

Sugen Pillay talks SETE 2014

Sugen Pillay, commercial director of Thebe Reed Exhibitions, talks to Bizcommunity.com about the forthcoming Sports and Events Tourism Exchange (SETE) in Durban from 28-30 October 2014.



■ ***What is the Sports & Events Tourism Exchange?***

Sugen Pillay: The Sports and Events Tourism Exchange (SETE) is aimed at promoting South Africa as an events destination. The two-day conference attracts leaders from the sports and events tourism industries from the private and public sectors to debate issues of importance to contribute towards the growth of events tourism in the country.

Lessons from international experience are shared and delegates use these lessons to develop strategies to enable SA to be globally competitive as an events tourism destination. Alongside the conference is a two-day exhibition where international buyers are hosted to meet with product in SA that has the capacity and ability to host international events.

International buyers include rights owners of events, global tour operators specialising in sports tour groups, international event federations and associations interested in hosting their event in SA. Exhibitors include event venues, sports tour operators, accommodation facilities, national sports federations, travel agencies, car rental companies, sports marketing companies, etc.

■ ***What are SETE 2014's goals?***

Pillay: For the past three years SETE has succeeded in mobilising key stakeholders from the sports and tourism industries to collaborate with each other and develop strategies aimed at bringing more international events to SA. With the focus on supporting Durban's bid for the 2022 Commonwealth Games, which resulted from resolutions adopted at last year's SETE conference, we are working towards learning lessons from destinations that successfully bid and hosted previous Commonwealth Games.

■ ***What is the impact of this show on the business events sector?***

Pillay: International sports federations also convene international meetings and conventions. Many of the buyers who attend SETE can also influence decisions as to where their meetings are hosted.

FIFA has an annual congress that is hosted in different countries, the IOC Congress was hosted in Durban in 2011, and the World Anti-Doping Congress was hosted in Joburg last year. The International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT) the US was hosted as a buyer in 2012 and, because of SETE, has decided to host the IIPT World Symposium on Sustainable and Peaceful Communities and Nations in Ekurhuleni in February 2015. Therefore, the SETE platform also creates opportunities for the business tourism sector to benefit from attracting international sports meetings and conventions.

■ ***What role do you believe that sports play in the events sector?***

Pillay: At the 2014 Sports Tourism European Summit it was highlighted that the Sports Tourism industry is worth an estimated euro 450 billion globally and is the fastest growing tourism sector.

South Africa has been fortunate in hosting three major world cup events; however, to sustain government's investment in the infrastructure developed for these events it will be important for the country to attract more international events. Since the hosting of the FIFA World Cup, foreign visitor arrivals to SA continues to grow, confirming the view that the World Cup generated positive media awareness of SA, which contributes to a growth in tourism long after the event.

■ In your opinion, do sports events belong in the business events sector?

Pillay: There are definite cross-selling opportunities between both sectors. Sport is a thriving industry and, therefore, it makes sense for the business tourism sector to take advantage of opportunities within the sports industry. Both sectors need to work closely with each other to enjoy the benefits. At last year's conference one of the international speakers from the US presented case studies about convention bureaux in the US changing their focus to support sports and cultural events, and therefore, it was agreed that CVBs in SA should review their role aimed at supporting bids for international sports and cultural events to be hosted in SA.

■ Who should be attending this conference and exhibition?

Pillay: In order to promote ourselves as a destination capable of hosting major international events, we need the supply chains of the sports and event tourism industries to participate in this event. This means that the hospitality industry, airline tour operators, car rental companies, event venues such as stadia, sports marketing companies, corporate companies involved in sponsoring events, media agencies promoting events and any company that wants to benefit from the sports and events tourism industries should attend either as a conference delegate or exhibitor. The international buyers who we are hosting will be keen to meet key players from the industry so that they will bring their event to SA.

Government institutions from the sports and events tourism sectors will also need to attend, especially the local government authorities, such as provincial and city tourism authorities, officials from the provincial and national tourism, arts and culture and sports departments. Undergraduate and postgraduate students who want to further their career in sports tourism are encouraged to attend the conference to understand the global and local trends and lessons that can be learnt.

■ Who should be exhibiting at this event?

Pillay: Exhibitors include: event venues, sports tour operators, accommodation facilities, national sports federations, travel agencies, car rental companies, sports marketing companies, provincial tourism authorities, city tourism authorities, sports facilities, golf estates and high-performance centres, event organisers and entertainment venues.

■ Does this show attract international buyers?

Pillay: Over the past three years we have hosted an average of 45 international buyers per annum from over 20 countries. These are international sports federations, global sports tour operators, sports marketing agencies, rights owners of events and national sports federations. Each buyer has an average of 20 meetings over the two days and is also given the opportunity to participate in a post-event tour of the country in which they visit the venues and destinations that they would like to host their event. The feedback we received from buyers who attended previous events has been positive and many of them are now hosting events or sports groups in SA.

■ What can visitors and delegates expect?

Pillay: The key focus this year is to mobilise support from the sports and events tourism industry for Durban's bid for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Speakers at this year's conference include experts involved with this year's Glasgow Commonwealth Games and Melbourne's Games, as well as experts to share the latest trends associated with the sponsorship of events and the role that the media plays in promoting events. Delegates will also engage with international buyers and understand what their requirements are in bringing events to SA.

■ Would you like to increase the support from other African countries going forward?

Pillay: Our intention is to increase the participation of African countries. At this year's conference there is a panel discussion

involving key stakeholders from BRICS and African countries to agree on a framework that will ensure that the BRICS forum inclusive of African countries will support member countries in their bids for multi-sport events.

■ Which key speakers are lined up for the conference?

Pillay: This year we have a series of panel discussions facilitated by experts in their respective fields.

Some of these panel experts include:

- Professor Graham Brown from the University of South Australia, who has specialist expertise concerning the relationship between the Olympic Games and tourism. He was a member of a 'mission to Atlanta' to identify lessons from planning the Sydney Olympic Games and provided advice to the Canadian Department of Heritage about impact measures for the 2010 Olympic Games. He will be facilitating the panel discussion on Experience of Cities that Host Multi-sport Events;
- Kelvin Watt is the Executive Chairman of Repucom with over 20 years' experience in the South African sport and sponsorship industry. Repucom has conducted numerous audits of sports brands to evaluate their sponsorship value. He will facilitate the session on Sponsorship Trends in the Events Tourism Industry;
- Steve Bainbridge was General Counsel of Yas Marina Circuit (Abu Dhabi Motorsports Management LLC) managing the central legal function of the iconic Yas Marina Circuit, including responsibility for all contracts from F1 rights through sponsorship, broadcasting and venue maintenance contracts. He will facilitate the panel discussion on the Role of Media in Supporting Events;
- Guy Mastermind is the Head of the Academy of Sport and Physical Activity at Sheffield Hallam University and has published numerous articles on sports and events tourism. He will facilitate the session on Planning for Event Legacies;
- Michael Linley is MD of consulting firm Brand Capital International. He is a leading expert in the role of brands as competitive strategic assets for destination brands. He will facilitate the panel discussion Bidding & Hosting of International Events from an International Buyer's Perspective

The Sports and Events Tourism Exchange is hosted by the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Economic Development and Tourism, partnered by CATHSSETA, SASCO, Tourism KZN and Durban Tourism, South African Airways, the Tsogo Sun and supported by Durban KZN Convention Bureau and the exclusive broadcasting partner SABC.

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