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Emerging Markets Dialogue

IMEX has invited meetings and incentive travel specialists from the so-called 'emerging markets', both agencies and corporate buyers, to share business tourism insights from their respective countries. This dialogue will be updated every few months.

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The pace of economic, social and sometimes political change is characteristically intense within those countries labelled the 'emerging markets' for meetings and incentive travel. Business events, whether staged internally or overseas, are an inevitable corollary of such development. Generally, explanations for the new circumstances focus on the internationalisation, or globalisation, of corporate activity, often reflected in visits by senior managers to attend trade fairs, but other 'micro' considerations also apply. The opinions of experts in respective countries are reported below.

affluence

In **Hungary**, for example, one specialist refers to increasing affluence arising from growth in Gross Domestic Product forecast at 7-10% for 2005. Fuelling demand in **Argentina** are prices for meetings and incentives considered relatively low in a global context. The **Mexico** experience is that businesses are now becoming far more aware, and appreciative, of the value of incentivising staff, a trend noted also in **Russia**. Dramatic industrial growth coupled with a widespread cultural acceptance of the advantages of globalisation, are seen as particular driving forces in **Thailand**. In **India**, attention is drawn to the continuing expansion of the jobs market and the growth in overall consumption and productivity that this brings about. Countries new to the European Union (e.g. **Czech Republic**) identify this enlarged market as a powerful influence for economic and social change. Such experiences have led many commentators to forecast continued growth in the respective meetings and incentive travel markets during 2005. Notable examples include **China**, the **Czech Republic** and **Russia**.

challenging issues

Respondents point to challenging issues that can arise when outbound business tourism is planned. One complication can be language and this is reported commonly by buyers from countries within **Latin America**. Another can be contrasting cultural attitudes towards punctuality and management style (explains a **Russian** planner). On the other hand, religious considerations are not seen as likely to impact on potential future demand. A typical view from some countries within **Central America** is that the strict attitudes of western destinations towards cancellations and confirmations, deposits and full pre-payments are not always the preferred experience of Latin buyers. An insider in the sector in **Russia** believes that growth in the appeal of some international destinations will depend on the ease of getting the necessary visas. A further factor, notes an **East European** specialist, that can hold back international demand for meetings and incentive travel from emerging markets, is simply a lack of information about facilities and services, and a lack of global personal contacts.

influences

Influences which will appeal most to delegates travelling overseas can vary. From **Russia**, we are told that demand will be heavy for destinations that represent a combination of sun, sea and culture. The use of English as the first or second language can matter, for example, to delegates travelling from **Hungary**. Locations that have been made fashionable by the media will appeal strongly to visitors from **Thailand**.

It may be observed that the emerging business tourism markets display considerable diversity not just in their pace of change, and therefore the potential of their international demand, but also in the multi-cultural detail of their consumer behaviour. However, the picture overall for these countries is one of opportunity, and accelerating integration, into the global business tourism sector.

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