

# MarketingWeek

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## Top performer Google voted best company

**General Motors freezes \$2.1bn media spend** as major job cuts loom

**Lloyds boosts Gilbert's role** Marketing chief to take on HBOS brands

**Will it be Smith?** JWT poised to pick ceo replacement for Alison Burns



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are not always as reliable. You need a partner to work with in the destination, so we always work with a destination management company. It will be a local contact that knows what works and what doesn't."

Many emerging economies which have built up a strong industrial base have also grown into emerging economies for the events industries. Hospitality and entertainment venues have grown around the corporate infrastructure to support the surge of corporate guests to these production hotspots.

Chris Carter at agency SMP says this is partly down to where the company chooses to host its events. "For a technology company that is launching a new product, it may be

imperative to have the ability to reinforce the features behind the key offering at the head office. Hosting the event on-site will provide an opportunity to meet and greet the core team behind the new design or to see the factory where the product is being made," he says.

#### EXPERIENCE IN THE FIELD

On the other hand if a company wants to demonstrate best in class retail marketing, a field visit by stakeholders from different regions will allow them to experience how their counterparts operate in a selected market. "This will enable the companies to host training events where there can be a visible benchmark, showcasing a coherent direction on where the firm intends to go in the future," says Carter.

When selecting an event, companies must keep in mind perception, accessibility, focus and the message they intend to send as a result of the event, he says.

Meanwhile, some multinationals use experiences in emerging destinations as a combined training and incentive programme. Experiential company Jack Morton Worldwide has organised events in India for Phillips, where the company took senior executives and gave them tasks to carry out and then report back to the management team. "They created something beyond just a primary experience, they got people out of the ordinary run of things and got them thinking and talking," says Jack Morton creative director Simon Lethbridge. He adds that

companies are looking for increasingly exotic locations to take hundreds of their staff on incentive trips.

However, this can spark a vicious circle where the next year an even more exotic location is required, he says. While many places such as Mauritius or the Maldives are rapidly building infrastructure for corporate entertaining, there is a limit to the numbers of executives who can be taken to there.

But there is no limit on the imagination of the organisers of incentive trips, conferences and meetings. They have an insatiable demand for new, exciting and exhilarating experiences with which to stimulate executives at multinational corporations.

## Focus on Istanbul

Istanbul is the only city in the world which straddles two continents - Europe and Asia - and it can justifiably claim to be a meeting point between East and West. It is seeking to put itself on the map as a destination for conferences and incentive trips.

Turkey's growing reputation as a tourist haunt stems partly from its mix of beaches and historic culture. Istanbul serves a role as a captivating stopping-off point on the way to the southern coastal areas.

Luxury hotel group Marmara, which operates a number of hotels across Turkey, is on a drive to attract corporate visits for meetings, conferences and incentive trips. All its hotels have extensive conference and exhibition spaces with facilities for business people plus an array of resources such as gyms, swimming pools and saunas.

The Marmara Istanbul, located in the central Taksim Square on the European side of the city, is certainly alluring. The hotel has views across the Bosphorus straits and is conveniently situated to explore Istanbul's attractions.

Baris Kaya, marketing manager for international corporate projects at The Marmara Hotels & Residences, says Istanbul is still a virgin destination for multinationals. "We receive about 6 million visitors a year, and 4 or 5 million of these come for meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions. Istanbul is really becoming a congress city - so much so that travel agents have complained because sometimes they can't find rooms for leisure travellers," he says. Next year the International Monetary Fund is holding its congress in the city and will bring an estimated 20,000 people.

Western companies are flocking to the city to hold conferences and offer staff incentive trips. The UK is a major source of corporate travel to Turkey and Marmara is on a drive to attract



Marmara Istanbul: Luxury conference destination

more British visitors. The five-star Marmara Istanbul has 377 rooms and extensive business facilities and conference and meetings technology, and can host everything from sales meetings to international conferences with up to 1,000 participants. It has two large ball rooms, The Grand Ballroom and the Taksim Ballroom and a new meeting space comprising six smaller meeting rooms and a business centre. The hotel has hosted conferences, banquets, galas and incentive programmes.

"At the Marmara Istanbul, we have hosted conferences for multinationals such as IBM, Danone, Siemens, Coca-Cola and PepsiCo. We can offer top-class conference and meetings facilities right in the heart of Istanbul in one of the city's most luxurious hotels. Then there's our sister hotel the Marmara Pera a mile away in downtown Istanbul which has hosted meetings and incentive trips for Novartis and Toyota," says Kaya.

Marmara also has a venue for parties and meetings, situated on the banks of the Bosphorus, the straits splitting Istanbul into its European and Asian halves. The Esma Sultan is a 19th century mansion named after its former owner, the daughter of the 32nd Ottoman Sultan Abdulaziz. It has a garden, accessible by boat, and two levels, which can be used for dinners and receptions, hosting up to 3,000 people. Kate

Moss, Princess Rania of Jordan and Prince Albert of Monaco have hosted parties there.

"This city has a lot to offer for incentive trips and there are lots of venues for the meeting, incentive, convention and exhibition (MICE) segment. We've got plenty of shopping and stunning culture. You can take a trip to see the ancient mosques in the old city and there is great night life and fantastic art. The Bosphorus Strait is amazing. We compete with destinations such as Prague and Budapest."

Perceptions of poor security have deterred visitors to the city, though the last major terrorist attack was the bombing of the HSBC building in 2003. This year, armed gunmen attacked the US Embassy leaving six dead. That said, it is comparatively safe in terms of street crime. Kaya says: "I believe Istanbul is as safe as any other city in the world. Terrorism is global now." According to the International Congress & Convention Association report in 2007, Istanbul has moved to 19th place in the world cities ranking, with 66 meetings held. It was 49th in the year 1998. The city has a new target of having 10 million visitors in 2010 up from 5.5 million at the end of 2007.

Another Marmara hotel is located outside Antalya on the Mediterranean coast of southwest Turkey and is also keen to build its reputation as a corporate destination. The Marmara Antalya has a ballroom measuring 885sq m without columns, which fits up to 1,000 people and is suitable for car shows. There are five meeting rooms up to 90sq m with adjacent pre-function areas and equipped with the latest technology. The hotel has a private natural beach on the sea and extensive grounds. A striking feature is the revolving annex, the world's only hotel which turns a full 360 degrees on its foundations allowing all the guests in its 24 rooms to have a view of the sea.