Dubai’s Transportation System Advancements in the 21st Century
Lead Researcher: Jaclyn Welch, B.S. Computer Science

Abstract

The advancement of Dubai’s transportation system over the last two decades is regarded as being at the forefront of technological advancements, focusing mainly on the driverless train system, the efficient traffic flow, and the strict, safety-focused taxi regulations. Such swift developments provide an opportunity for research into how these developments were made possible and how accessible and user-friendly this system is for tourists. Answering this question could provide a blueprint for developing cities focusing on tourism to maximize efficiency when planning their transportation systems “from scratch” in the same manner as Dubai.

This research utilized field observations, informal interviews, and artifact collection to gather data. Triangulation of the data lead to the findings that the meticulous engineering of the roadways, exploitive working conditions of emigrants, constant construction, and prioritization of tourism are the main factors that have given Dubai’s transportation system its cutting edge in the last two decades. While these rapid developments mark a new era of technological advancement on a grand infrastructural scale and can serve as a model for up and coming cities, the manipulation of poor migrant workers is an injustice which cannot be dismissed in the name of progress.

Research Questions

1. What factors are prioritized in the design of Dubai’s transportation system?
2. What factors contributed to the speed of the development?
3. What progress is currently being made to continue development on the transportation systems?

Methodology

- This research utilized field observations, informal interviews, and artifact collection for data collection. Following the data collection, the data was coded for common themes and similarities. These themes were compared to themes found in the literature and the researcher’s personal bias and background was accounted for in the findings.

- Factors the researcher specifically noted were expense, safety, and “user friendliness” (defined by simplicity transportation is for diverse travelers to use, i.e. multilingual labels, maps, signs, available attendants)

- Field Observations: Throughout the researcher’s time in Dubai, they utilized every kind of transportation available – trains, taxis, automobiles – and took photos, videos, and notes about all observable aspects of each form of travel. Expected limitations included language barriers, expense, and the researcher’s unfamiliarity with the transportation system.

- Informal Interviews: The researcher conducted informal interviews with other tourists in Dubai about their feelings regarding the transportation system. These interviews were semi-structured, focusing on the subject’s experience traveling in Dubai.

- Collection of Artifacts: The research kept train tickets, took pictures, videos, and journal notes of experiences with the airport, taxis, trains, roadways, and anything else related to the transportation system.

Findings

- Public safety, efficiency, and ease of transportation for tourists, mainly English-speaking tourists are main factors considered during the development of the transportation system.

- There were no signs of financial restraint or limitations for extravagance or safety.

- Extensive roadway engineering, nonstop construction, and exploitation of migrant workers made development possible.

- Drone taxis and ongoing construction in barren areas indicates continuing progress.

References

2. Buckley, M. (2015), Locating Neoliberalism in Dubai: Migrant Workers and Class Struggle in the Autoimmune City Antipode, 45: 256-274.