



MEADFA PRESS RELEASE

جمعية الشرق الأوسط و أفريقيا للأسواق الحرة
MIDDLE EAST & AFRICA
DUTY FREE ASSOCIATION

For immediate release
November 19, 2024

MEADFA Conference 2024 welcomes over 550 delegates in Abu Dhabi

The 2024 MEADFA Conference in Abu Dhabi, UAE, came to a close today, and MEADFA has confirmed that over 550 delegates attended.

The event opened with a welcome address from MEADFA President Sherif Toulan and Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Airports, Elena Sorlini. This included a moment of silence to honour the life and work of Colm McLoughlin.

This was followed by a discussion on fuelling growth in the Middle East and Africa focusing on recent developments and the importance of non-aeronautical revenues for airports in the region as well as growth opportunities linked to the Indian subcontinent. The morning session continued with a debate centred on the issues the industry must address to safeguard its growth in the Middle East & Africa. The session provided global context, explaining the strategies that are being employed to address fundamental key challenges. With the travel sector on track for recovery fuelled by rising visitor numbers, a focus on business travel, and increasing investment, the 'soaring skies' session explored why addressing evolving traveller needs will be crucial for long-term success.

Day two opened with a session on how the duty free and travel retail industry can tap into exciting developments as change sweeps through Saudi Arabia creating significant opportunities in travel retail. This was followed by discussions on the industry's growth in East Africa where expansions in travel and tourism provide opportunities for the travel retail industry to engage with a diverse and growing audience. As sustainability emerges as a critical concern for every company, MEADFA's sustainability update was also on the agenda. With the value of mystery shopping increasingly recognised as an essential tool to assess customer experience the 'unveiling customer journey' session explored innovative strategies tailored to travel retail. The growth of Artificial Intelligence was highlighted in the final session which offered insights on what the future holds for duty free and travel retail in the era of AI and suggested what we need to learn as an industry to stay ahead.

Delegates also enjoyed a varied networking programme, which included a welcome cocktail on Sunday evening at the Fairmont Bab Al Bahr Hotel, hosted by ARI Middle East, a Gala dinner on Monday night at the Yas Marina Circuit, hosted by Avolta, and numerous networking opportunities throughout the conference.

During the Gala Dinner, the MEADFA Awards winners were announced. These accolades recognise innovative and world-class duty free and travel retail specialists in the Middle East and Africa region.

Best Retailer was awarded to Lagardère Travel Retail, Best Marketing Strategy was awarded to Dubai Duty Free and Muscat Duty Free was named the winner of the Sustainability & CSR Award. Pernod Ricard India, Middle East & Africa Business Unit received the Customer & Supplier Award and Operations Manager at MEADFA Micheline El Ammar took home this year's Lifetime Achievement Award.

MEADFA would also like to thank all sponsors of the 2024 MEADFA Conference, managed by TFWA, including the official host of the MEADFA Conference, Abu Dhabi Airports, Gala Experience Partner: AVOLTA, Diamond Partners: ARI Middle East, Casa Maestri, Hama, International Duty Free Trading & Agencies (IDF), Sterling Perfumes, Emperor Blue and Mazaya, Platinum Partners: Aphrodite Duty Free, Dubai Duty Free, Imperial Brands, JT International and Pernod Ricard Global Travel Retail, Gold

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“As we gather here in Abu Dhabi, we are reminded of the strength and resilience of our region and the duty-free industry. This week, we have honored the legacies of industry pioneers and celebrated the remarkable achievements of our partners for their outstanding contributions to our industry.

“Despite the challenges we face, I am confident that our collective efforts will continue to shape a bright and prosperous future for the Middle East and Africa.”

Sherif Toulan, MEADFA President

“The MEADFA Conference allows delegates to discover the vast opportunities offered by the rapidly evolving region of the Middle East and Africa. I am very pleased for TFWA to be supporting this important event in the duty free and travel retail calendar.”

Erik Juul-Mortensen, TFWA President

For more information on the MEADFA Conference visit [MEADFA website](#) or contact Ms. Micheline El Ammar Enkiri on info@meadfa.com

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