to make sure it’s not diluted with distinguished cultures living in the same geographic area. The DHD one of the channels to preserve Emirati heritage, the culture, and also embrace other cultures.

Q09) There are a lot of efforts that are directed towards the cultural heritage and preserving or documenting the history of Dubai in different means. Having a project like the DHD is a way of documentation. The efforts that are cascaded from our leadership to entities that are concerned with the arts, culture and heritage sectors to make sure it is an ongoing effort of preserving. The decree will help streamlining process but that doesn’t conclude the absence of the existing efforts of safeguarding cultural heritage.

Q10) Heritagization is a very interesting concept! However, I don’t think we’re trying to produce alternative heritage, we’re trying to preserve and represent heritage in a modern way. This is the vision of this project. When it comes to the challenges to meet expectations, it is something we continuously face, not only in this project, but in every project, that involves with culture and heritage. We try our best to represent our content, items, stories as authentic as possible. With the help of research and consultation, whatever we represent we need to make sure it’s a true representation of
Dubai, the history of Dubai, resonate and can be consumed easily by the audience. It is very much based on stories and things we connect as humans.

Q11) Definitely. Sustainable cities are looking to the future to sustain way of life to the next generations. Making sure with the progression of the future, they have a very solid background and foundation for their history and the process of the way they become right now. It is a must to have a sustainable growth in terms of the city’s culture and to make sure that authenticity is a key element in that process.

Q12) Cultural heritage is something you cannot change. Its built in, not only the city’s landscape, but also in the lives of people lived there throughout many years. DHD is one of the ways we safeguard cultural heritage, telling stories, provide experiences to actually make sure the rich culture in Dubai is represented. It’s a different form of cultural exchange with preserving heritage.

**Interview 3): Yousef Lootah | Executive Director of Tourism Development & Investments Department - DTCM | April 4th, 2017**

Q01) DHD as a project for Dubai tourism is a cultural offering that enhances Dubai cultural contributions in general. Culture offerings in Dubai, when did a benchmark, did not score as our regional competitors or international, on certain facets. The DHD project, which includes four districts in total, not only Shindaga, comprise full scope that will enable Dubai to lead the region in terms of cultural tourism. Therefore, one of my main objectives is enhancing Dubai destination as part of my duties in Dubai Tourism, Heading dictation development. When we started the project, my duties are drawing the strategy of the project, the road brushes of development aspects, and oversee the delivery of these objective as approved from H.H. Ruler of Dubai. This is done in collaboration with Dubai Municipality and Dubai Culture in defining what could be offered, where to be offered even in budgeting and operational wise. So, we tendered and hired a company called Halcrow and developed the master plan. My definition of what DHD is a project that extends beyond creating tourism offerings, in that sense from a professional job to a personal one which is, trying to lead the future generations of Emiratis a preserved authentic record of the past, where they can get learned, inspired, understand where Dubai came from. The latter becomes their national treasure of their origin. It goes beyond than just creating tourism oriented district and I think they meet two things: the international tourism also wants to see something authentic, he wants to learn the real story, he wants to understand things in detail. High level talk doesn’t give the rich experience for the tourist to appreciate what he sees or interact with and understanding what this means and why it happened this way, what are the circumstances. Such talk doesn’t tell the real stories, between having an object and a label that says this is a boat, or this is a rifle, there is no meaning. It evolves a lot of story-telling, journey and experience planning.
Q02) The way I characterize cultural heritage right now from a tourism perspective: it’s fluffy! It’s high level, the Emirati heritage identity is getting drowned in the multinational cultures that took over these heritage sites. So, it’s getting diluted. In terms of the shops in the sidewalks, the tourists are not really getting the difference between the Emirati ones from the other nationalities inside these districts, they just can’t see the difference. There is no strong communication, there is no central function that manages and records heritage, to do rich research, historical academic based research as this point in time. When we started this project I personally was not aware of any such central place to go and learn about cultural heritage. There are many people who have done good research, record keeping on matter of interest to them which means things are sporadic and everywhere, they’re not collected in a central archive. When did the study, I realized and I have pushed the creation for heritage archive. That’s the reason you see it now in Dubai Culture. In the UAE in general, I think other Emirates have done a better job at recording the history, keeping objects, expanding the reach. Abu Dhabi standout in terms of their heritage work in relation to the festivals they conduct, the collections they have, whether objects or artifacts or documentations, recorded or filmed history. I think we can achieve the same in what we are doing here in the DHD project.

Q03) They’re very much part of it and I think if the heritage archive performs we will collect the key elements such as objects, stories and research that will lead to more research in the future and more work and engagement. And this immediately falls under our jewel of the DHD project which is the Shindaga Museum. The whole aspect of creating the ambience of living history is very important and that’s where Shindaga Museum comes in not only the classical museum experience but rather the recreation of activities of the past and there where people can go and interact. Learning is a key challenge in how do you make it fun for people.

Q04) I think the biggest challenge in enriching cultural heritage is timing. The second one is commitment, and the third is support. Timing, the more we delay recording stories for people and finding the right recourses, people who have witnessed the 40s and 50s are dying or they reached a point where they’re absent minded. Timing is a big factor and it creates urgency. The second one, commitment, is having proper recourses to collecting this history by the relevant project managers and the support need is also from the community to open up and share. It’s a cultural issue where people sometimes don’t want to be filmed or recorded due to traditional customs and it’s a challenge but I think with commitment and sufficient recourses it can work.

Q05) There are two things. My personal interest differs from the tourism context. Now, on my personal thing, I have always been a part of a family with long lineage here in the UAE. From the days of Liwa to the days of Dubai and throughout my parents, I have learned from their parents and it has been cascaded down. I grew in such a family that their context has been encoded in me. So, it’s part of my way of life or thinking. I don’t see it a special interest as much as it’s a way of life. How do I
convert this interest and modernize it work in our recent times? where Emirati protocol of the Majlis? For example, how could be reflected in the cooperate life, or how employees can treat each other in the work environment? There is a big disparity there, and my fear is Emiratis dice the old ways and values for new western values that will undoubtedly in my mind getting them to lose Emirati identity. From that sense, recording our culture and sharing it through DHD will surely enable us Emiratis to remember and bring back these dying values and using it at the same time to market our identity through tourism. Tourism is the biggest ally of cultural heritage.

Q06) Cultural heritage and heritage in general is a key component of travel. When people travel to destinations they always want to discover the local country they visit. In Dubai, it has been blessed with a very fast development that led many people to think that Dubai was born 40 years ago. It’s very apparent that we needed to tell people that we’ve been around longer than that so they can really understand the real story behind the existence of Dubai the way it is. Dubai has become a cultural melting pot of over than 200 nationalities and that in itself dilutes the Emirati identity in the physical presence. It’s very important and key observations of cultural visitors that they find it very hard to find Emiratis to interact with. Therefore, they cannot judge Dubai in the right means. Thus, as part of the initiative to grow to 20 million visitors and compete to the rest of the world, we need to improve this aspect, which has been to a certain level ignored or stopped developing. When I came on board I realized that the offerings are old and has been around for very long time, numerous failures in terms of transformation modes and in terms of marketing or keeping it. Many different things related to it such as museums or Souqs or the Creek or ancient sites, it wasn’t properly taken care of and the problem with that comes from the fact and here where the link comes where tourism is involved in cultural heritage, it costs a lot of money to up keep it and without making sense economically, the funding may drop. Therefore, tourism that drives visitation and commerce in that sense through people who are interested in such things and coming to these sites, validates the spends on cultural heritage. This is the important link between the two.

Q07) Heritage sites in general can pop anywhere. It doesn’t matter. Their significance stand out from their authenticity. That they’re “heritage” sites. Tourists will go to any relevant cultural site they think they should visit. If you break down cultural sites in their different forms and have heritage by itself, I’ll take out the arts and religion aspect and just focused on historic versus heritage. For example, Sarooq AlHadid ancient site popped in the middle of the desert, between two Emirates, a civilization still on the discovery. But, Shindaga, Deira, including AlRas, are key locations because of their proximity and heritage value and also to the geography aspect, the core of Dubai. That’s why it’s very important these are protected and governed well like any old city. If you go to Rome, or Milan, Or London, there is a core of culture where their history meet. Old Dubai is our core, the anchor where the population stuck and grow there.
Q08) DHD’s project itself, when we first started, it was called in our tourism strategy, Heritage District. During the work, I pushed to change the terms in a way it needs its own identity that would remind everybody what it is. Similar to downtown or DIFC, these are well recognized, they had different names in the past, however, the idea there was no name for the core of Dubai. It’s now BurDubai, Deira, Fahidi, Shindaga and to package it in a way that the international visitor can know where to go and where to explore as abundant, I thought of the name Dubai Historical District (DHD) and I think it works from a marketing perspective so any tourist whether he comes from China or America, it’s simple, he can go and discover it through the way of story-telling. Now to tackle things, we can go deeper, in our planning each district has a flavor. Shindaga were the Royal family lived, a lot of Dubai based families lived there as well. Deira in similar faction, was more progressive than that and allowed trade to happen within and around neighborhoods. Shindaga was more secured, independent, maybe had 2-3 shops, AlFahidi was more of a neighborhood that a trade center. BurDubai was the connection between the two and there is a Souq. In a way, each one brings its own flavor to the context of cultural district, but here, how do we market it is the question. How do we tell the tourist where and what to discover, how to get there and how to know about it, all comes from different elements not just the museum but also tours, developing guided tours through government or private sectors, allowing Emiratis to get involved or doing digital tours where self-guided tours can happen and you tell the stories. Marketing these stories to the source market and telling them what’s expected in Dubai. That aspect is now moving quite a lot clearer in DTCM. All is all, these factors and the other cultural corporates working together in the DHD project, I’m sure the results and the satisfaction of cultural tourism will go up.

Q09) It’s a good question but I don’t think I’m the right person to answer that. I’m not fully understand the extent of these decrees in Abu Dhabi or Sharjah. But what I understand is H. H. the Ruler of Dubai puts great emphasis on protecting our culture, our national treasures, and also the treasures of other cultures. The systems in Dubai that screens and inspects anything comes to and through Dubai is very well governed. These agencies have their standard operational procedures and I think there are connections with Dubai Culture on this. I think, the system works. Do we need a Decree? If Dubai Culture thinks so, I think we need more cooperation and I think the Decree when it’s mentioned in the context of the DHD is how we get objects from people and how we influence people to willingly share their historic belongings, but these things can be tackled in different ways and does not need authoritative decree.

Q10) I think the biggest challenge this project has is project managers who do not the heritage of Dubai, and think that they know because they read few facts here and there or got one aspect of heritage from other people of heard about it or lived it from their perspective! And they want to present it as Emirati genuine heritage. Here where the problem lies in terms of protecting authentic heritage and this has been a challenge from day one in this project. I came to know not from any empirical or
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academic studies that has been conducted but from what I have been told so. What I’m saying, it has to be taken care of in a pitch of soul, because maybe I was taught different things from my family that actually not authentic, but in that manner what we did, I filtered subjects and referred those ones who are subject matter experts, well known to the stories of Dubai and heritage here. And I pressed on my colleagues to do the same. When I personally was part on getting approvals on the museum storyline, each museum was developed for Shindaga foe example, DTCM Director General expects from me that this not just what the tourists wants but also this is accurate. So, the pressure is on me, in front of the DTCM Director General to make sure that our presentation is authentic and what I do basically is when I go through the content and reading it, I kick through my filter and whatever that I’m not aware of I call the experts and make sure it’s correct. The second problem is that research wasn’t well versed especially thematically. What frustrates me that there are not enough Emiratis or we haven’t seen enough Emirati researches working on this project from day one. And that was a challenge, we could speed up a lot of things from the beginning. So, the process as I said, when we decided to do a museum and selected the topics, and we drilled down to pavilions and different stories, there is the normal museum overarching or meta-narrative mechanism of developing a classical museum in process. The rest of the DHD, the other aspects comes from developing certain concepts to show heritage and culture and how we preserve both, but I think more can be done by the Architecture Heritage Department in Dubai Municipality to manage this properly. I think it’s split between Architectural Heritage Management and the Heritage Centre under Dubai Culture, there is something missing in the middle, I think that this can be overcome by more collaboration.

Q11) Of course, unless the authentic experience was not sustainable. Now sustainability has different facets it’s not a single facet. Sustainability in the way industry defines it, one is environment, the second is economic, and the third is sociocultural. It’s a key in sustainability for Emiratis, to explore and exploit heritage for their own economic interest. Because it creates opportunities, and it lacks authenticity if a foreigner wears our costume, stands, meeting and greeting other foreigners as if he’s Emirati, it doesn’t work. So, the only people who fit the job description are Emiratis. That creates economic value for Dubai, and it makes us help Emiratis to earn living, keep a cultural life. None of these activities as far I know, harmful to the environment. Certain practices like building with Coral, back then when was abundant but now building with these raw materials is not easy. But in general, it’s sustainable and one of the most sustainable practices I can think of in the tourism sector.

Q12) I see that, laws and legalizations are important in putting actions into specified frameworks. But at the end, cooperation and the strategic components in any of the cultural corporates involved in the DHD, and the support gained from the Leadership for the same subject, all the mentioned are the variables to influence on safeguarding cultural heritage. There is no barrier for any director to draw a strategic plan or model
to safeguard cultural heritage. There is a federal decree that is under process if I’m not mistaken that is concerned with the 7 Emirates, UAE in general. No doubt, it’s important to have such decree to streamline efforts, but what is more important, is the current action to protect heritage which involves the community as well. This address each emirate and each entity set foot on this country. From a personal experience, when we tried to cooperate with a federal entity in this subject, we faced difficulties to gain the proper information or content. For one reason or another I’m not quite sure why, smart systems can be utilized and interfere positively in safeguarding cultural heritage. Digital platform and smart solutions for instance, they can do much much more, than what it has been offered right now. to be honest, if we had what other countries did many years back, which is documenting every detail of their way of life, to the point I was in a tour in London called the Historic coffee shop tour, it narrates the storyline of coffee in London since 1600s. this coffee house made by this merchant and the stories behind each. When we tried to discover if such existed in Shindaga, we faced a block where none could tell us any fact, until by coincidence, an old fellow passed by heard us and he called upon us saying: “come, come over, this corner there was a traditional coffee setting belonged to Mussabah”. And this shocked me personally because the space he pointed at currently including the infrastructure plans for the Perfume Museum! That micro piece of information was not recorded. As a result, if it was recorded and generalized in the past as it should be, the DHD project and its component would be in a different place. It all goes back to the record keeping. The latter is very important and Dubai could do better even with the lost time in due.

**Interview 4): Karim Qassoud | Associate – Tourism Development & Investments Department - DTCM | April 09th, 2017**

**Q01)** Basically, I’m part of the PMO team in Dubai Tourism. We’re following up with all the strategic projects and making sure of the deliverables per timeline and schedule. Also, making sure all the different entities involved working together in parallel. My personal definition of the DHD, being involved from early stages of the masterplan, I believe it’s a great project for Dubai from an expat perspective being here in the city for years, we need a place for people to connect more with the culture of UAE and locals. The definition is, what would an Emirati tell the people who visit the UAE? Whether it’s through the history of Shindaga or the diversity of BurDubai or the trade and the culture and artwork in Fahidi. I think there are four districts coming very well together to showcase what Dubai really is.

**Q02)** From a tourism perspective, the main characteristic of cultural heritage in general, I think it is the bottom pillar of tourism. I was lucky to work in other places, France for instance, within the tourism sector, where cultural heritage is very important, basically that is how people connect with tourism. I think for the UAE it’s very important giving the name of the DHD, it’s appealing. The hub as it is, it needs
to keep its soul, its culture. Keeping it and showcasing it, I think they’re two key elements for cultural heritage and tourism in general. For the studies, to be honest I’m not aware of such.

**Q03)** The whole need of creating heritage district in Dubai, came from the different surveys we conducted with tourists mainly and also with residences, the Emirati population. Basically, the survey was about the need to have place to connect different aspects of Emirati culture. I think the DHD project is full of the latter, from the museums to the cultural institutions. All the different projects under this umbrella and I can name a few of them – as there is more than 90 projects – in the masterplan of the DHD they key objectives were to connect Emiratis with their culture, showcasing Emirati culture through different activations, improving networking and communication between Emiratis and their cultural heritage, and obviously reconnecting the future generations with their own culture. These five objectives leading the project to fulfill its deliverables hopefully.

**Q04)** There are quite few limitations and challenges, because the nature of this district has changed a lot and very quickly. Therefore, to bring back the authenticity and the culture into this district is pretty complicated. On top of that, the fabric of this district is evolving which it can be a challenge and also an opportunity. An example is the Fahidi, an activated area but it needs improvement in terms of basic services. One it needs parking for instance, this has been tackled in the masterplan. Creating events more frequently is another aspect, the right timing to activate these events. How can we basically improve the whole offering of Fahidi and we can do the similar in Shindaga or Deira and so on. The limitation would be dealing with four districts with four different identities, not just one. The four of them are really complicated. But the fact we have to focus on Shindaga, and learn for the challenges on that district and learn how to work together, I think that would be much easier to also deal with other projects in the other districts.

**Q05)** To be honest, I was working on projects on cultural heritage back in France when I was still a student, and I think I was more exposed when I started working in the DHD and trying to understand why this is important for the tourists. Throughout the past years working at Dubai Tourism we’ve got a lot of knowledge of what people would want when they come to Dubai, what are there expectation and what do they think of Emirati culture. And after experiencing all, what they learned. I believe there are a lot of opportunities to improve that segment and it’s very critical and important to tackle it right now rather than later. For the tourists when they come to Dubai there is something they really want to discover but somehow, they’re shy to do so! It’s all about marketing it and making it known to the public, and on the top of that I’d say, tourists nowadays, they’re not the usual ones. Tourists won’t just come and visit the common tourist tours, they always want to discover something new and different, or their friends never seen. It’s all about customized experience and I think the way Dubai can do it is through cultural heritage.
Q06) I think more or less it’s linked to what I was just saying. People want to know where they are and this is coming from tourists all over the world. Where the locals go? How do they live? It’s very critical here and Dubai and becoming very popular in Dubai because people know Dubai as a futuristic hub and as a modern city. But they don’t really know what is behind this modernity, the story, how it developed so far. It’s always the nature of the environment and people became curious I think. When they come to Dubai they just want to know and it matches their expectations and their reasons behind visiting Dubai. It’s all about how we put these offerings and there is a lot to offer thought the DHD which is tackling these needs.

Q07) I think, there is no “right” tourism market for cultural heritage sites. We’re seen it throughout different surveys that says everyone wants to know. Some percentage is more interested than others, some wants to know about culture, arts, and heritage, some people just want to know about culture in general and other wants to focus on heritage. Culture and heritage are two distinguished themes. Others want entertainment or leisure shopping. But I think across all market, geographically or age groups, I think everyone would want to know the size of heritage Dubai can offer. They look for museums and how people used to live before. Example, is the Shindaga which is properly the oldest in Dubai along with the Fahidi, and I’m always surprised before they started the constructions of the DHD, how people go there even though the offerings are very poor and hopefully will be improved. People are so interested about these areas and how they loved walking in the Sikka (narrow walks between the buildings) trying to understand how people used to live. I think everyone is interested there is just no right in my opinion.

Q08) I think this is an amazing question! Because this is all the essence of who delivers the DHD. Here you’re asking how do we leverage the DHD to tackle this demand. In my opinion, the right way is the governance instructions on delivering DHD, the fact is it’s not just one entity, we have three delivering the needs on its own way or mandates. For instances, the tourism side of it where Dubai Tourism targets all aspects of tourism in that area and the objectives of pleasing the tourist, that’s just one aspect. Dubai Culture, the entity responsible of content, the knowledge and the expertise, is important as well. Dubai Municipality handling the high-level projects in terms of infrastructure, urban planning, landscaping. The combination of the three is what tackling this demand and on the back of that we have the higher committee, the consultant, the experts and the lead, who are involved on daily basis to proofread and make sure authenticity is there.

Q09) With the absence of that decree, I think there is the architectural heritage department in DM which is very professional in overseeing all the work and all the heritage sites across the city and I think they’re doing a great job in trying to make sure whatever is there remains there and what needs to be improved will be improved.

Q10) I think this is the main challenge for delivering DHD. It is how to make sure, as you mentioned, the authenticity of the project. Giving an example the museums and
the products are actually the stories – rather than the tangible side – throughout the Shindaga for each and the right tackled theme. All of this is very critical in terms of trying to keep authenticity of the whole site. The building with the right themes and the utilization at the minimum risk of alternation these buildings. People needs to experience it in the right way and that’s the whole aspect of authenticity. And I think here where the collaborative work between the three entities is very important and trying to make sure we have crosschecking people along the whole process, is not just one person telling the story, but a community story-telling and there is research work, interviews, just to make sure the narration that’s going to be delivered in this or that museum as authentic as possible.

Q11) This is very interesting point! In Dubai Tourism, we try to keep all the offerings across Dubai from hotels to museums sustainable. Sustainability has different definitions, there is the environmental, the economical and the cultural. Since here we’re talking about culture, making sure one tourist visit Dubai they experience it in the right way. And I think a very good example to look at internationally is the Venice example where it’s probably one of the most beautiful cities in the world, and one of the richest in term of culture and heritage. However, people when they go there, throughout the different surveys that tourism boards or organizations have conducted, is that people don’t actually enjoy the culture as much. They stay there for one day, or two, without experiencing the full cultural offering. I think that’s just one example we don’t want to get through and its overselling culture is trying to make it a marketable item rather than making it more authentic. It’s a challenge of how not to keep culture, heritage and arts not commercial products and keeping it as something people would enjoy and discover by themselves, something passionate about and not something that’s been sold as tickets to people.

Q12) Throughout the delivery of the DHD, we’re really making sure that the culture side are kept as they are. It’s one of the primary mandate of DM but also in Dubai Culture, making sure the stories, and the authenticity of these stories are checked. In term, how things will evolve and making less commercialized, this is a challenge the three entities are working on currently. It’s really interesting how to work on it because tourism is all about driving revenues and visitations and making people have an enjoyable stay with increased numbers, opposed to culture. It would be nice to have common grounds, having more tourists yet giving the authenticity of that site which is the way forward for this project

Interview 5): Nasser AlShamsi | CEO of YAS Reform | April 10th, 2017

Q01) If we talk about my position in the DHD project, it’s related to two parts of the project. It’s not talking about the whole DHD, we’re talking about the Heritage Community Centre (HCC) which mainly handles traditional Emirati handcrafts. My company, was awarded to handle the development about 15 heritage houses in the
same area located in Shindaga. To transform this cluster, old restored houses, into educational institute dedicated for the handcrafts, focusing mainly at a number that’s been practiced commonly in the UAE as whole. My role has two directions, one is working on the development on the handcrafts strategy sector, laying out a roadmap for Dubai Culture to implement the right educational programs, to follow a very proper framework to enhance the handcraft which is fragmented here and there. We started with the basis of the handcrafts strategy and working on the competency framework for this sector, what we need, skills, knowledge, capabilities and capacities to be implemented in this sector in order to bring it in the right position. Of course, that part includes the training program, the educational courses, the teaching materials, insuring the quality and the implementation for the people who will handle and facilitate the HCC. The second part, looking at the concept, how we transfer the houses from an engineering point of view, to harmonies the flow of visitor circulation, student engagement, and make it a proper place for knowledge transfer. This is mainly our scope of work. If you ask me what is the definition of the DHD, I would say it is an old, historical location where the history of Dubai started. If you go back to the history of Shindaga itself, it’s clear it was a place where the Royal family established their legacy and got the loyalty of the people surrounding that area and utilized it to live as a residence. A lot of activates were developed over there. People lived at the seaside, the desert side, the communication and interaction between both. The culture that was exchanged around Shindaga was developed gradually. Based on that, a lot of requirements and needs were addressed based on their way of living.

Q02: Unfortunately, if you looked at the availability of information – I’m talking now about the handcrafts as part of heritage or cultural heritage – if you look at that aspect, you will find information done by some reporter or covered by a newspaper of a magazine, without any validation. It’s still not being captured in a way where the information is coming from the real people who are experienced in that field and continuously practicing that or this handcraft. No validation process was followed in gathering and building this database. The character of the Emirati handcraft in Dubai, it’s shaping the living style in the area throughout the past years. Part of this cultural heritage is telling the story of the Bedouin lifestyle, how they were the available raw material, for example the palms fronds. Whatever is available at the desert side and how they used these materials to meet their daily requirements and basically survive. These needs grew to be a traditional handcraft in terms of furniture, decoration, tools, clothing, which makes their life adaptable. It was also, to differentiate our culture from another, especially the Islamic flavor on that side. Some of the products has patterns that are related to a certain group of people living on a particular side of the UAE and this is a remark of a tribe. For example, the Sadu handcraft, that weaving reflected many patterns follows a history, either its related to their family tree or related to some of desert related icons/symbols, they use it also on their cattle to recognize their ownership. All these sings and patterns reflected on the handcraft which gave it a sense of authenticity and belonging. A certain character all is all.
Q03) I think the DHD is a bigger umbrella, you will find a different cultural era for the people who live there. The Bedouin brought their products to Shindaga area and that shaped the character of the whole area. This is an early method of interacting between different environments in Dubai.

Q04) For the handcrafts, unfortunately, the database for each handcraft, the documentation is missing. There is a limitation in this aspect. It is very important to have a database and this is what we are doing in cooperation with Dubai Culture. To build a functional database for the handcrafts in term of describing the handcraft itself, the history behind it and what does it mean, describing the raw material that has been used in order to practice a certain handcraft. Describing also the techniques and skills, the pattern and the art. We have people who are looking for this information, researchers as well, benchmarking to fetch what I have mentioned earlier, they don’t find the information! We came to a point where it’s critical to have a well-documented database with records, footage and photos, from the people who are practicing any type of cultural heritage.

Q05) Well, for the last 25 years of my career, I’ve been focusing on two main pillars of development. One is the people excellence which is related to human recourses development. The other is institutional, which I call it business excellence. Its related to strategy management, quality, and performance. Therefore, I have decided to use this diversity in the field of culture. Culture and arts is one of the promising sectors in my opinion that got a lot of opportunities. So, my interest actually got twofold directions. One is coming from being part of the society here as a citizen of the UAE, I feel it’s very important that culture, art and heritage need to be looked at in depth where we can present it to our community, the children, the people abroad who are interested to know about our culture. That’s been said, an interest for N. S. as a citizen. The other is a commercial interest. Follows opportunities and business. Creating opportunities for culture and heritage where not a lot of corporates can understand the local language and local culture of UAE. I find myself, based on the long experience that I have, learning about this type of business which is the cultural heritage sector. Also, creating opportunities where I can aid other entities, especially the research centers.

Q06) Well, Dubai is a hub for tourists. For also business and economy. We are expecting a lot of development in the near future in this sector. Tourists have big interest to know about the history of the country. To produce and provide real knowledge to the people, it requires a lot of work. Another reason for the popularity of cultural heritage is the focus on Dubai as distinguished international city with all the achievement and recognition that Dubai is getting, it became the talk for everybody. The history available in parallel with this focus, heritage and culture is part of this journey. The more people we get, the more popular cultural heritage becomes. This is just a regular formula. Also, the winning bid of the Expo2020, the
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popularity increases especially from the visiting countries who will participate and want to know more about the heritage and history of Dubai.

Q07) Shindaga is one of the destinations, works as a bigger umbrella for culture and heritage and history of the UAE. There are other places around Dubai, for examples, museums whether old or recently launched. Etihad museum is unique and distinguished example for the history of the UAE as whole. Events, seminar, traveling exhibitions that are related to Dubai Tourism. All the mentioned are platforms ad tools to present cultural heritage of the UAE.

Q08) I think the plan that the government is following is focused in bringing the original and right information for the visitor. Visitors or tourists are smart, people can recognize if this is original or not. As I said, the government is following proper governance for the activities and select the right program to be implemented in this historical district.

Q09) Always, in any business, the legislation platform or environment is the baseline and the concrete foundation for the sector to grow. Having such a law to protect cultural heritage, the art, history, is a must. Abu Dhabi and Sharjah had implemented this and they’re doing more because having this legislation without implementation on ground it’s not enough. There has to be an action plan in parallel with the law. Here in Dubai, even though they haven’t introduced this law yet, but there are good initiatives and programs to preserve our culture. By introducing the project of HCC, introducing a well-organized program for the local handcrafts, this is a unique process to preserve cultural heritage. The way initiatives are introduced play major role in preserving and safeguarding Emirati culture. Looking at building a competency framework across the cultural sector in Dubai, means that Dubai is putting a lot of effort. The way they want the new generation to learn about the handcraft as a cultural part of our society is a process having heritage handcraft strategy for the sector is one of the pillars that can also save cultural heritage. Once you have a roadmap everyone can follow, and measure, there are objectives and KPIs. There is a clear alignment for the strategy as a tool to save heritage and also align it with the strategy of the city and the country and present it internationally. Dubai is working on annual basis on a report called the creative economy report. To present and having this report embedded, it gives a clear direction that Dubai is on the right track to preserve the culture and heritage of UAE. Definitely, we’re looking to have a law to be a foundation for all the pillars will be built on that later on as I have mentioned.

Q10) To have an authentic product, you need the people who are experienced. The way we design the project, the way we are gathering and collecting the information for the HCC, is one of the main pillars of success to introduce and deliver authentic product in the heritage sector. We should rely on real original raw material, not duplicated. For example, the Khos handcraft, we can’t rely on artificial or fake palm fronds! Event he coloring is counted. We should present the one and only way to
produce an original piece is to follow the right process of making it. Starting from the right knowledge, introducing the right skills, the validated information, finding and unitizing raw materials related to that certain craft, having real handcraft masters on ground to ensure the knowledge transfer to the consumer. This is the only way where visitors can find real and original piece of Khos product, or Sadu, or jewelry. We have to follow certain steps for any kind of handcrafts as a cycle that can’t be broken. It has to be built on the way it was implemented years back. But at the same time, you have to bear in mind, that you also need to enhance the product where it can be reflected in the modern art and fashion to keep up with the market. However, we have to keep the originality of the production cycle. This is the only way we can provide authenticity of handcrafts.

Q11) Of course! Sustainability is always relying on something original. Without it, you will not be able to preserve this type of product. Sustainability is relying on the right or original cycle of handcrafts.

Q12) The focus now is come up with an alternative solution to enhance the economy of the UAE. This is clearly, and if you remember in the Government Summit two years back, H. H. crown prince of Abu Dhabi, has given a clear statement that here in the UAE we should think 50 years ahead, where the last ship of oil will leave our ports. How do we do that? We should put more focus on certain sectors. That it can implement this vision. Mostly sectors have to do with sustainability. Culture and heritage is one of the promising sectors that fulfills that vision. Provide a sustainable and authentic approach to enhance the economy and introduce it to the public. This is the only way.

Interview 6): Eng. Khalid Yousef | Head of Design Section - DM | April 10th, 2017

Q01) I’m the head of the design section in the in architectural heritage department. And my responsibility in this project, a supervisor on number of waves (1, 2, 3), for example, the pavilions about beauty products of the past and traditional medicine, the navigation museum, and the life of the sea pavilion. And also, my team who’s working on these waves, we’re working to develop the resort for Shindaga area. Also, I’m part of the HCC team which mainly handles the production, execution, infrastructure and landscaping, not only for the HCC, but also for all the waves I have mentioned earlier. All is all, design and build the museum experience. Through my experience in the architectural heritage department, more than 16 years, for the conservation of the DHD, the Municipality DG approved the expansion of this department to also preserve architectural heritage in Dubai. My definition of the DHD, it’s the most important part of Dubai now. Couple of reasons for that, first, there is no cultural identity for the city. The Shindaga area is maybe 1% of the DHD master plan as a whole. This part is locally important more than internationally, for
Emiratis more than foreigners. This is the identity of the city. If you visit any other country, you can see contemporary and modern landscaping everywhere. But the identity is always remains at the heart of these countries. In the case of Dubai, the historical zone where the DHD is located is the heart. Because of that, we much preserve, add value, develop the infrastructure, and pushing up the level of this area. If you move away from the heart, the low maintenance of the buildings began to affect the historic area. Some are used as labor camps, others are in a bad condition or the construction is weak. Thus, the DHD, must be improved and not be affected by the surroundings.

Q02) Cultural heritage has two parts, tangible and intangible. We focus on the tangible part because it’s my main scope of work. Which means, the buildings. We also focus on the usage of these buildings in the past, this can be intangible in a way. For example, was it residential, religious, commercial, defense? The management of these buildings, the concept behind each and why they had to build it this way. Development of materials is also included.

Q03) Once we came up with the concept studies of the DHD, the Shindaga itself has many types of buildings. 90% were residential buildings. To understand more about the architectural concept, we needed to understand what is the concept, the nature and the story behind each. Even the materials been used to build the house, is it from the surroundings? Through trade from other civilizations like India or Iran or African countries? From nomads that are coming from close by areas? This exchange effect on the culture itself. Once we need to make categories, we tried to meet the owners and for a fact there are no architects back then, nor civil or mechanical engineers. Who built the house, depends on their physiology or knowledge, or basically their experiences and lifestyle they create the need for each space in the house. That also includes the ornaments, the garnets, the human needs affect heavily on the interior design for each house.

Q04) The mixture between historical and modern building is a challenge. This situation attracts some who are interested and maybe expert in heritage, but also questioning about the history and the story behind certain aspects of heritage. For examples, we’re giving the permits to the vendor or contractors or even landlords not to manipulate but to keep the traditional sense of the historic building if they’re willing to utilize it. We face the unawareness of our customers when they try to invest in any historical area. The lack of awareness always results in resistance of the consumer to follow our regulations, to follow the main strategies of the DHD project.

Q05) I joined the architectural heritage department in 2000, and my first summer training was in 1998, before joining Dubai Municipality and before knowing what heritage or historical buildings means. Something’s changed in me in regards to the concepts of heritage that made me join DM officially, as if it's a call of duty towards our heritage. The conservation and the restoration was my challenge when I have
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joined because it affects the authenticity of the city of Dubai. I came to know people who work in DM and they never knew it’s the corporates responsibility to preserve authenticity of historic building. From a tourism perspective, an italian tourist once came for a meeting, and he told me what we do is extraordinary. I asked him why, and he replied because the action of preservation you’re holding into, is an inspiration of modern architecture now. the tourist continues: when I was in downtown Dubai, I saw elements I wasn’t familiar with and I felt it’s not contemporary. When I came now to meet you I understand what distinguish these elements. And he encouraged us to continue influencing because it’s an effective practice and attracts tourists like himself. Once you make more studies and maintain restorations, it always questions the tourists and makes him interested to keep re-visiting.

Q06) Because of the unfamiliarity of the heritage or historic buildings, I don’t think it’s popular. The knowledge behind cultural heritage, in my opinion, it is weak. Yes, they hear about cultural heritage activities here and there like Sikka, or traditional market and food. The reasons behind this, I can name a few, there was no reference or books or studies been taught in schools about Emirati cultural heritage, here I’m emphasizing about the tangible aspect, the urban side. Also, the teachers do not know much about it. So, we must start from the base, schools, then universities to research centers. At least, the universities should apply mandatory cultural heritage courses, tangible and intangible with sites visits for the students to know more about their own identity, their country, their heritage! For the tourist guides, there should be accredited courses for them to learn and transfer the proper knowledge of Emirati cultural heritage.

Q07) The example been given, the Shindaga area, which is the most strategic part of Dubai. From a geographic wise, the location itself, surrounded by the sea from 3 sides. Most of the buildings related to the Ruler family of Dubai, given more importance than any other areas in Dubai. It’s filled with traditional elements. Thus, the traditional elements if the most convenient aspect to work on in the market. If you heard about a local brand called Feathers, the brand local owner is actually an architect who studied in UAEU, his brand logo was inspired from one ornament of the traditional elements, and turned it into a symbol for his brand in all his products. That means, the traditional elements itself considered to be utilized for the market needs and meet with the tourist’s expectations.

Q08) In my opinion, it’s on the rise again correct, what’s related to Dubai Culture or Tourism, but not for the DHD for now. the demand is rising in other parts of Dubai through cultural and heritage festivals, or traditional restaurants. Locals adore this history and get attached to their past, they wish to see a resemblance or memories of the past. They want to see how their ancestries been living, and one of the current methods is the staged Emirati hospitality or food making in some restaurants. The demand in DHD through my experience, is a bit dimmed. An example, when we tender to invest in the DHD, whether utilizing the buildings for restaurants or related
to hospitality, we find a weak response rate. If we targeted let’s say 20, we get 2-3 responses and even from this low number we expect withdrawing at any moment. I believe we have to work properly, through clear governance in regards to heritage. All government entities should be part of heritage. The DHD is not a project related to a certain sector. It’s a national treasure that everyone should embrace which gives Dubai more authenticity and through this project, we can definitely rise the demand for cultural heritage project or district in a very stratifying level. Proper infrastructure and services and simple as easy parking, will attract more.

Q09) I will focus on my experience in our work. How we started to conserve and preserve historical buildings from the days of Sheikh Rashid. At the beginning, we didn’t have any regulations to safeguard cultural heritage. But we work on definitions that’s been personalized through self-conducted studied made by our specialists within the borders of the historic areas. That information was also supported by the photographs and surveys been taken of the DHD area from the early days of DM. so, we assumed where are the borders in theory and throughout this process, we work with the planning department to assign is officially in Dubai’s map. The categorization was based on plots system, and we applied regulations according to these plots. For example, you cannot make any changes in the buildings within that border without coming back to DM, that includes reconstruction, or redecorations, even if the building is given to you to utilize, there are steps and procedures and certain permits of the level of change and that level differs according to the house. With these sets approvals, we control 60% of the original characteristics of the buildings. The lost percentage goes back to the ownership of some historical buildings which is not under DM, which means it doesn’t follow the regulations that has been set to preserve authenticity. Some of that percentage is owned by private sectors and usually they’re business oriented they would focus more on the profit rather than the condition or the nature of the building. Since there is no decree, we cannot stop that kind of act, but we can at least force some regulations when it comes to the harm of historic building.

Q10) When we started conservation in the emirate of Dubai, we faced a challenge that we’re the only department who’s handling this subject matter. Our department is focusing on restoration, rehabilitation, and preservation or historical buildings. As a plan, to do these practices in the proper way, we must balance between the market’s requirements, authenticity, and the expectation of the government in these projects. We issue the first masterplan, for example in the Fahidi historical neighborhood, we need to study the usage of each buildings as I have mentioned before. Since they’re residential buildings, there is a limitation in their functions and tourists whether domestics or international will only enjoy the beauty part of the structure. In my opinion, they would seek for more services, personalized experiences that’s related to the culture of the city. And thus, you cannot keep the original use of the residential buildings unless they were staged. This area has to be developed in term of tourism
and economical requirements with minimum harm applied to the landscaping. These experiences include understanding of Emirati heritage and culture.

Q11) Since we’re focusing on authenticity in our department, for the restoration process we always use the same raw materials to rehabilitate the buildings. The urban fabric that is from the past whether DHD or old markets (Souqs), this continuity of inhabiting these areas create sustainability by default. The story of Dubai and the customs remained until this day with a mix of other culture, results in getting unique experiences for the tourists. The DHD project is focused on the needs on tourists without effecting the nature of the historical buildings or landscaping. The ideal way of sustainability, restore and try to preserve as much of the area and give the investor a chance to understand this cycle so it can’t be broken easily.

Q12) This evolution, address the project from the beginning, the current development is only in Shindaga which is 10% of the whole DHD. This phase, and I believe, once we’re done with Shindaga area, it’ll have a great positive affect on the tourism map of Dubai and it’ll reach a great deal of positioning globally. But this is after we complete the first phases especially the Shindaga Museums. However, the delaying will affect negatively which means we need to work according to aggressive timeline that cannot be compromised. For less commodification of cultural heritage, because we have regulations as I had mentioned before to protect the historic zones, we’re giving opportunities to the public including the investors to use the traditional historic elements, even the coloring. Putting these elements into use and incorporate it in the market will affect in an indirect way to protect tangible heritage.


Q01) I’ll answer the second part of the question first. My definition, DHD is a project where you prepare the historical district for the end user, locals, future generations and the tourists. You prepare in a way where you present heritage in the necessary rhythm of how the government visions to be presented. There are three stakeholders handling this project, Dubai Culture, Dubai Tourism, and Dubai Municipality. Each has a different role according to its specialty, DM prepares the building physically in terms of architecture, interiors, the operational matters. DTCM they handle the branding, marketing, as well as the project management as a whole. Dubai Culture looks over everything related to content, knowledge and expertise involved to make sure of the authentic story-telling. My scope of work, project manager of 5 different projects or museums within the DHD district is Shindaga, from more than 40 projects from an architectural perspective. The projects are: the navigation, culture of the sea museums, the temporary exhibiting hall, and the resort.
Q02) It depends on how you define cultural heritage, because there is tangible and intangible. There is habit and the physical elements. It’s a broad term. If we’re talking about my specialization, the main characteristics of the cultural heritage today is the habit. I see it as it’s the only that will lives. If you’re going to describe the physical aspect, for instance the architecture of the interior, the clothing, through time they change. The needs and requirements changes. The functionalities of tangible things change. But when we talk about the lifestyle or the habit it remains the same. With what we go through nowadays and the globalization effect, it’s very strong on physical things, but the effect is a bit low on non-physical aspects. To me cultural heritage is the habit. We have one of the main studies that has been developed and adapted in our department, called the principles and elements of architecture. It has a very wide selection of the elements are symbols in an Emirati house, in Dubai or the UAE. There are some differences in these ornaments but overall, they’re basically the same. This book was used as guide and it’s very positive for us in Dubai to have such book referred to. Because of my career, observing this book made me think from where all these symbols used years and years back came from. Some were duplicated abroad! It made me question where the term heritage came from. Is it something used to be done here in a specific way and the generation followed or is it a unique existence of a culture? Different understanding of heritage which also include something is just being used to it as a habit. But if it’s a distinguished flavor only existing within a geographic frame, through specific group of people, it’s something completely different. The reason I’m mentioning this, is a lot of the ornaments in that book that we think it’s heritage, they do exist internationally! I was shocked I never knew that we do have special ornaments of our own, Emirati based ornament because it’s found in the historic areas, however, the cultural shock came from seeing the exact same ornament reflected in some European facades. This brings up a question, why we do not know where this symbol comes from. We have to understand the concept behind it before calling it heritage. Another example of the Barjeel (wind tower) it’s an architectural aspect of a traditional Emirati house and considered part of the heritage. It was basically for cool ventilation. Now, the concept has changed, because we do understand the function of the Barjeel, the historic part of it, but the function is not used anymore it’s just décor due to the use of ACs and so on. Heritage is something that has to make sense.

Q03) It’s a tough question… the Shindaga is an experienced based museum with content. It’s relaying completely on the end0user experience which links the habit I have mentioned to the DHD project. For instance, the navigation museum, from the name its intangible regardless of the artifacts of the tolls displayed. The major point relies on the experience of navigation in the museum.

Q04) Major challenge here, we have very limited research, database, and this thing put us in a corner that we cannot just make up history! It has to be rich content because we do have it but unfortunately undocumented. We’re dealing with heritage, it’s in the past, it’s all within the elderly our great grandparents. What should have
been done, is to catch up with them before the remaining information dies out completely. I had an interview with an elderly who’s best known of the culture of the sea back then, he is the lead of this field with experience and so on. While interviewing, his memory is vague, he’s too old to catch up with our questions and what hurts, why we waited all this time to interview who considered the only expert in this field? To extract information, basically a friendly talk that should have been conducted years back instead of facing this challenge now then it’ll be really too late and we will have basically invent or come up with alternative heritage.

Q05) Well, I wasn’t a fan of heritage. I see it only on national days. Now, it’s different, my interest changed when I was studying interior design where I came across all other rich cultures reflecting their heritage intangibly and then, it comes the Emirati or even the GCC, why I can’t find enough studies about that? I had a little research of my own to understand the process of how these other cultures achieve high level of preservation and conserving their cultural heritage. I have realized what happened in GCC in general, we had this massive change between the past and the present due to the discovery of oil. We did have rich architecture and interiors but because of this change, people started exchanging their traditional outdated and not functional residency elements or even lifestyle to western or modern style. Throwing away the tradition wasn’t the case as much not conserving it even it was not functional anymore. Working in DM, my office based in Fahidi, I was questioning why this place is old and existed, it’s dirty! But once I have stayed for a year, I got a sense of belonging and loyalty to this culture and you want people to know it as well. To implement it in tourism perspective, we deal with a lot of vendors and we encourage them to open their temporary offices within the DHD sites rather their own. This gives them a sense of understanding of the heritage atmosphere and also an opportunity for them to apply their work from not just a stakeholder perspective, but from a tourist perspective as well.

Q06) Three reasons: the massive change and development in Dubai, brought curiosity to the tourists. They would want to know how this city achieved this speedy investment, they want to understand the mentality of locals living here. Second thing, we do have very rich content, but I think it should be well interpreted to the visitors. The last thing, people got bored of modernity, because it’s everywhere. International cities now look similar, resorts, beaches, malls, restaurant, it’s everywhere. The additional unique experience is the culture of each city which makes it standout.

Q07) I think the right market is the place itself, to proper it in a way to be active and functional and full of offerings. Anything will give you hard time understanding or using it won’t work. You can have the best application but if you end up not knowing how to use it individually you will delete it, simple as that, you will look for another that serves you the same thing but applicable. Same thing with content, if it’s not implemented in the right way in Shindaga or the DHD it’s not going to achieve its purpose in attracting tourists. It has to be comfortable in terms of shared facilities and
services. Advanced technologies and amazing content is the least of our worries in
opposite to the proper services.

Q08) When talking about authenticity, sadly, it’s not a secret that Shindaga district
was demolished fully, for project purposes, long years back except for the Royal
family houses. Even the vendors who comes to invest know that these building are not
the original houses back in 1960’s or so. A lot of studies refer to that conducted in the
early 1990s when European researches were interested in the heritage and history of
old Dubai. However, DM has its own procedures of bringing back how these
buildings were, due to the availability of these building’s documentations. I didn’t
understand how these procedures are very complicated and I never understood them
in the beginning. One reason, the Shindaga wasn’t built at once! Or demolished at
once, it was built through time, so there is a timeline where this house was built in X
time or this cluster built in Y time. Another example, when the area was still
occupied, you will find a house that has been demolished and rebuilt more than once
due to the change or ownership of the house. So, DM faced a challenge of choosing
one phase of time to rebuild whatever has been demolished. Because of the time
selection that has been made, it brought many clashes of the real owners when they
visit because they don’t recall their original houses the way it is now. When we talk
about authenticity in this matter, many questions have to be asked.

Q09) DM taking this matter seriously as a governance part of Dubai’s vision. It has
full control of the city. The DHD is marked and we have a system we look at the
history aspect of the house, criteria for alternation or demolishing procedures,
depends also to how old the house is. A fact needs to be raised, that due to the young
age of UAE, we consider 50 years is worth something. In other countries, a 100 years
old artifact or building maybe considered nothing to a 1000 year of civilization. It
critically depends on how old the country is. The regulation of the country itself
matters. In DM, we do document anything’s been demolished so that when we need
to go back to the origins we can find it in our archives. Year by year, we do develop
these regulations also according to the market demand that’s growing fast.

Q10) It’s very hard to bring something from the past. Authenticity do matter,
especially religious symbols has to be untouched, they’re sacred. But when it’s linked
back to just the past, if we preserve everything it’s like having a whole pot preserved.
I think we should set strategy of how to preserve authenticity in terms of buildings
and landscapes. There should be rules and regulations to what extent tangible heritage
to be preserved. There should be levels of priorities set. Authenticity, in my opinion,
comes first and foremost for the future generations, more than the tourists. Tourists
come and go, so mainly our priority is our youth and next generations. They’re the
one who will carry and use heritage. Preserving heritage is just one step, and
educating heritage is another. Studying in local universities and not having a single
course related to Emirati cultural heritage is a mistake. this should be taken more
seriously.
Q11) Not necessarily. For example, how they rebuild the traditional houses, they use old methods. We can say they’re sustainable using raw materials that has nothing to do with chemicals. That we do not know the impact of it on the environment. But when we talk about the Fahidi, the maintenance alone, it’s very much costly and been done 10 times more than a modern house. This takes a lot of effort, materials, time. There are different aspects to it so I wouldn’t say it’s sustainable.

Q12) The DHD project, I believe, is the first massive cultural district in Dubai. I think it’s a good lead for other projects to follow in terms of safeguarding cultural heritage. After 2019, if it has positive response from the tourists or residence when it’s open to the public, I think DM will expand this opportunity to Jumeira side where there are archeological sides. And I believe this will make a sense to lessen the commercial aspect of cultural heritage, as an Emirati element to be preserved.

Interview 8): Dr. Eman Al-Assi | Heritage Studies Specialist – World Heritage Section - DM | April 20th, 2017

Q01) My actual scope in the DHD project, I was the manager of the initiation of the first phase of the project which is done by Halcrow. It gave an idea about the framework to develop the historic area with focus of Shindaga. It’s like the base to continue with other project related to cultural or educational activities. Later on, I’m involved whenever they ask me to intervene. For example, to review feedback on the progress of these projects. The DHD is the historic area where most of the historic significance of Dubai is there, especially the period around late 20th century and early 21st century.

Q02) The main aspect which characterize cultural heritage in the UAE, to have more focus on the intangible and the cultural collective memory. During the 50s and 60s, a lot of the cultural heritage sites were destroyed. So, the focus more on the intangible. Of course, there are other fabrics in the UAE, but if you look at Dubai, you can see more historic fabric comparing to the rest of the country. Abu Dhabi or Sharjah are fragmented. This is unique about Dubai, we do have a heritage fabric and the focus should be at this stage on intangible heritage. For the studies, we do have architectural heritage studies but for the empirical I do not recall any at the moment.

Q03) When we went through the development phase we had many options. One option is to focus on tourism and the other focusing on education. As an intervention, we chose the educational aspect because this is the most important aspect of cultural heritage. This is related to the awareness of the significance of this area and how Emiratis can relate back to their history.
Q04) The project is in the historic area; the intervention will be educational as I have mentioned including museums. These historic buildings reconstructed according to their origins. There might be some difficulties in adapting them to their current proposal activities like multimedia, technology and this is really a challenge. How far you can go with changes to the historic buildings to have really good museum with technology and maintain the authenticity or the fabric. This is really a challenge. Most of the houses are small, and sometimes you need big space so how you’re going to do it? These are some of the limitations which influence the authenticity of the place. One major issue is the infrastructure, when we had the study over it it’s a real issue. The electricity and the drainage aspects because it’s very close to the Creek, where are we going to dump the waste. If you’d like to have traditional restaurants, you need gas, and the standards we’re maintaining it’s not allowed in the historic areas. The infrastructure is a real challenge and Shindaga, part of the DHD, is a big site and we have to treat it as a whole to have all these services provided equally. We tried to overcome these challenges by cases. It’s like we compromise a case more than the other, but we do have priorities. If the building is really very important like Sheikh Saeed house, minimum intervention happens with no changes to recall. If the house is in the 60’s or 70’s we can make some changes. It’s case by case and even the masterplan in the end, we didn’t do it as once slot, we divided it and its easier to work and oversees the whole project.

Q05) My first interest in cultural heritage, since the days I have worked in Palestine, lecturing at the universities. I took a course at ICCROM, international training. I was also in the ministry of culture. At the same time, I was doing my PhD. My interest was on the old cities and relating it to the modern and taking this course really shifted my interest from modern into old and how it’s integrated and since 1996. From that point, I developed my interest through my PhD thesis which I did on the perception of people experience old cities and the modern ones, what they like about both because there are certain people like or dislike in terms of attitude. So, I did this in order for any developments for projects to be in tuned with the traditional and its continuity. Since then the interest kept growing further with the conversation and documentation of the national archive of Palestine, then I moved to international organization of the UNESCO and finally I came here. If you love cultural heritage, it’s everywhere.

Q06) Popular because it’s a main source of income. This is very clear. It’s the main revenue of Dubai and we had a presentation which shows that Dubai Tourism did statistics of how many days tourists can stay in the city, it came out the stay three days, max. And they ask them what do you want to see more, and the majority agreed on wanting culture. This is the strategy of Dubai Tourism to have an expansion of one day that is mainly focused on cultural heritage of Dubai. Of course, tourists also or the investors if they’re interested in the uniqueness of the place which is the culture.

Q07) Now Shindaga, the main proposition is the museum. We have discussed this many time should it be paid entry of free. We did discuss this with our consultants,
they agreed that ticketing is not a main source of revenue. So, if you want to market this area, just related entertainment activities to cultural ones.

Q08) If you ask tourists, including my foreigner friends, they all seek to see Emirati culture and how they used to live. Where is the origins? They’re interested where it comes from. If you look at the DHD initiative, part of it is Shindaga, the other parts related to Deira or Fahidi later. If you talk about Shindaga and authenticity, we faced this in preparation of our nomination in the World Heritage. Because, any site that should be nominated to World Heritage has to be authentic. The term authentic in the World Heritage means the fabric. We faced this concept when we prepared our files and they said the whole area is not authentic. We had to convince them that authenticity the way you are considering is Euro-centric concept that talks about the case of Europe and goes back to conventions established since Venice charter in 1964, it’s an old and not flexible one and mostly its addressed to Europe, they don’t see other cases around the world. For the UAE, or Dubai, we can have it as case that represents the Gulf, especially after the post war and the oil discovery, people become richer and the surroundings were not sophisticated. The rapid change made the historic area deserted. But later, when Emiratis or the GCC wanted to have their own identity, they see the cultural heritage as a one aspect of their identity. They return back of the sources, the historic fabric. Eventually, authenticity for the Gulf region is a social process. It’s for them how they’re related to their history. For the locals, even when they go back the reconstructed houses in Shindaga, it’s authentic for them because it’s related to them in their memory. It’s a different kind of authenticity it’s a definite social process.

Q09) In Dubai Municipality, we do have a map where the boundaries of the historic areas and this is a protected area. This was in 1969. Once you define the area its reflected even in the vision of Sheikh Rashid when the development started in Dubai. For example, when he wanted to do a Shindaga tunnel, there was an option to do it a bridge. He said no! I’m not going to destroy the approach to the Creek. Even the AlMaktoum bridge, He agreed on the condition of having it far away from the historic areas, so the vision, even if it’s not a decree or a law, it’s respected even earlier by Sheikh Rashid. And that’s why the urban fabric of the historic Dubai is here because of Sheikh Rashid. It has to be kept as it is. Later in 2014, we had an order signed by Sheikh Hamdan, for the protection of the historic area. We do not have a decree, but we have other tools. The historic area is also located at the Creek, we have a lot of environmental orders to keep it including the water stream, the ships and the boats. These are intangible authenticity of the Creek. It’s even the strongest authentic aspect of the Creek. We have a lot of regulations by the RTA for the traditional boats routes, and the economic department regulates how to brings the goods, importing and exporting. We also have in DM how to maintain the environmental quality of the water in the Creek. You look at the whole area comprehensively because if you looked just at the building it doesn’t serve the purpose.
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Q10) The authenticity is very specific to the Gulf as I have mentioned, related to the social process and the authenticity of use. We do maintain the history fabric according to the uniqueness of the place. When you say produce its very industrial like machine to produce and sell.

Q11) Of course, because heritage by itself is sustainable. There are three columns of sustainability: environmental, economic and social aspects. If you look at heritage, all the three are there. For social, if people are connected, they see its part of their identity and they protect it. They belong to it, they respect it and eventually they preserve it because they’re engaged. Environmental, once there is sense of belonging they protect the fabric. Economic, if they do the mentioned together, it will become a source of income.

Q12) Depends on which entity you’re talking about. If Tourism, of course they seek to turn it into a product. To be honest, since the initiation of the project, we do really protect our heritage but there is some defect to promote it. Tourism came on board in order to promote it. Also, Dubai Culture dealing with content and knowledge, the three entities are the perfect combination for the DHD but you have to keep a balance. You don’t have to go really for abstraction of heritage as a product, no! you have to produce authentic expression and still maintain authenticity even if you sell it, you don’t sell it but rather you promote it to the tourists. It became very sensitive for me when I mention authenticity in the DHD meetings, everyone questions this term.