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The Exhibition Industry in the Middle East & Africa

2011-2012 Executive Summary

A UFI Report researched and compiled
by the UFI Middle East & Africa Regional Office

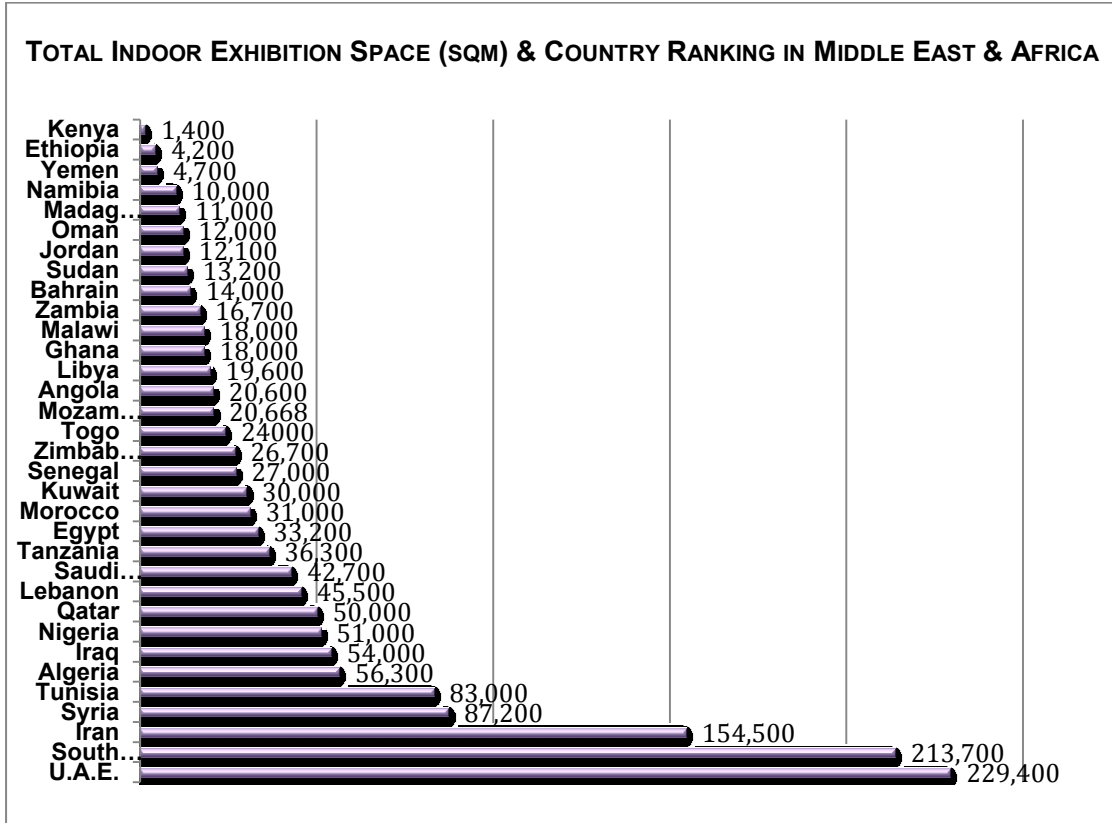


UFI, the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry, Middle East/Africa Regional Office has issued its report: **The Exhibition Industry in the Middle East & Africa 2011-2012**. This report includes information, statistics and figures about exhibition venues, numbers of trade fairs/exhibitions, business sectors, emerging trends and provides a SWOT analysis of the region's exhibition industry. 44 countries are covered: 12 in the Middle East and 32 in Africa. Additional listings, comparisons, updated figures and information for 2011 and 2012 are provided for exhibitions and venues respectively.

Regardless of the effects of the global economic downturn in 2008 and the instability of the Arab spring in 2011, 80% of the surveyed organisations in the region remain optimistic in their belief that the future of the exhibition industry in the regional market is promising. They base this belief on the young population, emerging and trade-oriented economies, untapped markets, government support, and the value of face to face marketing. However, all are aware of the negative factors represented by insecurity and political instability, government restrictions, lack of trained and qualified personnel, and, in some cases, the inadequacy of professional exhibition infrastructure.

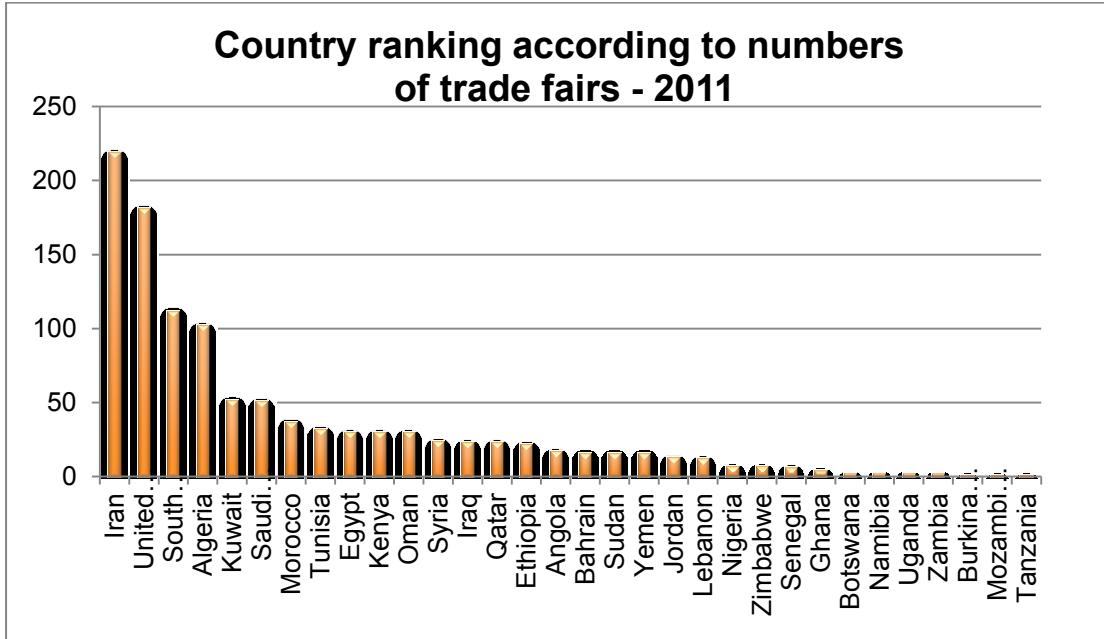
In the Middle East, the exhibition industry continues to grow. Since 2006, there has been a 14% increase in the number of trade fairs organized and a 21% increase in available exhibition space despite the sudden eruption the Arab Spring in 2011 and the major global economic crisis in 2008.

The United Arab Emirates now provides the largest indoor exhibition space representing 31% of the regional total. Dubai continues as the regional hub, with the greatest number of events hosted in one city (104) and the largest indoor exhibition space: 17% of the regional total. Iran hosts the greatest number of events in one country, welcoming 219 events in 6 cities. Iraq has shown a reasonable comeback and Kuwait and Saudi Arabia have also witnessed good growth. As business centres, Abu Dhabi and Doha have increased their exhibition numbers by +230% since 2006.



In Africa the exhibition industry is strongly present in the southern, northern and, to a lesser extent, eastern tips of the continent. It is still not existent, or only timidly present, in the Sahara, western and equatorial Africa. The growth of the exhibition industry in Africa is also to be noted with 33% more exhibition space and 15% more trade fairs than in 2006.

South Africa is the industry giant in Africa with 15 venues representing 29% of indoor exhibition space and organizing 112 trade fairs. Johannesburg is the only city to offer 7 purpose-built exhibition venues in the entire MEA region. At the northern tip of Africa, Tunisia also forms an outstanding exhibition platform with 7 purpose-built exhibition venues in five cities providing a total of 79,000 sqm of gross indoor space. Algeria, Morocco and Egypt, Kenya and Ethiopia are also important exhibition markets servicing the African continent.



The exhibition market leaders identified in the previous 2006 edition of this report remain unchanged: United Arab Emirates, South Africa and Iran. These three countries together provide approximately 40% of the documented indoor exhibition space in the Middle East & Africa. Together they host approximately 46% of the region’s trade fairs and exhibitions. Iran is a locally thriving market with strong consumer potential. South Africa is one of the world’s emerging BRICS economies and a gateway to African markets. The UAE depends on sophisticated trade services, tourism and an open door policy which has contributed to its development as a regional hub. On the other hand, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Kuwait and Qatar are important emerging markets with significant potential for growth in the future.

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