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UNISA ON CUTTING TRAVEL COSTS
Xolani Solomon speaks on new ways to save

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Editor's note

Not surprisingly, fraud has become a growing concern for travel buyers.

Hotels are prime targets for cyber attacks, not only because of the sheer volume of credit card transactions which they process on a regular basis, but also because guest information remains on hotel databases for the duration of their stay. Hackers are becoming increasingly adept at creating spyware which can access these databases and glean confidential information. Corporate travellers are left vulnerable, and travel buyers are often left to deal with the end result as credit card charges suddenly start popping up in areas where their travellers have never ventured.

There are of course ways to combat this, one being the use of virtual cards which pre-authorise specific payments at specific times, and which are pin-protected.

But, this kind of credit card fraud is not the only form of data theft which impacts travellers. In fact, the greater the number of travellers tapping into free Wi-Fi wherever they go, the greater the risk posed to both personal and company information.

In this month's power panel, we take a closer look at data security and how this impacts the travel

industry. Our panel of experts share their views on how to protect travellers and ensure your company's information remains on lockdown.

Speaking of concerns around traveller safety, we also tackle prominent challenges in Africa in our *Travel into Africa* feature. Industry professionals provide some context around the accommodation issue and why this remains a headache for corporates sending travellers into Africa. They also provide some advice on how best to manage Africa travel.

In our Meetings section, we focus in on Mozambique specifically, investigating why the destination continues to attract more meetings. Not just another tropical escape, the country boasts one of the fastest economic growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa – business has taken off and so has conferencing.

From the latest on developments within the car rental industry to ways to impress delegates, the June edition of *Travel Buyer* is packed with content to keep you reading.

Until next month,

Debbie Badham
(debbieb@nowmedia.co.za)
Deputy Editor

COVER

The travel team at Unisa is in the midst of reviewing its travel policy in a bid to save money. Travel commodity specialist, **Xolani Solomon** speaks to *Travel Buyer* about developing effective cost-saving solutions. Cover photograph by **Shannon Van Zyl**.

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OZ visas – agents apply on your behalf

THE Australian Department of Immigration and Border Protection has made organisational ImmiAccounts available to overseas agents, enabling them to lodge online visitor visa applications on behalf of clients. Information on the organisational

ImmiAccounts, and how to register, is available on the Australian immigration website.

By having an organisational ImmiAccount, agents will not need to create a new ImmiAccount for each new client. Agents will need to provide the Organisation Registration Number (the

company or organisation number as it appears in the relevant authority's register) and registered name. Once the registration form has been submitted, the application will be processed by the Department of Immigration and Border Protection in Australia. The processing time for visitor

applications for South Africa, Botswana and Namibia passport holders is 20 working days for tourist visas and 10 working days for business visas. Business and tourist visas or other nationalities require 20 working days' processing time, after which the agent will be notified of the decision by email.

New payment line to reduce TMC-corporate conflict

CARD payment solutions provider, VISA, has introduced a new payment standard that recognises the growing trend in ancillary purchases.

VISA recently introduced a new 'ancillary' payment line, which includes any non-ticket-related purchases, such as in-flight meals, Wi-Fi, baggage fees, seat upgrades and entertainment. Previously, all airline payments were lumped together as one ticketing-related charge, making reporting a challenge. For example, a charge for Wi-Fi, would appear as 'AirlineName0014567891014',

whereas under the new standard, this charge appears as 'AirlineName Wi-Fi'.

VISA's head of merchant sales, **Ramon Martin**, says the airline industry's changing business model has seen ancillary sales increase by nearly 400% since ancillaries were first introduced in 2008. "VISA's new standard will allow airlines to process these transactions so that they are distinctly identified and categorised from ticket purchases. This offers real benefit to both businesses and consumers as ancillary purchases now account for approximately 50% of all airline transactions."

SAA – show up or pay up

SAA has introduced a special 'no-show' fee from May 1 for customers who do not arrive for their scheduled flights on time.

Tlali Tlali, spokesperson for SAA, says no shows have been "a constant headache" for the airline. SAA would previously cancel or forfeit the customer's airline ticket in the event of a 'no show' and the ticket was then refunded. Now, passengers will pay a no-show fee as well as a change fee, but will not have to complete a "new transaction", he said.

The airline will now charge a dedicated fee, which will vary from market to market. No shows on domestic routes will incur a fee of R570 for economy class and R1 140 for business class per ticket. On international and regional routes, fixed amounts will be implemented depending on the destination. "In some cases, the fixed amount, plus change fee, plus upgrade to the next higher fare, will apply, whereas on other routes only fixed amounts will apply," Tlali says.

City Lodge buys out Courtyard

THE City Lodge Hotel Group has concluded a deal with Hospitality Property Fund to acquire Hospitality's interest in the Courtyard Hotel portfolio for R80m.

The sale agreement involves Hospitality's 50% interest in Arcadia, Bruma Lake, Rosebank, and Sandown Courtyard hotels and its 50% share in five sectional title units at Courtyard Hotel Sandton and one at Courtyard Hotel Rosebank. The City Lodge Hotel Group now wholly owns these hotels as of May 1. Courtyard Hotel Port Elizabeth is already wholly owned by the group.

City Lodge ceo, **Clifford Ross**, said: "The Courtyard Hotel brand is an integral part of the City Lodge Hotel Group's portfolio of brands and complements our strategy of providing quality accommodation options in the one-star to four-star business and leisure traveller markets in South Africa."

The group has 52 hotels in South Africa across the Courtyard Hotel, City Lodge Hotel, Town Lodge and Road Lodge brands. The 148-room City Lodge Hotel Newtown, Johannesburg, and the 90-room Road Lodge Pietermaritzburg are currently under construction.



PHOTO: DARISE FOSTER

The lowdown on VAT refunds

ABTA recently hosted a travel management forum at the Legacy Centurion Lake Hotel, titled, "The Lowdown on VAT refunds for business travel." Stakeholders from across the industry gathered to hear VAT experts from SARS and VATit

discuss the best protocol to follow when dealing with VAT claims, both in South Africa and abroad. Pictured here at the event (from left) are **Keshni Rai**, (HRG Rennies Travel), with **Robyn Saunders** (Aurecon) and **Anita Carolus** (Amex).

Mega conference centre opens in Malawi

On May 1, the Umodzi Park precinct and the President Walmont Hotel opened in Malawi's capital of Lilongwe. **President Peter Mutharika** formally opened the hotel in a ribbon cutting ceremony.

Peermont Hotels, Casinos and Resorts will manage the hotel and the Umodzi Park precinct, which aims to attract conference delegations within the continent and boost Malawi's tourism sector. The 130-room hotel includes a gym, health spa, lobby bar, lounge

and restaurant. The Umodzi Park precinct can seat 1 500 conference delegates.

At the launch, Peermont ceo, **Anthony Puttergill** said: "The opening of Umodzi Park is a proud moment for Peermont. It is the culmination of a long journey with our partners in Malawi – both the Malawian Government and the Umodzi Board. We are confident that the expertise that we bring to this magnificent property will ensure that it prospers, and that it will be a wonderful asset that all Malawians can be very proud of."



PHOTO: DEBBIE BADHAM

On the right track!

World Travel in conjunction with Rail Europe hosted an international rail product presentation at the Crowne Plaza Johannesburg – The Rosebank on April 21. Members of the travel industry were updated with the latest tips and travel information for rail itineraries around the world. Rail Europe covers 11 000 routes in Europe alone, offering convenient

*connections from city centre to city centre. **Alexis Darne**, sales manager for India, Middle East, Africa and Central Asia revealed that Rail Europe recently joined up with its sister company in New York, now offering its product in regions virtually across the world. Pictured here is Darne with World Travel's **Terri-Ann Wright** (left) and **Ilfona du Brÿyn** (right).*

R680m hotel coming to Cape

Tsogo Sun will construct a new R680m 500-bedroom hotel complex in the Cape Town city centre after reaching an agreement with the owners of the site of a recently demolished Tulip hotel. It will be located on the corner of Buitengracht and Strand streets.

Construction is expected to begin in May this year and to be completed by September 2017.

The hotel will consist of two products in one complex - a 200-bedroom latest-design SunSquare hotel and a 300-bedroom new-generation StayEasy hotel. Also in the complex will be banqueting and conference facilities, Tsogo Sun's casual dining offering, Vigour & Verve, retail space and approximately 300 underground parking bays.

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Gauteng packaged tours a missed opportunity

AS part of its strategy to grow tourism to the province, increase length of stay and encourage South Africans from other provinces to enjoy Gauteng's facilities, experiences and attractions, the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) is calling on travel organisers and event managers to leverage off major events taking place in the province.

Barba Gaoganediwe, GTA's senior manager of destination and corporate communications, says the GTA would like to encourage travel managers to use major events as a draw card. "We'd like to see the creation of attractive packages around events, packaging two to three-night weekend or midweek stays, and include some of the fantastic experiences on offer in Gauteng."

For example, the Bulls vs Sharks rugby match that took place at Loftus Versveld in Pretoria on February 28: "Visitors from other

provinces should not just fly in for the match. The match should be part of a larger itinerary that includes the Dinokeng Game Reserve, the Cullinan mines and the Union Buildings as well as experiences at restaurants and bars in the area," says Gaoganediwe.

Business events

TMCs can also benefit from the business events sector while promoting tourism in the province, says **Nonnie Kubeka**, executive manager of the Gauteng Convention Bureau (GCB).

"Many local corporates use their TMCs to arrange travel and accommodation. We'd like to encourage TMCs to up-sell, offering clients tours and experiences pre- or post their meeting or conference.

"We're targeting international association meetings in the manufacturing, sports, education,

finance, aviation, mining, research, and health sectors, so there is enormous opportunity for the local trade to offer packages to local corporates that attend these business events. Many of these events offer pre-arranged pre- and post tours but space is often limited, so there's nothing stopping TMCs from arranging their own tours for delegates using the same itinerary," she says.

Companies with head offices in South Africa and a footprint in Africa or globally who are hosting strategic meetings and corporate team building events in Gauteng could arrange these meetings around major events in the province, such as golf tournaments or festivals, which delegates could attend, Kubeka says. "We have many innovative meeting spaces in the province and the fantastic experiences TMCs can offer clients can be aligned with these meeting or team-building agendas."

Emirates adjusts schedule

EMIRATES has temporarily amended the flight schedules for its Johannesburg services. The changes came into effect on May 1.

Until June 30, flights from Johannesburg will depart 40 minutes earlier than their current departure times, with flight EK768 departing at 08h45, EK762 departing at 13h20 and EK764 departing at 18h35. Flight EK767 will arrive back in Johannesburg at 06h15, 50 minutes later than its previous landing time. EK761 will land at 11h35 and EK763 at 17h10, both 45 minutes later than usual. Flight EK766 also sees a slight disruption, landing in Dubai at 08h45, 25 minutes later than its current landing time. ■



GAUTENG TOURISM AT THE TOURISM INDABA 2015



Gauteng Tourism promotes township tourism experiences

The Tourism Indaba is Africa's most important travel and tourism exhibition, and is broadly considered one of the top three "must-visit" events on the global calendar. It showcases the widest variety of Southern Africa's best tourism products, and attracts over 13 000 delegates and media from across the globe, keeping them abreast of global trends and developments in African tourism. It

allows interactions between 1800 industry stakeholders and decisionmakers face-to-face.

Following its success at the 2014 Tourism Indaba, Gauteng Tourism is once again hitting this annual landmark trade show with maximum impact. "We welcome South African Tourism's new approach in positioning the show as a Pan-African Trade Show," said **Barba Gaoganediwe**, GTA

spokesperson.

In consultation with SA Tourism, the Tourism Enterprise Programme (TEP) and other industry players such as Southern Africa Tourism Services Association (SATSA), GTA is rolling out a programme aligned with the Province's programme of Transformation, Modernisation and Reindustrialisation of our economy with special emphasis on our township enterprises. So, we are taking tour

operators, guides and others from enterprises which are part of the first phase township tourism cluster businesses to Indaba, as part of our development and market readiness programme.

These first phase township tourism clusters, products and experiences comprise of the following areas:

Soweto, Alex, Mamelodi, Oriental Plaza, Arts on Main and Maboneng Neighborhood.

The New Pan African Indaba

With tourism arrivals to Africa growing by 7% year on year, Africa is one of tourism's most exciting opportunities. Destination Gauteng remains the best gateway to the continent and South Africa. It is the most representative and accounts for over 55% of all the international arrivals, with OR Tambo International Airport serving as the busiest airport in Africa.

GTA says NO to Xenophobia

Gauteng Tourism Authority used the Tourism Indaba platform to join the rest of the country in voicing its distress and outrage at the recent xenophobic and ethnic attacks in some parts of our

province and in KwaZulu Natal.

By showcasing the good potential we have in tourism in our townships we join the President and Gauteng Premier in reassuring our key travel

markets that despite these attacks, Gauteng still remains a preferred and lucrative destination for business and leisure tourism.

The country aims to grow tourism jobs

nationally by 225 000 jobs, but this will only be possible in a stable economy and society. Tourism provides work for over 200 000 people in Gauteng, which is about 4% of the workforce.

For more information on what's happening in Gauteng, what to do and where to go, visit www.gauteng.net download our Gauteng Travel Guide APP on Google Play and App Store, follow us on Facebook [ilovegauteng](https://www.facebook.com/ilovegauteng), on Twitter @visitgauteng with #GPLifestyle #GeePeeShotLeft

Virtual card solutions – your questions answered



The concept of the virtual card, though relatively new, is fast gathering supporters in every link of the corporate travel chain – from the travel manager and the corporate traveller, to the travel management company (TMC), to suppliers of services.

The revolutionary payment method, plastic-free and with benefits for data collection and reporting, reduced bill backs, and most importantly, minimised fraud risks, holds tremendous appeal all-round.

Says **Kele Mohatle**, Liberty Group travel manager: "Virtual cards are an effective way of continuously mitigating the risk of fraud which has often been associated with physical cards in the past. Virtual cards cannot be used to pay for goods and services that are not travel related. Should transactions unrelated to travel costs be attempted at any point, these will automatically be declined which not only protects the card, but allows for a smoother reconciliation process at the end of the month."

Travel managers are now familiarising themselves with the new payment method. **Kevin Lomax**, head: commercial card, Diners Club and Standard Bank SA discusses the benefits of virtual cards for travel buyers. Diners Club launched the Dynamic Virtual Card in April.

Q: What are virtual card solutions used for?

KL: Virtual cards can be used to pay any supplier of travel services that accepts card payments. This is particularly advantageous for land arrangements, which until now have been heavily based on the arduous bill back system.

Q: How will virtual cards benefit me as the travel buyer, and my company?

KL: Research conducted by ABTA in 2014, revealed that the issues that keep travel

buyers awake at night include governance and travel policy; technology, information management and automation; cost management and payment solutions. Virtual card solutions hold remedies for each of these headaches.

Let's start with enforcing governance and travel policy. By using a virtual card rather than an account or invoice system, travel buyers, in conjunction with their TMC, can ensure that travellers' spend will be capped and they will only incur pre-approved costs. With a single account linked to a single traveller, there's less scope for overspending and potential for debates. Infrequent travellers, who didn't have access to a company credit card in the past, are also brought into the ambit of the managed travel programme.

If you look at how all companies want to improve their utilisation of technology and information, the virtual card enables far richer information to be passed between the supplier, the TMC and the corporate. It also improves reconciliation processes by consolidating all spend on one payment instrument, the corporate lodge card.

This gives the opportunity to reduce costs for all parties. There is less manual intervention in the processes, the relevant supplier carries their true portion of the costs, and funding costs are removed throughout the settlement process. Card has long

been the recognised payment solution for the travel industry. It is convenient, cost effective and has relatively low risk. Utilising a virtual card to address what is currently non-card spend, makes the payment process simpler and more effective.

Q: To begin utilising a virtual card solution, what must the travel buyer have in place?

KL: In the instance of the Diners Club solution, the corporate needs to have a Travel Lodge Account with Diners Club International. The corporate must establish processes whereby the travel manager or its TMC can authorise use of the card, and the company's travel policy must be adapted to encompass its utilisation. We work closely with the corporate and the TMC to enable this.

Q: How do I use the card in the booking process?

KL: Conduct your bookings as normal through your TMC or online booking tool. The request for a virtual card will be embedded in the booking process and is managed between TMC and supplier e.g. hotel. An important point is that the virtual card is a single use option for a set amount. On receipt, issue the corporate traveller with relevant information. Note that all this is done electronically, without an actual, physical card.

Take care, however, to give the traveller instructions on the check-out and payment process. Travellers must verify all bills. If they find a discrepancy between invoice and virtual card, they should pay the difference or request a new virtual card, depending on policy. Note an additional bonus - use of the new virtual payment system does not involve any changing of processes with suppliers or intermediaries – you can carry on just as you have before.



Unisa on **cutting** travel costs

The travel team at the University of South Africa (Unisa) is in the midst of reviewing its travel policy in a bid to save money. **Debbie Badham** speaks to travel commodity specialist, **Xolani Solomon**, about plans to develop effective cost and logistics solutions for large groups of travellers.

UNISA's travel programme requires significant resources to function smoothly. Unlike most corporate organisations, the university is responsible, not only, for its travelling staff members but also for students and a wide variety of guests.

Not surprisingly, this results in volumes of around 12 to 15 travel requests per travel official on peak day periods, sometimes significantly more because entire departments travel together for conferences and events. Travel officials therefore need to be able to handle bookings quickly and efficiently.

As such, **Xolani Solomon's** considerable background in travel is invaluable for the role that he plays in ensuring travel processes run as smoothly as possible.

Having completed a national diploma in Travel and Tourism in 1999, his career began at HRG Rennies Travel as a travel processor. Solomon spent a year with the travel company during which time he became a travel consultant.

Thereafter, he moved on to Worldwide Tours (a division of Seekers) where he focused a great deal on international travel.

Solomon explains that it had long been a dream of his to work for SAA and see the world. Setting

things in motion, he landed a job with Nationwide Airlines in 2003 as a service and ticketing sales agent.

Then in 2004, his dream came true when he was called up to join the country's national carrier, working at the airline's call centre as a customer service agent. "I later became an ambassador for SAA, finally getting the opportunity to travel internationally."

Broadening his experience in travel even further, Solomon joined handling company Menzies Aviation in 2009, where he was exposed to the logistics behind baggage services.

It was in 2010 that he first started working for Unisa as a travel official. Currently, Solomon is one of eight travel buyers employed by the institution, forming part of a team of 10 which includes a manager and receptionist.

Together, the travel team handles all travel related activities, including both domestic and international, from one centralised office. "When I first started working at Unisa travel requests were submitted manually. Then in 2011 we moved onto an electronic system called iTravel which enables travellers to upload requests digitally," says Solomon. He explains that once requests have been captured and travel documents uploaded, these are then passed on to the traveller's line manager for approval – the line

manager then assesses the request in terms of budget and compliance.

Once approval has been granted, the request is sent through to the travel office for processing. At this point the request is again assessed against policy for compliance. "After this reviewing process is complete and we are sure the request complies with policy, it is sent through to BCD Travel who will then confirm the booking. We then issue a purchase order, after which BCD issues the travel documents," explains Solomon.

Enhancing skill sets

Solomon is highly invested in the development of skills that will assist him, not only in his day to day activities but also in his broader understanding of procurement. He recently completed GBTA's Fundamentals of Business Travel course, which he says has given him insight into the importance of the role which travel management plays in the greater business context. "It showed me that there are many ways to introduce improvements and adapt."

"My role as a travel official has exposed me to the procurement management process which has led me to study a B.Com in Public Procurement Management. There is a great deal which travel buyers can do for their companies and I feel that through my degree I

am learning how to get the best possible value for money and produce the best possible service at the end of the day."

Cost-cutting policy

The current version of Unisa's travel policy is quite straightforward reveals Solomon, however he notes that there are a few challenges which the institution is trying to overcome.

Travellers are categorised according to their role at the University – for example executive management falls within its own category. Each category then relates to different sections of the travel policy in terms of the level of travel which is able to be booked. Solomon explains that, at the moment, star grading and car rental groupings go hand in hand with category levels. "The policy is quite strict in that way, but at the same time it's also fairly flexible. We are always able to carry through exceptions, but of course the proper approval process must be followed to allow these."

The institution's policy around subsistence is also very clear and falls in line with the official SARS rates.

Interestingly, Solomon reveals that this version of the policy is under review. "We found that travellers were becoming frustrated with the way in which things were currently run. For example, there are often instances in which a traveller is required to stay in a three-star hotel because of the category in which they fall. However, the four-star offering is actually cheap enough to fall within budget. They are then required to produce motivation to demonstrate



Pictured here the Unisa team. (Back from left) Kutullo Makofane, Masego Motang, Solomon, Azenathi Zimema, Fabian Brouers, Roelien Thomas, Thabiso Matsoso. (Front from left) Lebogang Chauke, Halahala Amos Mbongo, Yvonne Mekgwe.

this if they want to upgrade, which causes a lot of frustration," he says.

"Moving forward we are going to introduce a rate cap for each category rather than attach a certain level of accommodation or car rental," comments Solomon. "We are hoping that this not only makes things easier for our travellers but will also ultimately help save money."

Bulk buying power

While Unisa wields significant buying power as a single establishment, it also has the advantage of forming part of a university consortium called Purco, which negotiates rates on behalf of a number of universities within South Africa. Solomon notes that while this can be beneficial, Unisa often finds it relevant to negotiate its own rates as well. "It's important for us to ensure that we maintain good relationships with our supplier representatives," he says.

International safety procedures

Volatile events across the globe have not had any kind of negative effect on Unisa's travel programme, according to Solomon. He says that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa resulted in a number of cancelled trips, but beyond that things have continued as normal.

The duty of care and insurance aspects of Unisa's travel is handled by the American International Group (AIG). This largely involves the travel information and documents which are passed on to travellers once their booking has been finalised. As this relates directly to the booking process, BCD handles the processing of these documents.

Last-minute requests

Securing best rates becomes a considerable challenge when dealing with last minute bookings. Solomon notes that this is by

far the travel team's greatest challenge. "When we are required to work under pressure we often end up not securing the cheapest possible fare. For example, when it comes to car rental the desired vehicle group may simply not be available anymore."

He notes that Unisa has developed a "last-minute" culture in which travellers tend to find a wide range of excuses for having to book at the last minute. "For this reason we are constantly educating our travellers around the expenses which result from last minute bookings and reminding them of the correct time frames in which travel should be booked." To achieve this, the travel team issues constant communications through the university's internal communication (Intcom) system. "In most cases they simply don't understand the impact that their late submissions have on the cost of their trip," Solomon comments.

The same relates to last minute changes. Solomon reveals that the University's travel officials are frequently under considerable pressure with travellers requesting changes to their itineraries in such narrow time frames that this sometimes even occurs while they are on their way to the airport.

Future developments

In answer to pressures brought about by last-minute bookings, Unisa is looking into the introduction of a self-booking tool. Solomon explains that the institution is also actively benchmarking best practice against other institutions.

While technology has an important part to play in this, he ultimately believes that best practice comes down to good relationships. "It's about maintaining good work ethics with your suppliers and a good relationship with your TMC so that you can ensure your travellers are safe and that you are saving your organisation money," he concludes. ■

PHOTOS: SHANNON VAN ZYL



Why Mozambique is attracting more meetings

In many ways Mozambique epitomises the African good news story. It's hard to believe that just over two decades ago it was still in the throes of civil war. With one of the fastest economic growth rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, it has grabbed the attention of the world. Business is booming and so is conferencing. **Liesl Venter** finds out more.

IT'S impossible to ignore the allure of Mozambique. With its sandy white beaches and aquamarine waters it is breathtakingly beautiful from Ponto do Ouro in the south to Pemba in the north where massive gas finds have recently given rise to much excitement. It essentially means business will continue to boom in this African paradise where major efforts have been made in recent years to ensure economic stability.

With an average growth rate of around 7,4% Mozambique is an attractive proposition for anyone wanting to do business on the continent. "Business travel is definitely on the rise and not only from the South African market," says **Janis Theron** of Mozambique Travel. "It is especially opening up to foreign business markets. And with it we are seeing an increase in conferences."

Conference organiser **Morven Santana Afonso** came to the country 11 years ago with the British High Commission. Having married a Mozambican it is now her full-time base from where she runs her event coordination company, OLE Lda. She has witnessed first hand the growing interest in the Mice sector.

"Mice is a rapidly growing business industry in Mozambique. Much of the attention is on Maputo which is fast gaining the reputation of being a very unique destination," she says. "It has quality hotels and conference venues of a world-class standard, it can offer exciting leisure activities that range from deep sea fishing to a first hand experience with elephants, and at the same time it has a great vibe thanks to the mix of African and Portuguese flavours."

According to Theron conferences and business go hand in hand in Mozambique – as a developing African country with rich environmental resources, it is attracting

some of the world's largest multinationals to its shores. "It is faring very well with regards to foreign investment and 2015 is expected to be a bumper year for corporate travel. At the same time it is also still developing and so the opportunities for business and business travel, conferencing and events are only just beginning."

Beyond Maputo

The outlook for the events industry is very positive, says Afonso, whose clients include international NGOs, donors, corporates, business associations and large international event companies. "For clients the choice of quality venues has expanded significantly and the variety and quality of services has increased rapidly. We are internationally competitive without a doubt."

She maintains that the country is very different from other Southern African countries due to its location, history, people and climate. "Don't just think about Maputo as a destination. For example, Vilanculos has a beautiful conference centre with views over the Bazaruto Archipelago. What's more there are direct flights from Johannesburg to Maputo, Vilanculos, Nacala, Nampula, Beira and Pemba. The options are endless."

At the same time Mozambique provides delegates with the opportunity to combine business with leisure by possibly staying on for an exotic beach and safari holiday.

Top tips

There is very little difference between hosting a conference in Mozambique to Johannesburg.

"The challenges are really no different to anywhere else," says Afonso. "The main

challenge is following up with the local service provider. It is recommended for a conference organiser from outside the country to use a local co-ordinator who has relationships with local service providers. The co-ordinator will recommend service providers with a proven track record, follow up with the service providers on behalf of the client and can communicate in the local language to ensure no miscommunications."

Afonso says with a large variety of conference and meeting facilities available the needs of just about any event can be catered for. "The venues are of international standard and can easily meet the needs of guests and organisers alike."

She advises meeting planners to keep certain logistics in mind, including interpretation as in some areas English can be limited. "Conference organisers must remember to give very clear requests and instructions to service providers due to language differences," says Afonso. "If you communicate very clearly and effectively with the service provider you are more likely to get the response you want. Quality service providers in Mozambique are very busy due to the high amount of work so they always value a client who communicates well."

Also ground transport must be appropriate for the terrain and must be arranged in advance.

Her top tip is to include a local co-ordinator in the event budget who can advise on cultural protocol, assist with language, and who has relationships with quality service providers to ultimately ensure that time and money is not wasted. "It also means you don't waste time trying to communicate or get quotes from unknown entities that might very well not be worth your while," she adds.



PHOTO: LEGEND LODGES

6 MEETING SPOTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Conference and event venues in Mozambique compare favourably to the world's best. **Liesl Venter** rounds up some of the top venues on offer.

The Joaquim Chissano International Conference Centre

Maputo is undoubtedly the conference capital of the country, says **Barbara Mommen**, ceo of the Maputo Corridor Logistics Initiative. "The city's venues are of world-class standard and the conferences that are hosted there are in the same league as those that I attend elsewhere in the world." Maputo boasts several venues including the Joaquim Chissano International Conference Centre. This venue offers its users not only the beautiful view but is centrally located in relation to hotels, restaurants and other amenities such as travel agencies and banks. The JCICC offers a variety of room choices to cater for just about any conferencing need including a Grand Plenary Hall with a capacity for 1000 delegates. It also boasts banqueting rooms and beautiful gardens where functions can be hosted.



PHOTO: TSOGO SUN

Southern Sun Maputo

Mozambique's heritage is clearly visible in this Maputo hotel that recently underwent a major revamp, says Mommen. An iconic landmark in the city, the renovation saw the addition of three conference venues to the hotel which boasts 269 rooms, each promising a sanctuary for weary travellers and working businessmen alike. With its state-of-the-art conferencing and meeting facilities anything from 12 to 160 people can be catered for in different capacities. Screens, overhead projectors, television and dvds are standard facilities while additional services are easily supplied. Located on the Maputo beachfront the hotel is only 7km from the Maputo International Airport.



PHOTO: SERENA HOTEL

Polana Serena Hotel

Considered Mozambique's grand dame, the Polana Serena Hotel is steeped in tradition. Built in 1922, this luxury hotel is considered one of the finest in Africa. Offering flexible spaces that can be adapted to meet the needs of just about any conference or event, the hotel has an experienced team on hand to respond to requests. Small and large groups are easily accommodated with the hotel boasting everything from small executive meeting rooms to its Grand Ballroom with a maximum capacity of 250 delegates. Fully refurbished, all venues are well-equipped with Wi-Fi connection and state-of-the-art audiovisual equipment. The hotel itself offers a range of accommodation options from presidential suites to standard studio rooms.



Hotel Cardoso

This Maputo hotel is ideally suited to the business traveller as it has every kind of facility in place to ensure that doing business while away from the office is not only convenient but also pleasurable. It offers an on-site business centre for guests requiring business services such as printing, copying and faxing, and also has a purpose-built conference centre. "It has modern and well-equipped conference rooms and facilities," says Mommen. Anything from five to 150 delegates can be accommodated in the conference centre that is also fully equipped with the necessary audiovisual and other equipment.

Vilanculos Conference Centre

The beauty of Mozambique lies in its versatility, says **Morven Santana Afonso**, owner of event coordination company, OLE Lda. "While Maputo does offer a large range of venues depending on size and budget, there is also the option of heading out of town to areas like Vilanculos which boasts a beautiful conference centre."

The centre boasts first-class facilities, service and technology which combined with the stunning views of the Bazaruto Archipelago make it a truly unique location, she says. "The venue can easily accommodate up to a 100 people while Vilanculos has an international airport with daily flights from Johannesburg and regular flights from Durban and Maputo. It also has good road access." Furthermore, there are a number of accommodation options available in and around the town for delegates to stay overnight.



Pemba Beach Hotel & Spa

Set on Wimbe Beach amongst palm trees and lush gardens this venue is ideal for conferencing up in the north of the country where oil and gas explorations are on the increase, generating major business interest. The hotel boasts 91 rooms, two suites, eight self-catering villas, two restaurants, two bars and an activity centre. The fully-equipped conference venue can cater for up to 200 delegates at a time. According to Afonso there are several conference facilities in Pemba as well as other northern towns such as Nampula, Beira, Nacala and Tete. "Most can host at least 150 people. All of them also offer exciting options for trips and leisure activities. The venues are also very easily accessible with each city offering direct flights from Johannesburg."



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How to 'wow' delegates

Any experienced meeting planner is familiar with the basics involved in pulling off a successful event, but is this enough in today's competitive and fast-paced business world? **Liesl Venter** speaks to **Zelda Coetzee**, national chairperson of SAACI, about improving your service offering to add that extra pizzazz.

CONFERENCE planning has moved beyond simply ticking items off of a checklist and offering the basic services. According to Coetzee, it has definitely kicked up a notch.

"One could say that it is no longer just about organising a conference but rather about designing it," she explains. "As it's an experience that you are designing you have to take a more creative approach to the services on offer. This requires conference organisers to embrace design thinking principles and to allow for process design."

She explains this does not mean a new checklist of services for organisers, but rather adding another tick box to the existing list.

"So one still ticks off the essential services that have to be provided but you also have to tick the creative box. What about the conference offers the delegate a superior experience and how are you delivering that to the delegate? What are you adding to the conference services to improve it?"

It is important that organisers think about the conference as a process from the delegate's point of view, from the first moment they arrive to when they leave, says Coetzee. "How have you added value and made it all worthwhile? This does not necessarily mean you need to provide great entertainment or special effects. It's actually not through these kinds of elements that one wows a delegate."

Keep it personal

According to Coetzee, improved service is not about impressing delegates with good entertainment during lunch. Rather it is about

delivering a personal experience to the delegates that was not expected.

This could come in the form of simply registering an account with a taxi provider and taking care of each delegate's travel arrangements individually or giving each person the choice of what they want in their delegate bag. "It's all about choice and meeting personal preferences. That is how one creates 'wow' these days. So instead of them having to worry about airport transfers, for example,

it is all taken care of or maybe some delegates don't want a physical programme," she says.

These gestures can also

be of more of a flashy nature. Like installing a signboard at the registration that personally welcomes each delegate as they step into the venue.

"This is not difficult to implement and immediately says to each person: 'We know you and we want you here'. The gesture can be personalised even more by adding a photograph of them," says Coetzee.

It all comes down to dedicating time during the organising process to take the creative elements into consideration. And it is becoming more and more important, says Coetzee.

There is no need for creative consideration to be costly or time-consuming.

"Yes it does require more time from the organiser but there are simple ways in which one can provide delegates with a better service."

By giving people the opportunity to make their own choices one is already focusing on the personal

and providing an added service, says Coetzee. "This could be implemented throughout the event from giving delegates the option of a sit-down meal to rather taking a take-away. Over and above the basic services we are offering choice – something that delegates don't often get to do at a conference where everything is usually decided for them."

Go the extra mile

Conference organisers wanting to go the extra mile can invest time and do research on delegates finding out about their preferences. This also allows for a service where delegates are given information prior to a conference that will be useful to them while at the event.

For example, says Coetzee: "Conference tours are very standard. Delegates generally don't have the opportunity to give much input. But if one takes the time to find out more about them it can be extremely advantageous in the service you offer. In other words if you know a delegate likes music concerts you can then find out all about the music events and offerings in the vicinity of the conference and ensure the delegate has this information beforehand. Alternatively if they are into health and wellness make sure they know which different

exercise options are available to them."

She explains that you are essentially saying to the delegate that it is not just their registration fee and attendance that you want, but that you want to create a conference around them.

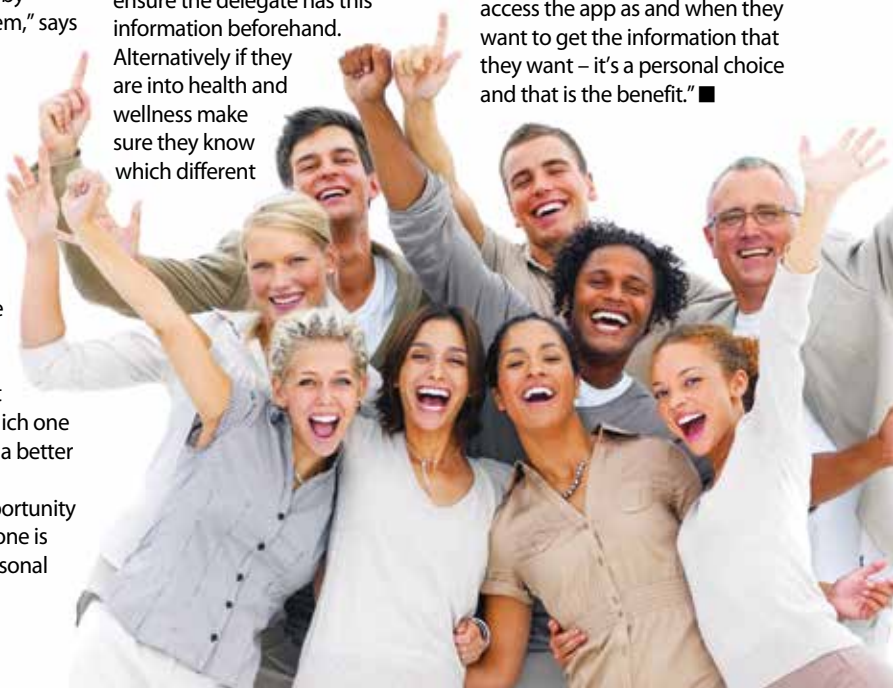
"Personalising the communications, highlighting events and using technology to improve their experience not only allows for a better service but ultimately ensures you are driving delegate numbers up."

Use technology

There is no greater gift than technology in the modern-day meeting environment.

"I don't believe that free Wi-Fi is an improved service – it really should be standard with any conference, but most often it is not. Therefore ensuring delegates have access to Wi-Fi from the moment they arrive is definitely an enhanced service."

Apps are another great way of delivering an enhanced service. "Everyone has a phone and it is a quick and fast way of delivering conference information without spamming anyone. Delegates can access the app as and when they want to get the information that they want – it's a personal choice and that is the benefit." ■





The start of a new industry shake-up?

Has the emergence of a new player on the car rental playing field threatened to overcrowd an already competitive market place? **Michelle Colman** investigates.

ALREADY congested, the car hire landscape is being watched closely following the entrance of a new player, but so far the changeover has been relatively smooth.

Earlier this year when Bidvest's decade-long agreement with the Avis Budget group to represent Budget Car Rental in South Africa expired, Barloworld, which holds the licence for Avis Southern Africa, announced it would take over the Budget brand (operating the two brands as is done internationally). Bidvest, which already owned the fleet operated under the Budget name, launched Bidvest Car Rental.

Says md **Paulette McGhee**:

"While we anticipated a 5% market risk associated with the brand name change in the short term, to date the risk has been far lower and mainly due to system booking interfaces which we are working on, so business volumes should be back to normal far quicker than we envisaged."

McGhee points out that the Bidvest Group is a well-established local entity with a reliable reputation, and thus paved the way for local acceptance of the new car hire brand. Competitors agree and expect little initial effect on their slice of the pie. **Fiona Angelico**, marketing and sales manager of Thrifty Car Rental, says the Bidvest brand is trusted among local

customers who are likely to remain loyal. **Lance Smith**, executive: sales for Avis, also expects little impression on market shares held by the main players in the short term, with Bidvest Car Rental retaining a large portion of the business it enjoyed while running the Budget brand.

Having gone through a similar process in 2008 when it relinquished two international brands (Global National and Alamo) to create a wholly South African-owned brand, First Car Rental believes Bidvest Car Rental has made an effective switch. **Melissa Storey**, executive head: Strategy, Development and Marketing, says: I think that Bidvest's quick adaptation to signage



Paulette McGhee, ceo, Bidvest Car Rental

and above-the-line advertising efforts are admirable considering the footprint

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Lance Smith, executive sales, Avis



Martin Lydall, chief commercial officer, Europcar



Melissa Storey, executive head, First Car Rental



Fiona Angelico, marketing and sales manager, Thrifty Car Rental

affected and the timeframe available in which they had to turn things around." But she qualifies this, pointing out that communicating the 'Budget-now-Bidvest' message to the public not exposed to travel industry channels might see Budget Car Rental perceived as a new player in the short-to medium-term.

Martin Lydall, chief commercial officer of another market leader, Europcar, says it will be interesting to see how many of the Budget customers bought into the brand (as opposed to the company that held the license) and will thus migrate to the new operators. **Mohamed Owais Suleman**, md of the Woodford Group, says Bidvest should not be regarded as a new player as it has retained the same management as in its Budget days, and has held on to its corporate domestic accounts.

The international market could be the trial for Bidvest. Angelico believes the inbound market may shift its support to brands known internationally. Says Storey: "The inbound market sector will prove

to be the biggest challenge for Bidvest, as not only is it an unknown brand to international travellers, but the Budget brand will still exist and traffic will not likely go to Bidvest – unless it has created an incentive for the browser to commit to an unknown brand. I can only hope

that Bidvest is still responsible in its pricing efforts to ensure that our industry collectively doesn't lose all positive, much-needed yield gains made in the past two years."

However, Smith holds the opinion that as the market slowly re-aligns, Budget's strong international reputation will re-establish itself at the expense of other brands.

Other than IT system changes and interfaces, McGhee says Bidvest Car Rental's only

substantial investment has been in the marketing budget to re-launch. Fears that uncertainty would affect staff acceptance of the changeover were unfounded, and the existing management team remains in place. "Behind the scenes there was a lot that needed to happen in a short

space of time. We effectively had three months to prepare and we hit the ground running with only one focus, to ensure a seamless transition for our customers."

Bidvest

Car Rental's brand positioning is based on the premise that irrespective of business trip or holiday, every minute of the journey is important and is encapsulated in the tagline – 'Because Every Minute Counts'.

According to Smith, the Avis and Budget brands will be sold

separately, but with a common fleet, operations and head office support. The South African operation has sufficient fleet to service the need of its Avis customers and growing demand from new Budget customers.

Competitors are stepping up their game. Europcar expects increased rivalry in an already-competitive environment. "Our strategy at this time is to continue to provide awesome service, for each and every rental, at great value to our customers. Having said that, we keep a wary watch on our competitors to ensure we continue to add service and value that leads the market," says Lydall.

While adhering to the same principles, Suleman believes his operation, niched in luxury rental, will hold its place irrespective of the number of players, their size or the state of the economy. "We would not expect any impact as Woodford has one firm policy, being that as long as we deliver a good service at the right price and at the same or superior quality of vehicle, we will thrive."

“Our strategy at this time is to continue to provide awesome service for each and every rental, at great value to our customers.”



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How to choose the right insurance

CAR rental service providers do not provide insurance, but waivers that lessen the renter's risk in the event of accident damage or theft," explains Europcar's **Martin Lydall**. Generally, 'standard' and 'super' waiver options are offered for damage and theft. With super waivers the daily cost is higher, but in the event of damage, theft and loss, the liability amount payable is lower than that of a standard waiver. "The difference between the standard and super excess is considerable and could easily consume the saving made by choosing the lower daily rate," says Lydall.

Comments **Fiona Angelico** of Thrifty Car Rental: "Corporate customers have mixed needs when it comes to waivers. Their decisions are governed by their own insurance cover. If it includes car rental they will opt for rates excluding waivers. Should their company insurance not include car

rental they often opt for a standard waiver with a high excess, as this rate is cheaper than the super cover, where the excess is much lower. In contrast, **Lance Smith** says Avis's experience is that most corporates without car rental cover go for the super waiver product, which means they require the lowest liability exposure available.

Travel Buyer asked **Anthony Courtenay**, ceo of the Ivory Group which owns SATIB Insurance Brokers, which option was more economical for corporates – car rental cover as part of an insurance policy, or waivers. He responded: "In most instances if a company has a number of staff travelling during the course of the year, it would work out more cost effective to

have the hired cars covered by their own company policy, as opposed to taking the car hire company waiver each and every time."

This would also afford corporates an opportunity to set the cover terms and conditions with their own insurers, as opposed to simply

In short, a more robust, comprehensive insurance cover with an excess structure to suit the corporate appetite for risk can be negotiated.

accepting the waiver terms and conditions offered by the car hire companies.

"In short, a more robust, comprehensive insurance cover with an excess structure to suit the corporate appetite for risk can be negotiated." Further, the existing relationship between the corporate and its insurers can be of benefit when claims and claims service come into play.

According to Courtenay, some of

the key points in arranging car hire cover with the company insurers (and getting it agreed with car hire partners) include:

- Disclosing the corporate's preferences for vehicle suppliers and the relevant rights and interests of all parties.
- Stating the estimated hire days or a given annual period.
- Stipulating the maximum sum insured or maximum value of class of hire vehicle.
- Affirming territorial limits where car hire may take place (it may well be that insurers cannot provide insurance cover for hired cars outside of SA).
- Clarifying terms and conditions the insurers place on the cover (for example limitation to cover if the vehicle is used in certain areas or for certain uses).
- Stating the excess structure that applies to the cover (for example higher excess for younger drivers).



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Mobile-enabled systems will lead the way

MOBILE seems to be the device that governs technology plans for car rental companies as they look to the future.

Says First Car Rental's Melissa Storey: "We need to see better builds of mobile apps or just more responsive design in general, to increase traveller efficiency on the move – this means devices, software and communication infrastructure increasingly allowing travellers to stay connected and productive while on the move." Avis Budget's **Lance Smith** concurs: "The biggest development is the e-enablement of systems

with the user touch points being mobile-enabled."

Storey says companies need to keep an eye on the travel behaviour of millennials, which represent a quarter of business travellers globally. "They are

characterised as techno-savvy, hyper-connected, and quick to adapt new technologies, and on the flipside they have wide choices and are quick to drop those that don't adapt."

She says travel businesses must further leverage travel data to build predictive and benchmark analyses. "This means any large amount of structured (semi or unstructured as well) data from traditional sources inside and

outside a company, because big data has unlimited potential to be mined for information and insights, representing a source for ongoing discovery and analysis," she maintains. Data security, too, is vital and preventative measures must be taken to guard client, employee and company information.

For Thrifty Car Rental, the emphasis is on improved booking technology. "Customers are looking for a quick, seamless reservation system that provides them with live time availability. We are constantly upgrading our online reservation system to meet our customers' ever-changing needs," comments **Fiona Angelico**.

“Customers are looking for a quick, seamless reservation system that provides them with live time availability.”

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First Car's Sarah Scholefield

First Car Rental introduces new models

FIRST Car Rental recently added three new models to its fleet. The additions include 100 Toyota Etios 1.5 XS sedans to Group C; 50 Honda Brio 1.2 auto sedans to Group D and 15 Honda Mobilio 1.5 Comfort seven-seaters to Group I.

The Honda Brio 1.2 Comfort

5dr is Honda's latest city car, coming with electric windows all round, air conditioner, power steering, USB/aux connectivity for the audio system and steering wheel radio controls. Its safety features include dual front airbags, ABS (Anti-lock Braking System) and EBD (Electronic Brake Distribution).

Did you know?

WITH the recent launch of the Woodford Chrysler Big promotion, the Woodford Group, which considers itself to be South Africa's market leader in super-luxury vehicle hire, has made luxury car rental more widely affordable. Under the slogan 'all the perks, without the pricetag', Woodford is offering a Grand Jeep Cherokee

or Chrysler Grand Voyager at R1 399 a day with 100km free daily. This, says md **Mohamed Suleman**, is perhaps 40% cheaper than other car rental companies can offer. The group recently upgraded its website, with a refreshed look, as well as improved booking time, now down to under a minute, says Suleman.

Travelport signs agreement with Bidvest Car Rental

Travelport has added Bidvest Car Rental content to its platform, becoming the first travel platform to offer the newly branded content on the GDS.

This follows the signing of a new long-term agreement with the Bidvest Group, which has rebranded its Budget Car Rental operation to become Bidvest Car Rental.

Travel agencies can now book Bidvest Car Rental through Travelport Smartpoint. In the recently launched version of Travelport Smartpoint, booking car rental now mirrors that of the consumer's online experience and allows travel agents to access enhanced features, including pictures and comparisons, all within the same workflow. ■

Europcar adds new Nissans

Europcar now boasts Nissan's new X-Trail 2.0 and the new Qashqai 1.5 Diesel in Group S. These

are available at major airport locations with most units located in Johannesburg and some in the Cape and KwaZulu- Natal.

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Africa's big challenge

Corporate travel into Africa is flourishing. As the market grows, so too does the need for reliable, affordable accommodation. **Dorine Reinstein** investigates.

AFRICA's exciting investment potential and dynamic business opportunities are attracting attention from corporates worldwide, yet many share the same complaint: travel on the continent is hampered by an inadequate, overpriced accommodation infrastructure. This has led to a demand for a more cost-effective, quality service.

Sharon Burgers, senior manager Carlson Wagonlit Travel (CWT), recommends that travellers into Africa opt for hotels with a higher star rating, as they are generally better equipped in terms of security and may even include value-adds such as free Wi-Fi in their daily rates. She admits, however, that this places

pressure on the corporate travel budget. "The daily rate cap allowed on client hotel programmes is generally lower than the room rate at hotels that are acceptable to the South African business traveller."

Claude Vankeirsbilck, chief sales and marketing officer at Tourvest Travel Services, says there is a real need for more quality three-star accommodation in Africa. He believes that travellers are faced with a limited choice, even though most major hotel chains have a presence in Africa's primary business destinations. Added to this,

quality is often inconsistent; the service and accommodation provided at a three-star hotel may vary considerably across countries. That said, Vankeirsbilck points out that there is an increase in the development of hotel

properties across the continent.

Amora Nyawo, executive consultant for Club Travel

Executive, says some hotels in African cities command the highest average daily rates in the world but can't even guarantee constant electricity. "Until the capacity shortage is addressed, the average daily rates will remain sky high."

The volatility of the exchange rate has further squeezed the corporate traveller's budget. "With the rand-dollar rate of exchange, affordability is a challenge for many corporate and leisure markets. That's why it's important to use reliable tour operators with reputable backgrounds and experience. Their buying power ensures bulk negotiated rates so that corporate travellers get the best rate."

Glenn Stutchbury, group ceo of Cresta Hotels, agrees that the rate of exchange is often a major stumbling block. "You will find that generally, hotels across the SADC have maintained their rates and, in some cases, even reduced them, but when the rand moves from R9,50 to R12 to the US\$,

“Until the capacity shortage is addressed, the average daily rates will remain sky high.”



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that equates to a 26% increase in hotel rates north of the Limpopo River, without any rate change for the hotels.”

Major hotel chains have picked up on the need for more affordable options in Africa and have started aggressively expanding their brands across the continent. **Yigit Sezgin**, global sales and marketing director for the Rezidor Hotel Group, says Africa offers excellent opportunities for growth due to its huge natural resources and workforce, improved infrastructure, and a growing middle class. Sezgin reveals that the Rezidor group plans to accelerate its growth strategy into Africa and aims to establish Radisson Blu as the leading upscale brand in the region while pursuing the scaled growth of Park Inn by Radisson, the group’s mid-market brand, in high-potential primary and secondary destinations.

Clifford Ross, ceo of City Lodge Hotel Group, says currently, most

accommodation in Africa is at the upper end of the market. However, quality is poor as the majority of the hotels are dated and in need of refurbishment. He reports that the group has responded to the perceived need for three-star properties with the establishment of new City Lodge hotels in Nairobi, Dar es Salaam, Kampala and Maputo.

Ensuring affordability

Vankeirsbilck says TMCs can reduce the expense of costly hotel accommodation by negotiating corporate rates. This is why it is preferable to book with major hotel chains or with a TMC’s preferred hotel partner, as these offer corporate rates; travellers may find that rates are unaffordable if they book locally with smaller hotels.

Relationships are vital for TMCs that want to help clients find affordable accommodation in Africa. “For example, we draw on our local branches or

our American Express Travel Partner Networks in different countries, as well as our preferred hotel suppliers,” Vankeirsbilck says.

Burgers maintains that the best way to ensure affordable accommodation for clients is to negotiate company group rates both at a global and local level. TMCs will benefit from working closely with local GSAs and tour operators.

However, Nyawo says that shopping around for affordable rates is often not an option. “In African hubs, the use of negotiated rates at well-known chain hotels is mandated for security reasons. Risk levels differ from city to city and from country to country but there are very few corporate hotel programmes that allow travellers to book independent properties unless they have been properly vetted. This largely stems from companies wanting to ensure employees are secure, and concerns around productivity and safe food and water.”

Opt for a one-stop shop

WHEN travel agents and TMCs are looking for the best hotel for their clients in Africa, a one-stop shop with conference facilities, restaurants and all the necessary entertainment options is often a good option, industry players report.

Claude Vankeirsbilck says: “Because of transport challenges and duty of care requirements, most of the corporate travellers that we deal with prefer to stay, eat and conference at the same place.”

Sharon Burgers has also observed the preference for one-stop destinations but she points out that when a customer is familiar with a destination and has a network of contacts, this requirement diminishes.

Brand consistency – a challenge in Africa?

TRAVELLERS rely on hotel chains to deliver a predictable experience. However, brand consistency is a challenge in Africa.

Annemarie Lexow, sales and marketing manager for Travel Vision, says once travellers have found a reliable hotel, they may go so far as to change their travel dates if the hotel is fully booked. This is because the standards of African hotels are often unpredictable. “It’s not unusual to find that a star-graded hotel doesn’t deliver the service and standards travellers have come to expect because of their experience in South Africa. For example, a five-star hotel may only be equivalent to a four-star South African property,” she says.

Although consistency may be expected from upmarket major hotel chains, the same cannot be said for three-star properties,

says **Claude Vankeirsbilck**.

According to **Clifford Ross**, the reason for the lack of consistency is that often each property is individually owned by a local developer, with the chain brand only holding the management contract for the building.

But **Nicholas Barenblatt**, group marketing manager of Protea Hotels, part of Marriott International, says there is no excuse for inconsistent service. “Every international hotel brand has formal brand standards that govern the quality of the physical product as well as the service standards. These need to be adhered to throughout the region, regardless of where the hotel is located. From a branding and collateral perspective, if you align your group with the right suppliers, you can achieve consistent quality in terms of branded collateral throughout the region.”

TB1955SD

Aviation opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES for aviation companies in Africa are limitless, according to **Richard Bodin**, chief commercial officer of fastjet.

He says Africa has 20% of the world's population, 15% of the world's land mass, yet only 3% of the world's aviation industry. "That indicates the size of the opportunity on the continent. In Europe, there are seats for every person but in Africa that figure stands at 0,02 seats per inhabitant."

According to Bodin, Mozambique and Tanzania are definitely up and coming in the corporate travel

world. Zimbabwe and Zambia, two countries where fastjet will launch operations in the coming year, are other hotspots for corporate and leisure travel. "There are 100 buses a day going from Zimbabwe to South Africa. We hear horrible stories from our clients about trouble at customs and about road closures. There is definitely a need for an effective aviation industry in that region."

Despite the opportunities, Africa also presents quite a few challenges for corporate travellers. "Africa is responsible for 3% of the world's aviation, but 11% of the world's safety-related incidents," he says.



PHOTO: SERENA HOTELS

Serena goes for gold

ECOTOURISM Kenya has awarded Lake Elmenteita Serena Camp in Kenya a gold eco-rating. This is in recognition of facilities that ensure the venue is able to function at a superior level in terms of environmental

management, conservation, waste management, resource management, health and safety criteria. This is the second Serena property to attain gold certification since the inception of the programme in 2002. ■

AHA adds to Botswana portfolio

AFRICAN Hotels and Adventures (AHA) has added the Lansmore Masa Square Hotel to its portfolio of Botswana properties. AHA will manage and market the five-star Gaborone property.

Equipped with a 200-seat conference centre and seven meeting rooms, the hotel is a sound choice for corporate travellers. Facilities include an on-site restaurant, swimming pool and cocktail bar, and free WiFi.

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Data security– simplified

It has become increasingly important for travel buyers to enhance their understanding of technology and the way in which it impacts corporate travel. The word 'data' is thrown around a lot, both because of its significant advantages and numerous pitfalls. **Debbie Badham** consults the experts to find out more.



Monique Diez, head of sales,
Sabre Travel Network



Monique Swart, founder, ABTA

DATA might well be a scary subject for a significant number of travel buyers. Aside from the ongoing difficulties in accurately collating and analysing relevant information, data security can be a real cause for concern.

Data collation and standardisation is almost impossible for travel buyers, largely because there is simply no such thing as global data, says **Debbie Duncan**, head of sales and marketing for TraveluXion. "Even the best global TMCs don't share the same technology platforms and, furthermore, the TMC's representatives across the globe are not all owned or even franchised to a brand," she says. "Many corporate companies receive data from a lot of different sources and have to collate it themselves, and total cost of trip reporting is a challenge."

Meanwhile increasing availability of data requires travel buyers to perform risk assessments, security evaluations and audits where they may not have been required to do so in the past, comments **Monique Diez**, head of sales for Sabre Travel Network in South Africa. "In addition to the increase in security requirements, travel buyers continue to balance their requirement for duty of care with employee privacy and confidentiality standards and laws," she adds.

The primary challenges, according to ceo of Uniglobe Travel in Sub-Saharan Africa, **Mike Gray**, are firstly ensuring that banking and credit card information is not compromised; secondly ensuring passenger safety and that passenger information is not abused and lastly that sensitive corporate information is not compromised.

As pointed out by founder of the African Business Travel Association, **Monique Swart**, this is made all the more challenging

by travellers who don't know enough about data. "I think while travelling, travellers often feel quite isolated, so the IT policies and procedures put in place to secure data might not feel as relevant to them," she explains.

Worst case scenarios?

Data security might seem relatively insignificant in amongst the other day-to-day operations necessary to travel management. However, compromised data security can have serious consequences. Gray reveals there is a whole list of complications that can arise, including paying the wrong supplier with cloned supplier information, compromised corporate lodge cards utilised for fraud purposes, abuse of passenger information used for hijacks, kidnapping and ransom, as well as the loss of corporate secrets and contracts stolen from Wi-Fi spots, the cloud or the theft of laptops and mobiles.

"Under the POPI act, companies can now be held liable if a client's data is compromised," adds Swart. "The resulting fines can be quite astronomical."

How can travellers establish secure connections?

There are several different ways to ensure travellers are able to go online without compromising data security. Duncan says one option is to do a SIM card swap, advising travellers to purchase a new card in the country they are travelling to, "but then beware if you use mobile tracking devices," she cautions.

Diez says the most effective way to secure Wi-Fi connections is to require business travellers to use an encrypted virtual private

network (VPN) with two-factor authentication.

In terms of keeping mobile data costs down, Swart advises companies to assess their reports and policies in order to understand when data costs are high and from there develop guidelines around what travellers may or may not do while travelling. "Some companies do not allow web growing, social media and the like in order to keep travel costs down," she says, adding that it's important to ensure data costs are built into the total cost of travel. "For example, you might find corporates using a bed and breakfast instead of a hotel as the rate is cheaper, but if the bed and breakfast has paid Wi-Fi (as opposed to hotels, which often offer free Wi-Fi), then the total cost of the accommodation might actually be more than if they had chosen a hotel option."

Which is the most secure way to track travellers?

According to Swart, compliance remains an issue with travellers sometimes going off grid and making their own travel arrangements. "This is why it is so important for travellers to be well educated about why they need to book within a process that allows the travel desk or TMC to know where they are. This should also be tested regularly, with corporates doing spot tests where they look up 10 travellers and make sure that they are able to reach them wherever they are supposed to be," she says.

However, having to check in with travellers is not the most efficient way to conduct traveller tracking. Diez maintains that online and real-time communication is the most effective way to accurately track travellers.



Mike Gray, ceo, Uniglobe Travel - Sub-Saharan Africa



Debbie Duncan, head of sales and marketing, TraveluXion

"There are technologies that provide services where traveller information is updated periodically throughout the day to reduce costs and data transmission," she notes.

Duncan agrees that the only way to effectively track travellers is through the use of cellphones. "There is no other way to track a traveller on the move – I guess you simply have to weigh up the costs of data versus security," she adds.

When it comes to flight tracking, Gray notes that travel agents are able to track the progress of the trip via the GDS passenger security system.

Is there a 'best practice' for data security?

Experts agree that educating travellers around the pitfalls associated with compromised data security underpins effective data security. "There is no magic bullet," says Diez, "however, it has been proven that end-user security awareness is incredibly important for data security. Regardless of the technology or policy being implemented, any system can be compromised when an end user is careless with a credential or circumvents protections."

Swart elaborates by saying

that travellers need to understand what data security is, how it can be compromised and what kinds of things they could be doing that might compromise data. "They also need to be equipped to recognise possible situations in which data could be compromised – for example, using free Wi-Fi that doesn't have pass codes, or selecting Wi-Fi options that are not known to them."

She adds that travellers need to know what the company policy is for how they access Wi-Fi. In other words, are they able to use free Wi-Fi in a public area? May they use free Wi-Fi in their hotel room, and if they can, must it be a stand-alone wireless modem option?

Gray emphasises that corporates need to have clear policies regarding the management and dissemination of data, ensuring that this is being adhered to by all parties and carrying out audits regularly.

Aside from traveller education, Duncan believes it's also very important for travel buyers to own their own data and reporting procedures. "This should not lie with a third party or be reliant on a third party," she cautions. "The application should sit behind the client's firewall, it should be payment card industry data

security standard (PCI DSS) compliant and should form part of the customer's distribution resource planning (DRP)."

Which are the best tools to assist with data security?

While Diez notes that creating a data protection culture from the top down is possibly the most powerful tool available to travel buyers, she adds that there are also many useful technologies and best practices that can be put in place to develop a successful information security programme.

Duncan is enthusiastic about TraveluXion's end-to-end solution for corporates, which she says is unique and robust, assisting with all factors that affect data security.

Aside from continuous review and monitoring, Gray recommends a number of different data technologies including:

- Sabre passenger security
- Sabre Tripcase
- Enett.com Virtual Credit Cards
- Sabre Gethere online travel procurement system
- Specific use credit cards (i.e. restricted to a particular vendor or vendor type) ■



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1. Australia

Qantas Airways. Return economy fares to Melbourne or Brisbane are from R 5 710 leaving Cape Town and from R5 660 leaving Durban. Fares exclude airport taxes. Fares are valid for sale until August 31 and for travel until December 6.

2. Zanzibar

Andgo.com. Seven-night packages are from R9 990 per person sharing. Offer includes flights leaving Johannesburg, airport taxes, return airport transfers, accommodation in a sea view suite with all meals and select drinks. It also includes a bonus USD200 per room per stay – credit is to be used for massages, bar bills, excursions, transport costs or boutique purchases. Offer valid until June 23.

3. Spain

Azure Travel. Special packages are from R7 795 per person sharing (plus approximate airline levies of R5 580 per person). Rate is inclusive of return airfares leaving Johannesburg, all transfers, four-star accommodation, five nights in Costa Brava, two nights in Barcelona. Value add: free upgrade to breakfast and dinner in Costa Brava plus select beverages with meals and breakfast in Barcelona. Last departure from South Africa is June 22.

4. Thailand

Qantas Holiday / Tour East. Stay three nights,

pay for two nights offer. Three-night packages are from R1 690 per person sharing. Offer includes accommodation at Ban Thai Beach Resort in a double standard room with daily breakfast. Special is available until October 28.

5. Mozambique

Mozambique Tourism. Bahia Do Mar Club, seven nights from R9 690 per person sharing. Package includes return flights from Johannesburg to Vilanculos, return transfers from the airport to Bahia, accommodation in a sea view room on a bed and breakfast basis (honeymooners get a private dinner). Excludes airport tax of R3 350 per person. Valid until December 1.

6. Gauteng

Protea Hotel Balalaika. Long-weekend special – rates are from R430 per person sharing. Rate is room only, including complimentary Wi-Fi, Gautrain and Sandton shuttle and access to in-house gym. Minimum two nights' stay required. Offer is valid from June 12 to 16, August 7 to 10, September 24 to 27.

7. Cairo and Istanbul

Travel Vision. City packages are from R15 666 per person sharing for six nights. Offer includes return airfare leaving Johannesburg including airport taxes, return airport-hotel transfers, four-star accommodation with daily breakfast throughout, three nights in Cairo, half-day private Pyramids and Sphinx

8. Austria

Pure Skiing. Christmas skiing special at Saalbach. Seven-night packages are from R20 910 per adult sharing. Offer includes return resort transfers, seven nights' accommodation with breakfast, travel insurance, Christmas dinner, six-day ski pass, and six-day ski hire. Excludes flights, ski school and entertainment dinners. Offer is valid from December 19 to 26.

tour; half-day private Egyptian Museum tour, three nights in Istanbul, city tour with lunch, half-day Bosphorus Cruise, entrance fees and visas. Offer expires September 30.

9. Western Cape

Bon Hotel Shelley Point. Weekend breakaway rates are from R 2 180 per room per night. Children under 12 stay free. Minimum two night stay required. Rate includes breakfast and dinner. Offer expires December 11. Conference packages are also available.

10. Umhlanga

African Hotels & Adventures – Royal Palm Umhlanga. Winter special offer: rates are from R810 per person sharing per night. Offer includes breakfast, parking and Wi-Fi. Offer expires August 31. ■

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