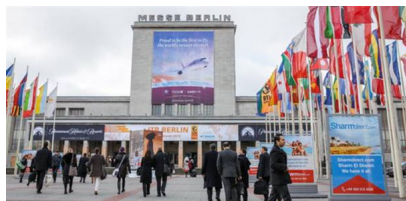


ITB TOURISM EXHIBITION DISCUSSED REFUGEE CRISIS AND ROBOTS



For its 50th anniversary, ITB Berlin 2016 managed to break a new visitor record of 120,000 people. This year, topics such as digitalization, refugee crisis and a humanoid robot from Japan, which made its European debut at the ITB, stood in the spotlight at the tourism exhibition.

According to Die Messe Berlin, the new visitor record not only displayed that the international tourism industry can defy geopolitical risks and the current refugee crisis; in the light of difficult global conditions, **the sector also presented itself as a dynamically growing industry.**

Roughly 10,000 companies from 187 countries and regions exhibited in the 26 convention halls of the ITB tourism exhibition. With 120,000 people, the convention was able to report the largest number of visitors since its establishment in 1966.

The number of purchase decision makers increased as well. According to ITB Berlin, two thirds of all visitors possess decision making responsibility in direct buying. During the event, transactions of roughly 7 billion euro were carried out, as compared to last year's 6.7 billion.

The tourism exhibition, which was established in Berlin 50 years ago, has evolved into an international success story. Since 2008, the ITB Asia is a yearly addition in Singapore. Starting in May 2017, another yearly exhibition called ITB China will join the family with China's largest travel companies coming together in Shanghai.

Travel 4.0 and the complete digitalization of tourism business processes were the main topic of the ITB congress, which is regarded as the think tank of this international industry. Another focal point was the refugee crisis as well as the chances and risks for tourism which will arise from it.

And finally, a humanoid robot from Japan celebrated its European debut. The android - dressed as an elegant hostess - showed visitors, how engineers and scientists envision the future of an industry focused on service. Luxury tourism was also met with great interest at the tourism exhibition.

The results and impressions of this year's ITB grant a positive outlook for industry experts: "The general atmosphere confirm that we can enter 2016 with general optimism. The tourism industry is excellently placed in Germany and the rest of the world, its offers are the most varied they have ever been, **the consumer confidence is very good and tourism remains Germans' favorite spending category**, as the GfK's consumption researchers confirmed," said Michael Frenzel, President of BTW (German federal tourist industry association).

This year's partner country of the ITB Berlin 2016 was the Maldives. More than 5000 accredited journalists from more than 80 countries and roughly 380 bloggers from 30 countries reported about the travel exhibition. The 180,000 visitors - including 60,000 private visitors - were joined by many international politicians and diplomats including 124 delegations, four majesties, 48 ministers and 87 ambassadors from all around the world.

Next year's ITB Berlin will take place between March 8th and 12th 2017, its official partner country being Botswana.

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