

WHAT'S TRENDING IN HOSPITALITY

A total of twelve roundtable discussions were featured during this year's Annual Hospitality Forum (AHF), in collaboration with Hodema consulting services and held during HORECA 2016. The event gathered key hospitality players from around the region to discuss current trends and the challenges facing the industry



From left to right: Robert Herr, Franck Royer, Nada Alameddine, Pierre G. Achkar, Dagmar Symes and Georges Ojeit

New markets

Ghassan Aidi, president of the Mediterranean Hotels & Restaurants Association (MHRA) pointed out that although the region's tourism is floundering in light of economic and political upheaval, there is potential to tap into new markets, namely China. "It's all about marketing and China has a population of almost 1.4 billion. Attracting just a fraction of their outbound tourism would make a huge difference." Aidi said that smart marketing campaigns by tourism ministries are more crucial than ever.

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Mid-market hotels

The forum highlighted a shift especially in high-end hubs such as Dubai, where developers are opting for new properties, maintaining their service excellence at lower rates and offering an experience that appeals to millennials, considered to be the new drivers of tourism. Amine Moukarzel, president of Golden Tulip Hotels in the MENA, pointed out that the brand continues to invest in new hotels that offer affordable comfort throughout the region in response to increasing demand for medium range accommodation.

Louay Sarage, corporate vice president for strategy and development at Roda Hotels mentioned that one of Roda's objectives is to diversify its portfolio by offering luxury and midscale within the same project, citing the example of the anticipated Jewel of the Creek – a new landmark under construction in Dubai.



From left to right: Elie Mehanna, Jean Claude Ghosn, Nagi Morkos and Tony Ramy

Green business

Emphasis was placed on Lebanon's recent waste crisis and Ziad Abi Chaker, CEO of Cedar Environmental, an environmental and industrial engineering firm, spoke of the shift towards green business. "There are a number of companies working with us to achieve zero waste in their organizations. Zero waste is attainable in hotels and restaurants at low cost." He continued by saying that sorting at the source is the first step to implementing this vision.

"Zero waste is attainable in hotels and restaurants at low cost" Ziad Abi Chaker



From left to right: Joumana Dammous-Salamé and Amine Moukarzel

Art meets boutique

The rise in the number of boutique hotels in the region was made apparent during the conference, especially those with a focus on art. Gordon Campbell Gray, founder and chairman of CampbellGray Hotels, spoke of his brand's new projects in the Middle East, namely the upcoming Le Gray, Amman and its signature art. "I personally choose the pieces that we place in the hotels. It's about creating an experience."

