

The Big 5 2017 to capitalise on GCC hospitality project line-up

OVER 2,000 HOSPITALITY and leisure projects are currently underway in the GCC with a combined estimated value of US\$200bn, according to the organiser of The Big 5 this month.

An estimated US\$64bn-worth of related projects in the construction pipeline, coupled with increasingly relaxed visa policies, highlight a developing focus on strengthening the regional tourism ecosystem.

Hospitality and leisure markets in the UAE and Saudi Arabia currently make up 74 per cent of all related projects in the GCC region. According to the GCC Hospitality and Leisure & Recreation report by BNC Network for The Big 5, the expanding tourism sector is a key driver for increasing hospitality and leisure projects in the region.

By adding hospitality and leisure projects to their portfolio, and developing the tourism sector in their countries, GCC governments are actively moving toward economic diversification and sustainable growth. Investments in the hospitality and leisure projects are adding significant growth to the whole construction sector as a result.

Mega developments in top ranking countries include the Hospitality District in Dubai's Mall of the World (UAE) and Phase 1 of the Red Sea Touristic Development in Tabouk (Saudi Arabia). After the UAE and Saudi Arabia, Oman has the third highest value of hospitality and leisure investment



The Big 5 is the place to do business.

with its Tourism Resort project in Duqm valued at US\$20mn.

Dubai and Abu Dhabi account for approximately 81 per cent of all hospitality and leisure projects in the UAE, with the country as a whole listed by BNC Project Intelligence as having the most competitive tourism sector in the GCC.

With the upcoming Expo 2020, the UAE is expected to attract an estimated 25mn visitors between October 2020 and April 2021. Additionally, under the 2020 Tourism Strategy, Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing aims to target 20mn overnight visitors in 2020.

Looking at the report, portfolio event director for The Big 5, Josine Heijmans, evaluates that "the high number of hospitality and leisure projects being launched in the GCC will continue to positively drive the regional construction sector as a whole. In an effort to support

mega-events such as Expo 2020 and developing tourism strategies, demand will remain strong for the innovative products and sustainable building solutions all on display at The Big 5 2017."

Running from 26-29 November at the Dubai World Trade Centre, the 38th edition of The Big 5 will feature over 2,500 local and international exhibiting companies showcasing 360-degree building solutions across five dedicated product sectors: Building Interiors & Finishes, Building Envelope & Special Construction, Construction Tools & Building Materials, Construct Technology & Innovation, and an MEP Services sector featuring an all new HVAC-R dedicated hall. The event is co-located with The Big 5 Solar.

Additionally, the event will offer a broad education agenda to the expected 78,000 visitors, which will include The Excellence in Construction Summit, the 2017 Big 5 Innovation in Precast Summit, and over 70 free to attend and CPD-certified Big 5 Talks broken down into six themes to correlate with product categories: Business, Sustainability, Project Management, MEP, Architecture and Technology.

Organised by dmg events Middle East, Asia & Africa, last year's edition of The Big 5 was the largest to date, attracting over 78,579 participants and 2,586 exhibiting companies from 59 countries.

'UAE design market buoyed by architecture'

THE UAE'S DESIGN market will hit US\$36bn in 2019, fuelled by architects and interior designers leveraging a wealth of innovations to enhance the user experience, experts have announced ahead of The Big 5 2017 in Dubai.

Boosted by innovative architecture and interior design projects, the UAE's design market is expected to grow by 13 per cent from US\$32bn in 2017 to reach a record-high of US\$36bn by 2019, according to the Dubai Design and Fashion Council.

The Middle East and North Africa's (MENA) design market will grow by 15 per cent to US\$148bn in 2019, with interior design growing seven times faster than the global average.

"The UAE and the Middle East are global hubs for showcasing how architecture and design innovations can transform how we work, live, and play. At The Big 5 Dubai, designers can experience how hi-tech materials such as felt can provide safe, comfortable, and cost-effective experiences, from sports stadia to office towers and metro stations," said Santhosh Vallil, sales manager Middle East at global architecture/design consultancy Hunter Douglas.

Supporting Middle East construction and design innovation, the Hunter Douglas felt linear ceiling system, HeartFelt, is seeing strong demand in the region. After its regional launch earlier this year, HeartFelt is now expanding its colour tones to include black and white, plus five new earth tones – cream, light brown,

Innovative architecture and interior design projects are helping grow the UAE design market.

medium brown, dark brown, and umber.

HeartFelt is made from felt, a natural, soft material with a warm appearance and excellent acoustic properties. Both the felt and the panels are cradle-to-cradle certified in sustainability. As a result, earlier in 2017 HeartFelt was awarded the Red Dot Award for Best of the Best in the Product Design category.

"With the earth tones palette, it is possible to imitate the natural look and feel of wood. Now that the range has twelve colours, designers are even better equipped to create dynamic, visually attractive ceilings with HeartFelt. By varying the colour schemes, designers can create a truly eye-catching design," said Pieter van Rees, business development manager for ceilings at Hunter Douglas.

