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A bigger and more promising conference on eTourism and eMarketing for Arabian markets this year

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Hossam Darwish, Secretary General of the International Organization for the eTourism Industry (IOETI)

TravelDailyNews: Last year was the first EUOTI conference. What made you decide to organize a conference on eTourism and eMarketing for Arabian area?

Hossam Darwish: Based on the overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants and speakers, and their request for another conference, we decided to organize the Second Arab International eTourism and eMarketing Conference. Furthermore, the 2009 conference will be bigger and more promising, improving on what we did and following up on attendee requests such as academic and applied workshops.

TDN: What were the results in terms of participants numbers and market representation as well as the feedback you had from the first conference?

H. D.: The inaugural Conference exceeded all expectations;

- 320 participants,
- 60 persons from the local, Arab, and International media,
- Coverage via 12 local, Arab, and international satellite channels in the Middle East,
- Tourism ministers from Egypt, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, and Yemen,
- Arabian and European representatives of tourism ministries,
- Leaders of Arab and international tourism and hotel organization,
- Travel agencies, travel and tour operators, hotel managers, marketing management companies and their representatives, international and global tourism websites owners,
- Google, and
- International tourism universities.

Last year's conference also included over 20 International experts from Spain, Austria, Norway, Australia, Britain, Russia, Italy, and Slovenia. These experts participated in the scientific sessions, workshops, discussions and networking events. Conference attendees came from 21 Arab countries.

TDN: What will be the subject of the 2nd conference and which are your expectations?

H. D.: The subjects will cover a broad area related to eTourism, such as:

- E Tourism overview: history, foundations, economic impacts, legal issues, trends and challenges.
- Online advertising such as search engine advertising and search engine marketing.
- Facilitating online shopping such as payment and via mobile phones.
- e Learning and specialized e Tourism education.
- Geo-mapping and tourism.
- Advances in scientific research of e Tourism.
- Latest technology and pitfalls of tourism and travel websites, such as social media and Web 2.0.
- Banks and Credit Cards payment online.
- E Governments Case Studies.

TDN: How does the governments, the tourism authorities and other organisations of the Arabian countries react to an important conference like that? Do they support it in anyway?

H. D.: Governmental support continues to grow. In addition to several Egyptian ministries, several League of Arab States organizations have endorsed the conference. Finally, the embedded academic workshop has a stellar list of endorsing organizations and universities - local and international - including:

- Arab Administrative Development Organization
- Center of Marketing Excellence at Glion Institute of Higher Education and LRG University of Applied Sciences
- Centre for Tourism and Services Research, Victoria University
- Egyptian Ministry of Communication and Information Technology
- Egyptian Ministry of State for Administrative Development
- Egyptian Ministry of Tourism
- Emirates Academy
- Faculty of Tourism & Hotels. Fayoum University, Egypt
- Information Technology Department, College of Computer and Information Sciences, King Saud University
- The Jordan Tourism Board
- Laboratory for Intelligent Systems in Tourism, Texas A&M University
- The MBI Al Jaber Foundation
- MODUL University Vienna
- Prince Sultan College for Tourism and Business (Abha)
- School of Tourism, The University of Queensland
- Talal Abu-Ghazaleh College of Business, The German-Jordanian University
- Temple University National Laboratory for Tourism and eCommerce, School for Tourism and Hospitality Management
- UAE Academy
- The University of Western Australia Business School
- The University of Western Australia Centre for Muslim States and Societies
- Welsh Centre for Tourism Research, University of Wales Institute, Cardiff

TDN: How does in your opinion eTourism and eMarketing develops in the Arabian countries?

H. D.: As the academic workshop announcements notes, “The Arab world and Africa have the advantage of learning from and leapfrogging developed areas in the management and implementation of Internet technologies in hospitality and tourism.”

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