

## Summary of market information

Decorations, festivities and celebrations in the Middle East

With this summary we would like to give you some impressions about the various styles of decorations used in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and its neighboring countries in order to make it easier for you to identify the potentials in the market of decorations, party supplies and professional fireworks.

This is only a small excerpt of the variety of events and decorations to be found throughout the Middle East, but should help you picture the endless possibilities a participation in Festivalworld Middle East can offer you.

The market in the Middle East is characterized by a high concentration of celebrations and activities which are always accompanied by lavish decorations throughout the cities, malls, hotels and event venues.

Creativity is endless. Every year event organizers are trying to surpass their decorations from the previous year and want to present themselves even bigger.

The government is supporting various activities and celebrations throughout the year.

But also private festivities are celebrated in big style and require huge resources which are often not easily available in the market, therewith again offering opportunities for international suppliers and manufacturers.

Taking Dubai as an example, the major celebrations which are reflected in public decorations are listed below in chronological order throughout the year.

### Dubai Shopping Festival (2010: 28 January – 28 February)



DSF began as a shopping extravaganza, and has expanded into a wider event, to include fashion shows, entertainments and other attractions, drawing more than 3 million visitors every year. The main attraction of the event is shopping, with the visitors being offered not only special discounts on a wide range of goods, from jewelry to fashion, electrical goods and carpets, but also the opportunity to win prizes.



About 150 or more international and regional events are expected to be showcased during the 15th edition in 2010, which includes shows, musicals and concerts. Apart from this, DSF 2010 involves participation of more than 6000 retail outlets, 50 malls which will put out spectacular shopping promotions during the 32 days of DSF 2010. Many neighborhoods and streets are themed to enhance the festive atmosphere created by DSF.



### Valentine's Day (14 of February)



Valentine's Day is very popular in Dubai and all major hotels and restaurants offer special evening packages. Florists witness a massive surge in sale of flowers and vases, with Valentine's Day being their busiest day of the year.

Left picture: Flower and candle decoration in the lobby of a five star hotel, and Valentine's decoration in a shopping mall.



### Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS 2010: 23 June – 31 August)



Following the success of DSF, a major equivalent organized by the DSF Office since 1998 during the summer months is the Dubai Summer Surprises (DSS). Bearing the logo “Big Fun for Little Ones”, the DSS brings in summers that are full of fun and learning for children in Dubai, apart from the plethora of wonderful shopping offers and bundle of edutainment activities.



Each week during the summer months, DSS has a different theme and transforms shopping malls into venues for live entertainment, music, dancing, competitions, workshops and numerous interactive programmes in keeping with that particular week's theme.

DSS is no longer just an entertainment event. It has become a social, cultural and economic phenomenon like no other in the region attracting more than 15 million visitors.



## Ramadan and Eid Al Fitr

(2010: approx. Ramadan 11 August - 9 September, Eid Al Fitr: 9-12 September)

**Ramadan** is the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar. It is the Islamic month of fasting, in which participating Muslims refrain from eating, drinking and smoking from dawn until sunset. Fasting is meant to teach the Muslim patience, modesty and spirituality. Ramadan is a time for Muslims to fast for the sake of God and to offer more prayer than usual.

Throughout the cities in the entire Muslim world special Iftar Tents are set up (Iftar = the evening meal when Muslims break their fast during the Islamic month of Ramadan). Restaurants offer Iftar Buffets and decorate their facilities with lanterns, crescents, stars and moons. The streets are illuminated; shopping malls and hotels hang decoration items and lightings from the ceilings and have special late opening hours. Muslims traditionally decorate their homes and invite family and friends to their house or meet outside to enjoy Iftar together.

**Eid Al-Fitr** marks the end of the fasting period of Ramadan and the first day of the following month, after another new moon has been sighted. Eid ul-Fitr means the Festival of Breaking the Fast; a special celebration is made. Food is donated to the poor; everyone puts on their best, usually new, clothes; and communal prayers are held in the early morning, followed by feasting and visiting relatives and friends.



1. Ramadan decorations in the shopping malls
2. Pictures below: Very popular decorations, also outside of Ramadan, are the vast illumination of palm trees and the use of many candles, lamps etc

### Diwali – the Hindu festival of lights (2010: 5 November)



The large proportion of foreigners and expatriates working in the United Arab Emirates has led to a proportion of over 20% Hindus living there. Also Oman and Bahrain accommodate a large percentage of Hindus in their population. Hindu festivals like Diwali and Holi are nowadays celebrated openly in Dubai.

Diwali is one of the biggest festival of Hindus, celebrated with great enthusiasm and happiness. The festival is celebrated for five continuous days, where the third days is celebrated as the main Diwali festival or 'Festival of lights'. On this auspicious day, people light up diyas and candles all around their house. They perform Laxmi Puja in the evening and seek divine blessings of the Goddess of Wealth. The festival of Diwali is never complete without exchange of gifts. People present diwali gifts to all near and dear ones.

Among the decorative items used in this festival are traditional door hangings, light chains and decorative lamps, candles and wall hangings.

### UAE National Day (2 December)



Each year the UAE Nationals celebrate with pomp and grandeur their National Day.

The hearts of every Emirati are filled with the overwhelming memories of 2nd December 1971 when the UAE made history by acquiring independence from the British Colonial rulers. The Al-Eid Al Watani (in Arabic) is celebrated with great zeal all over UAE with a splendid aura of triumph.

Balloons in the green, white, red and black of the UAE flag adorn myriad shopping malls for the independence anniversary. Streets and trees are ablaze with fairy lights.

Cars decorated with the national flag and images of the Rulers are a common sight on UAE streets during the National Day. Flags flutter around every corner of the UAE.

In 2009, car rallies, firework displays, charity drives and a marine parade were among dozens of activities held across the UAE as thousands of people came out on the streets to celebrate the country's 38th National Day. The professional fireworks display at the Emirates Palace Hotel in Abu Dhabi saw 100,000 devices from 12 barges fired into the air at heights of up to 2,000 metres.

## Christmas



Although a Christian celebration, the spirit of Christmas is also felt in Dubai. The country's religious tolerance offers foreigners the possibility to spend Christmas almost like at home. Every kind of Christmas decorations and goods are readily available in UAE stores. Fresh Christmas trees are imported. The different hotels of the city put an extra effort by decorating the hotel beautifully with lights and Christmas trees. Almost every mall and shopping centre is enjoying Christmas by displaying some of the finest collections of the season, pouring artificial snow or offering picture opportunities with Santa Claus.

Left and next page: Christmas trees with lights and decorations in Madinat Jumeirah, Mall of the Emirates, Wafi Mall and Dubai Mall, Jumeirah Centre, Deira City Centre, Lamcy Plaza



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Reference: **Market Information**

Date: February 2010



### Other countries of the Middle East where Christmas is celebrated:

Pictures below show a Palestinian shop vendor at his shop in Occupied Jerusalem's Old City, and Jordanians gathering to celebrate the lighting of the 26-meter tree.



Below: Santa Clauses wave to passers-by as they celebrate Christmas Day in downtown Beirut, and images from Christmas celebrations and shopping in Iran:



## Beirut, Lebanon – Christmas decoration



### **New Year** (31<sup>st</sup> of December)

New Year is celebrated in Dubai like almost everyone around the world, with one exception: Private fireworks are not allowed (throughout the year), but instead stunning professional fireworks light up the sky around the country.

A lot of hotels offer grand parties with sumptuous dinner and music. Nightclubs of the city organize different events and call upon well-known DJ's that make visitors stay on the dance floor all night long. Tour operators line up special events in the desert, and party items are in big demand for private celebrations.



## Other important celebrations and decoration opportunities

Apart from the above mentioned public celebrations which can be noticed throughout the city, there are numerous private celebrations like weddings, birthday parties and many other playing an important role in the decorations and party business.

Corporate events are organized by hundreds of event agencies offering their services to the market. Royal banquets and state events require finest set ups.

### Traditional weddings

An Arabic wedding is celebrated with lavish decorations, a breathtaking stage for the bride, hundreds of flowers and beautiful table set ups. If celebrated at home, the façade of the house is covered in lights. A traditional Emirati or Indian wedding often hosts up to 3000 guests.



### Malls and hotels - constantly changing decoration

Even without special events, decorations in hotels and malls change regularly and are continuously updated, offering an interesting market for all types of candles, vases and pots, flower arrangements, fabrics, lightings and many more.



All the above given information and shown pictures are mostly examples for Dubai.

The Middle Eastern countries all differ widely from each other and also host different cultural celebrations and customs. This means also that each market has to be assessed in a different way. Products which work in the rather liberal Dubai will not necessarily sell in Saudi Arabia with its more traditional laws. However, this market again will have a demand for other products.

In general, Dubai will be a good place for international companies to start exploring this extravagant market, as it is also a place where many nationalities come together and business people from all over the region like to travel to.

Most regional offices and distributors are located in Dubai, as it offers a safe business environment for foreign firms, relatively easy import and export as well as visa regulations, and well developed services and infrastructure.

Festivalworld Middle East, set to take place 7-9 March 2011, aims at bringing all countries in the region together to find decoration articles for all kinds of celebrations in one international trading place.

We invite you to explore this market and experience the lavish decoration opportunities for yourself!

Your team at Messe Frankfurt