

When Creativity Is the Solution: How to Transform Makkah into a Creative City

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Abstract : During the last decade, the rapidly growing prestige of so-called Creative Cities has inspired many other cities seeking to enhance their attractiveness, creativity, and success. However, the concept of a creative city seems to be an elusive one because it reflects a set of distinct ideologies which apply distinct ideas of creativity to physical and economic urban development. The main aim of this study is to investigate the ways in which the theoretical concept of the creative city can be usefully and practically employed to develop the urban services and global identity of Makkah, Saudi Arabia. This is a challenging prospect since no research on creative cities in the Middle East has previously been conducted. The city of Makkah and its holy sites is known as the focus of religious devotion for one and half billion Muslims around the globe, with millions travelling there on annual pilgrimage. The ideas of three of the key authors who have addressed relevant aspects of the concept of the creative city, Landry, Howkins and Florida, were explored in depth for the purpose of identifying the model which would be best suited to Makkah's identity as a sacred city. Of these, it was the approach of Landry and others whose work was originally focused on finding creative solutions to the problems faced by cities which proved most suitable for the context of Makkah. The development strategies of five case studies of Creative Cities situated in different parts of the world, namely Vancouver, Yokohama, Glasgow, Barcelona, and Sydney, were also examined. Inspired by their diverse experiences, a model, referred to by the acronym CREATIVE, was developed by bringing together the key elements which seemed to account for the success of these five creative cities: Concept, Resources, Events, Attractiveness, Technology, Involvement, Vision and Enthusiasm. Expert opinion was sought on the model by presenting this for discussion at five international conferences. This model was used to guide both the process of data collection via interviews, documentation and field notes, and for analysing this, revealing that Makkah has great potential to become a Creative City. The results suggested that implementation of the CREATIVE model in Makkah would help produce creative solutions to address the problems that the city currently faces due to the growing number of pilgrims every year.

Keywords : creative city, city imaging, Makkah, sacred city

Conference Title : ICSRD 2020 : International Conference on Scientific Research and Development

Conference Location : Chicago, United States

Conference Dates : December 12-13, 2020