Dubai needs to double hotel room count by 2020

Carlin Gerbich , *March 4th, 2015*

Dubai's needs 40,000 extra hotel rooms ahead of the Expo 2020 - effectively doubling the current capacity to cater for more than 25 million visitors annually.

Delegates at the Construction Week UAE Infrastruture Summit were told that as Dubai builds towards the Expo, the emirate also needs to consider what will happen after the event to help maintain those levels of tourism.

"When we think about 2020, we also need to think about 2022 with the World Cup in Qatar where a lot of people will stay in Dubai and watch matches in Qatar, so we have about three years where Dubai will have a good number of people," said Issam Ezzedine, principal design architect at the National Engineering Bureau. "But we also need to think about what happens after that. What is going to happen to make sure these 40-50,000 hotel rooms remin busy."

While Dubai has traditionally marketed itself as a luxury shopping destination, the demographic of tourists now visiting the emirate was changing, said architect Sumaya Dabbagh.

"There is a real need now, even among Saudi visitors, for more affordable hotel rooms - three and four star hotels where big families can stay without paying five star prices. Events such as Art Dubai and other events are attracting a lot of hime grown talent which is also creating a demand for lower cost accommodation," she added.

Dabbagh also said that it was important that hotels maintain a regional character, and that much of that had disappeared over recent years.

"Even Saudi visitors come to Dubai and ask whether they're in an Arabic country. It is very important that does not happen, especially in the heart of the city where, if you ignore that, it's a missed opportunity."