

International buyers make Meetings Africa successful

This year's Meetings Africa, held recently at Sandton Convention Centre (SCC), had 123 international buyers, hosted by South African Tourism and the Department of Trade and Industry, attend and buy from exhibitors. It generated 2216 scheduled business appointments from 365 online diaries and both exhibitors and visitors reported that the exhibition had been taken to new heights.

Ben Gosman of Free Style Events and Promotion in the Netherlands says he was impressed with the high quality of exhibitors. "In fact, I was so impressed that I changed my mind - I was going to take an incentive group to another destination, but now I am bringing them to South Africa in September."

Numbers, quality up

There were 272 exhibitors, an increase of 12.5% over 2009, marketing their products and services, including conference and event venues and services and incentive travel destinations to 1894 local and international visitors this year. A record number of 81 media representatives attended the event, held 24-26 February 2010.

Hosted buyers reported that the products on show were of a top-class, international standard.

Association market growth

This year's show placed far greater emphasis on the association market than in the past, with the hosting of the first-ever special Association Day for local associations that aimed to attract international events and the inclusion of more association buyers in the hosted buyer group.

Exhibitors responded very positively to these efforts, saying South African Tourism managed to get the right mix of international buyers this year.

Brian McDonald, deputy chair of Global Conferences Africa says there was real business to be done. "The quality, especially of the association buyers, was fantastic. It was most definitely worth our while to be there this year."

Bronwen Cadle, marketing and sales manager at the CSIR International Convention Centre, says it gets more professional each year. "We hope to see it grow to compete with similar international shows. There has been a huge improvement in the quality of buyers, they all kept their appointments with us and there were lots of good business leads to work with."

Future

Nomasonto Ndlovu, global manager: business tourism at South African Tourism says, "This exhibition is now the key driver of this organisation's business tourism growth strategy. I have no doubt that it will continue to grow, as there is definitely greater synergy between our marketing efforts and the needs of the private sector. Our efforts to grow business tourism are paying off and we can't wait to host an even bigger and better one in 2011." South African Tourism and its partners, the Gauteng Tourism Authority, the Johannesburg Tourism Company and the Sandton Convention Centre, will stage it from 23-25 February 2011 at the SCC.

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