

Tuesday 31 March 2009

**GROWTH & OPTIMISM HIGHLIGHTED IN THIRD GIBTM MIDDLE
EAST MEETINGS INDUSTRY REPORT
Report at-a-glance Summary**

Buyers

- 81% have held events in the Region over last year – up 35% on 2008 findings
- Dubai is the most popular destination with buyers over the last twelve months, followed by Egypt and Abu Dhabi
- 37% anticipating an increase in number of events held in next twelve months
- Duration for events in region 3.9 days down from 4.1 in 2008
- 87% holding events for up to 300 delegates; 69% for under 2000; mean number of delegates is 154, up from 143 last year
- Cost, quality of accommodation, quality of meeting facilities and service top influencing factors when holding an event in Gulf and Middle East
- Location, price, facilities, service levels key factors influencing selection of hotels / venues
- Importance of CSR and environmental issues reducing
- 60% believe number of meetings will either increase or stay the same in next year

Suppliers

- Over 70% of suppliers' clients are in Dubai, followed by Abu Dhabi and Saudi Arabia
- 18% of suppliers have 100% of business in the Middle East

- More business coming from corporates and Non Government Organisations (NGOs)
- Oil/ Gas/ Utilities top industry sectors followed by Pharmaceutical, Medical and Financial
- Construction and Engineering clients reduced by nearly 10%
- Mean number of events 3.6 compared to 3.7 in the 2008 report
- Mean duration 3.1 with typical size being 188 delegates compared to 195 last year
- Location, cost, quality of service and accommodation are viewed as the focal factors influencing clients decisions to hold an event
- Targets for future businesses see corporate organisations top, followed by government or public sector organisations, agencies and not for profit sector/associations

The Gulf Incentive, Business Travel & Meetings Exhibition's (GIBTM) third Middle East Meetings Industry Research Report was revealed today. At a time of difficult and challenging times for the industry, the research demonstrates that confidence still remains in the opportunities offered by the Gulf/ Middle East Region, with continuing growth in comparison to 2007.

The research, undertaken by Reed Travel Exhibitions in conjunction with Meetme (NPI Publishing) during January and February 2009 questioned regional and international buyers (258) and suppliers (167).

View from buyers

The 2009 report produced responses from 258 buyers based in 47 countries, with the largest proportion of respondents from the UAE and other Middle Eastern countries.

81% have held events in the region over the past twelve months compared to 46% in 2008, with 51% confirming they have organised more events in the Gulf and Middle East during the same period – up from 40% in 2008.

Dubai retains top spot as the most popular destination followed by Egypt, Abu Dhabi, Morocco and Jordan. Overall, events have been held in over 22 different destinations throughout the Region.

Destinations that buyers predicted would top the charts in the coming year, are exactly the same as last year's results with Dubai top, followed by Abu Dhabi, Egypt, Morocco, Jordan, Oman, Bahrain and Qatar.

Dubai also holds top spot for destination satisfaction ratings followed by Oman, Abu Dhabi, Egypt, Lebanon and Qatar.

Equally positive for the Region is the fact that 51% have organised more events than the previous year with 26% the same as in 2008. 73% predict that over the next twelve months there would either be an increase in the number of events or numbers would remain the same.

The duration of events has slightly decreased to 3.9 days from 4.1 days with 87% of respondents holding events for less than 300 delegates, with 69% under 200 delegates. Interestingly, 31% have experienced more delegates during the last twelve months with 45% saying numbers have remained the same.

Costs are – cited by 73% - as the main influencing factor driving buyers to the region when placing international events. The exchange rate fluctuations and the economic climate have clearly effected budgets. Second, as last year, is quality of accommodation equal with quality of meeting facilities – only 9th last year. Availability – third last year – drops to eighth place, probably due to the increase in supply.

The top four factors influencing the selection of hotels and venues are the same as last year – location, price, facilities and service levels. Brand and preferred supplier agreements are seen by 49% as influential, up from 32% last year.

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) and environmental issues remain important to event organisers but their influence on the decision making process has reduced from 79% to 71%.

Concluding the buyer results, 25% believe that the volume of events they organised would increase with 35% remaining the same; 15% see an increase in budgets with 21% the same; 14% see an increase in marketing and promotional budgets.

Suppliers seeing growth

With 18% of 167 respondents dealing with work exclusively in the Middle East, the research shows that suppliers are experiencing more business from all types of clients than in previous years, particularly with corporates and Non Government Organisations (NGOs).

The oil/gas/utilities sector comes top for suppliers, closely followed by the pharmaceutical, medical and financial sectors.

The mean number of events experienced by suppliers in the last twelve months is 3.6 compared with 3.7 in 2008, whilst the mean duration is 3.1 days with a typical size being 188 delegates compared to 195 last year.

The key factor thought to influence a client's decision to hold events in the Region is location – same as last year. Cost, fourth last year, takes second spot, equal second with quality of service. Then comes quality of

accommodation – second last year – quality of meeting facilities and availability of venues/hotel rooms.

What is encouraging for the Region is that 68% of suppliers believe that the Gulf and Middle East have the most growth potential worldwide – up from 62% last year.

Commenting on the report Paul Kennedy MBE, Reed Travel Exhibitions Group Exhibition Director Meetings and Incentive Events said: "This, our third GIBTM Middle East Meetings Industry Report, is proving once again to be an invaluable, up-to-date barometer as to the state of the meetings and events sector in the Region. Despite a difficult and challenging year the results, both from a buyer and supplier perspective, shows that the industry is in good shape to ride out the current economic climate."

Rob Nicholas, publisher of Meetme commented: "Since the beginning of the economic crisis there has been a blur between perception and reality as facts become harder to grasp in rapidly changing markets. However, our research provides a clear insight into where the industry is headed over the next 12 months and comes from the professionals actually determining where and when business is placed.

"What is most reassuring is the fact that most respondents see their budgets for the region either increasing or staying the same during 2009. This is very positive."

The GIBTM Middle East Meetings Industry Report was compiled and independently analysed by Sally Greenhill, Director The Right Solution.

The full report can be found at www.gibtm.com from 6 April.

- Ends -

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NOTES TO EDITORS

- The Gulf Incentive, Business Travel and Meetings Exhibition (GIBTM) is the leading exhibition dedicated to the Meetings, Incentive Events and Business Travel Industry in the Gulf and wider Middle East region, staged annually in the exciting and developing destination of Abu Dhabi, the capital of the UAE.
- GIBTM is ABC Audited every year to guarantee that the number of visitors promoted is completely accurate and are unique attendees only.
- GIBTM brings together regional and international buyers and suppliers for three days of business, networking and professional education and aims to be the driver behind the development of the meetings industry across the region.
- GIBTM forms part of the RTE portfolio of Global Meeting and Incentive Events along with EIBTM (www.eibtm.com), CIBTM (www.cibtm.com), AIBTM (www.aibtm.com) AIME (www.aime.com.au), and the ICCA Exhibition in association with the ICCA Congress (www.iccaworld.com).
- Abu Dhabi Tourism Authority, ADNEC, NCC and Etihad are all exclusive partners for GIBTM 2009. Meetme, published by NPI, is a global media partner and official publication for the show.
- For further press information, please visit the Reed Travel Exhibitions' website on www.reedtravelexhibitions.com
- Reed Exhibitions is the world's leading events organiser. In 2007 Reed brought together over six million industry professionals from around the world generating billions of dollars in business. Today Reed events are held in 38 countries throughout the Americas, Europe, the Middle East and Asia Pacific, and organised by 39 fully staffed offices.
- Reed organises a wide range of events, including exhibitions, conferences, congresses and meetings. Its portfolio of over 500 events serves 47 industry sectors, including: Aerospace & aviation, automobiles, building & construction, electronics, energy, engineering, entertainment, environment, food & hospitality, gifts, healthcare, IT, jewellery, life sciences & pharmaceuticals, property,

manufacturing, medical education, packaging & converting, printing & visual communication, security, sports & recreation, travel.

- Working closely with professional bodies, trade associations and government departments Reed ensures that each and every event is targeted and relevant to industry needs. As a result, many Reed events are market leaders in their field.
- Reed Exhibitions is part of Reed Elsevier Group plc, a FTSE-100 company and world-leading publisher and information provider. In 2006, Reed Elsevier made adjusted profit before taxation of £1,052 million on turnover of £5,398 million.
- GIBTM will again be working in partnership with MPI's Gulf Meetings and Events Conference taking place in Abu Dhabi, 28-29 March 2009. The two events form the Gulf Meetings Week providing a week long platform for education, networking and marketplace development.
- Etihad Airways is the exclusive official airline for GIBTM 2009. The Abu Dhabi-based airline is the national airline of the United Arab Emirates based in the UAE's capital, Abu Dhabi. Currently Etihad offers flights to 50 destinations in the Middle East, Europe, North America, Africa and Asia. Etihad has been appointed official carrier for GIBTM until 2011. For further details: Etihad Airways Corporate Communications: Tel: + 971 (0) 2 505 8317 / 8573 visit www.etihadmediacentre.com