**Logistics - one of the keys to a successful Dubai Expo**

For almost two centuries, Expos have been hallmark events for the world to celebrate and share innovation. So far there have been 22 World Expos, connecting cities as far west as Seattle and east as Shanghai. In 2020 we will watch Dubai, positioned at a strategic crossroads between the east and west, host the next Expo.

Held every five years, Expo is such a cherished event that millions travel from across the world to participate. 20 million people visited Expo Milan this year. That’s five times as many who attended the 2012 London Olympic Games. And in 2020, Dubai is already anticipating 25 million visitors, more than half the GCC population. The sheer volume of people participating in Expo is enormous.

So how do we get ready? It should come as no surprise that preparing for such a huge event is a massive undertaking. The Expo site must be built, an organizing committee selected, and Expo officials nominated. But this is just the beginning.

There are many serious issues to consider, one of the most important is logistical. Expo is the most logistically complicated of any international event, even the Olympic Games and World Cups aren’t subject to the same logistical requirements. I believe this is for three main reasons.

First, an Expo’s size and duration are the biggest and longest of any other global event. It attracts the largest volume of people and hosts them for six months. Expo Shanghai for example hosted 70 million people, three times Shanghai’s population. The city’s ability to predict visitor numbers and align them with public transport schedules presented no serious delays for those journeying to, from and throughout the Expo. This is a milestone achievement given that Shanghai is the most populous city in the world.

Second, Expo is a ‘hands on’ experience. At the Olympic Games and World Cups, visitors are onlookers cheering from the stands. Those attending Expo are the opposite; visitors are active participators in the experience. They come to the exhibitions to learn and engage. A successful visitor experience is therefore critical to a successful Expo. Consider the 2012 London Olympic Games, where free public transport alongside well posted signage made getting to the games easy and enjoyable. Even at the busiest times, with thousands emptying stadiums at once, the logistical and consequent overall experience was positive. London passed the ‘logistics test’ with flying colors.

Third, expectations of Dubai are at an all-time high. The city has a well-deserved reputation internationally as a dynamic and innovative city. Visitors will come to Dubai expecting airports, metros and other means of transport not only to run smoothly, but better than anywhere else. One glitch could impact thousands, tainting their view of Expo and memory of Dubai. Take the 2014 Rio de Janeiro World Cup, where a bridge collapsed days before a match, killing two and injuring dozens. Other transportation problems were only averted because the city essentially shut down by declaring public holidays around games.

By thinking of these in advance, we can not only plan for a successful Expo, but build a stronger, more sustainable Dubai after the Expo is finished. In my opinion, three solutions will ensure the city’s success in hosting the Expo and maintaining Dubai’s global reputation as a well-regarded hub for business and trade thereafter.

First, it is key that government bodies, Expo organizing committees and logistics providers align communications to ensure all potential logistical issues are mitigated in advance. Communication will be crucial before, during and after the Expo. This means that we must also agree how the facilities built for the Expo will be used after 2020 to support Dubai’s sustainable future.

Second, schools must educate youth on the importance of Expo and what it means for Dubai. Many students will graduate to fill the 275,000 jobs that are being created to service Expo. So it is critical now more than ever to teach them about the role they can play in Expo. This is an invaluable lesson for our youth as they will have gained unique experience interacting with the world and will be well-placed to lead Dubai as it continues to compete in the global arena.

Third, and what is most vital to the Expo’s success, is the continued innovation of logistics technologies. We must stay ahead of global trends and find the most optimal ways for making Dubai’s logistics and transportation systems as seamless and connected as possible in advance of the Expo. We must cater to a high number of visitors and provide logistics services to all sectors including hospitality, healthcare, construction and transportation. And to do so we must continue to unearth high tech logistics solutions capable of hosting the biggest and best Expo the world has yet seen.

Efficient logistics and transportation systems are the lifeline that connects people, goods and services globally. Expo is also truly a once-in-a-lifetime event, and if we prepare well, we will host well and this will benefit Dubai’s sustainable future. So one of the keys to a successful Expo is continued innovation in the logistics and transportation sector. And I am certain Dubai will deliver an extraordinary Expo for the year 2020.

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