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Internet fraud reignites bonding issue

Agents need to exploit their competitive advantage.

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE rise of online means now, more than ever, it's easier for fly-by-night OTAs to set up shop and swindle consumers, bringing the industry into disrepute. Should the travel industry be better regulated to protect the consumer?

A consumer approached TNW saying he had booked tickets with a travel agency he had found on the Internet – www.skyblue-travel.com. The agency appeared to be a UK-based company with a satellite office in Johannesburg. When the client was asked to pay money into a personal savings account for his tickets, alarm bells went off and he decided to abort the booking.

In a matter of days, the travel agency's website had shut down and telephone calls went unanswered. Google Street View revealed that the supposed head office address in the UK was a derelict house in London. The website was actually registered to a man based in Durban.

Wally Gaynor, md of Club Travel, believes the industry is not doing enough to protect the consumer and should look urgently into some form of consumer protection, be it a

bond or insurance. "Currently, there is no financial protection for a client booking with an Asata agent, which I think is crazy. I would like to see Asata as a seal of protection in the travel industry.

"I don't like over-regulation and believe in a free market but I would like a consumer to look at the Asata logo as they do with ABTA in the UK and know 'my money is safe with these people'. If we don't implement some form of consumer protection and a big entity defaults and leaves clients stranded, it will result in an outcry and could see the government step in."

Rod Rutter, coo of XL Travel, says Iata and Asata act as regulators for the SA travel industry, as the organisations impose codes of conduct and perform financial checks.

Rod admits that the issue of default insurance to protect consumers is an area in which the travel industry could improve. He says the onus should not fall solely on the travel agent, and that the airline industry should also be held liable. "A lot of our problems in the past have been as a result of financial difficulties by the airlines."

Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, says the issue of default

insurance is one that has been discussed for many years, particularly when a member of the travel sector declares bankruptcy, leaving consumers high and dry. "Asata is currently debating the merits of such a compensation fund to seek clarity on whether this is something that would be suitable for the SA market."

Otto adds, however, that in markets similar to South Africa's, like Australia, default insurance programmes are being removed because they have realised that the concept of a bail-out scheme is not the way to establish a professional industry. There is also the issue of support for a compensation fund, says Otto. "Would a company wish to contribute to a fund that will pay to compensate for his competitor's errors, fraudulent activity or any other error?"

Otto also asks whether establishing a compensation fund falls within the scope of Asata's role. "As Asata, we also need to look at the role the association plays and the tasks it takes on, on behalf of its members. While we recognise the need to debate the merits of this fund with our members, it may not be our role to offer or provide such a compensation fund." ■



Bigger and better!

Peermont is spending R30 million to expand the facilities at its convention centre at Emperors Palace in Johannesburg, with a further 1 800 sqm of conference facilities, including additional sub-divisible medium-sized meeting rooms, a new boardroom, and an additional pre-assembly space and reception area. Emperors Palace was recently awarded 'Best Convention Hotel in SA' in the 2013 International Hotel Awards. Pictured here, plotting and planning, is Wayne Hill, gm of Emperors Palace. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

New immigration rules – the die is cast

TESSA REED

REGULATIONS that require families travelling into and out of South Africa to produce an unabridged birth certificate for children under

18 years old will not be scrapped, says Home Affairs Minister, **Malusi Gigaba**.

The Minister said the department was ready to discuss how the new

To page 2



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SABMiller disposes of shareholding in Tsogo Sun

DEBBIE BADHAM

SABMILLER has disposed of its shareholding in Tsogo Sun. This comes further to its announcement on April 15 that it was conducting a strategic review of its 39,6% shareholding in the property group.

"The exit of SABMiller marks the end of a long-standing relationship between the two

companies," says Tsogo Sun ceo, **Marcel von Aulock**. "We have committed to support SABMiller through this process to ensure the orderly exit of a material shareholder."

Marcel says SABMiller's exit presents a unique opportunity to repurchase and cancel a significant number of Tsogo Sun shares on terms that are expected to have

a positive impact on Tsogo Sun's earnings per share and black economic empowerment shareholding.

Tsogo Sun's repurchase will result in its acquiring in excess of 5% of its ordinary shares, therefore the repurchase will require the approval of shareholders in a general meeting, the results of which will be released on August 5. ■

UAE visas: expect delays

SA PASSPORT holders are advised that visa application and issuing of visas for the UAE will be delayed over the

Ramadan period. VFS Global advises that the issuing of visas at the UAE Immigration

Department is expected to be slow between July 25 and August 2 due to the Eid holidays. ■

New immigration rules – the die is cast

From page 1 regulations would be implemented, not that the law would be withdrawn. "South Africa has international obligations in terms of the campaign against child pornography, child smuggling and child trafficking," he said. "If

we compromise on these things, we would be turning our backs against the world."

The minister was speaking at the official launch of the Visa and Permit Facilitation Centres in Johannesburg. This comes after the Department of

Home Affairs appointed Visa Facilitation Services (VFS) Global to facilitate the application, extension, renewal or change of visas and permits for non-South Africans. Eleven centres have been established in all nine provinces across the country. ■



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Address: Now Media Centre, 32 Fricker Road, Illovo Boulevard, Illovo, Johannesburg, PO Box 55251, Northlands, 2116, South Africa.



Founding Editors:
John H Marsh (1914-1996) Leona Marsh (1923-2003)

EDITORIAL
Editor: Natasha Tippel natashat@nowmedia.co.za
Features Editor: Michelle Colman michellec@nowmedia.co.za
Contributors:
Debbie Badham Chana Boucher
Hilka Bims Caro Malherbe
Dorine Reinstejn
Photographer: Shannon Van Zyl
Production Editor: Ann Braun

PUBLISHER
Kate Nathan katen@nowmedia.co.za

GROUP PUBLISHER
David Marsh davem@nowmedia.co.za

ADVERTISING
Sales: katen@nowmedia.co.za
Advertising Co-ordinator:
Courtney Canham courtneyc@nowmedia.co.za

PRODUCTION
Design Head:
Dirk Voormeeld

SUBSCRIPTIONS
Circulation tvsubs@nowmedia.co.za

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SAA is not cutting corners

CHANA BOUCHER

SAA'S plans to reduce the required amount of flying hours for its second officers will not compromise safety as some media reports have claimed, say aviation experts.

The airline has been accused of putting its passengers at risk by reducing the required flying hours for its in-flight relief, or second officers, from 1 500 hours to 250 as part of its Gaining Altitude programme. But SAA hit back saying that suggestions made about the introduction of the programme being a lowering of standards were "reckless and spurious".

SAA acting chief pilot, **Sandy Bayne**, said: "We have taken a decision to investigate the possibility of putting together a programme that will assist entrants to the airline's Cadet Pilot Training Programme who have successfully completed the initial training. This will enable them to receive more training in-house and acquire much-needed experience in their journey towards becoming fully fledged airline pilots."

Sandy said there had been no changes to the minimum requirements for first officers and that the 250 hours

for second officers was in line with international best practice, followed by many airlines across the globe.

Marius Santos, president of the Air Line Pilots' Association of SA, said once candidates had successfully completed their initial cadet training they would often leave to join smaller operators as second officers to gain the required hours before applying to a bigger airline such as SAA or Comair. "What SAA is trying to do is, instead of having the cadet pilots leave to join smaller airlines, getting them to stay with the airline. Cathay Pacific, Emirates and Etihad also do this.

"This airline-specific training would actually make the skies safer for passengers and not the opposite. It is a method of transformation but not at the expense of safety. By the time they become first officers the pilots will be the most thoroughly trained," he added.

Aviation expert and md of Plane Talking, **Linden Birns**, said: "What we are seeing is the emergence of a new philosophy around the role of a modern airline pilot and ensuring that their training properly reflects the significant technological and operational advances that we've witnessed over the past two decades and equips them with the appropriate skills set that modern airline pilots require." ■



Pictured at the launch are (from left): **Stéphanie Fischhoff** (Indigo's group sales and marketing manager); **Rolph Schmid** (md of the hotel group); with **Carla da Silva** (Air Mauritius regional manager for Southern Africa and Latin America). Photo: Kate Nathan

Indigo rolls out a new property

MAURITIUS-based corporate hotel group, Indigo Hotels, came to South Africa recently to promote its new boutique corporate hotel, The Address, to agents.

Situated in the residential area of Port Chambly, 20 minutes from Grand Baie and 10 minutes from Port Louis, the property features 42 rooms; a Japanese restaurant, Izumi; and La Fourchette, a Mediterranean alfresco dining experience overlooking the piazza. The Piano Rouge lounge bar and the Aqua Bar next to the pool, complete the dining and drinking options. The

Address also has an iSpa fitness and wellness spa.

Air Mauritius has an agreement with Indigo Hotels that allows corporate clients to earn Kestrelflyer Miles based on the total invoice, including extras. Miles are doubled for Friday- and Saturday-night stays. Gold card holders can get free upgrades at La Bourdonnais and spouses will be accommodated free of charge (room only). Other benefits include discounts on massages and VIP courtesy packs in rooms according to Kestrelflyer status. ■

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Changes to business visas: what TMCs need to know

DORINE REINSTEIN

BESIDES new requirements for families travelling with children into and out of South Africa, which has dominated the news recently, the Department of Home Affairs has also implemented a few changes to existing work permits and business visas through its new Immigration Act, which have implications for business travellers working for large multinationals in South Africa.

Kananelo Makhetha, md of BCD Travel, says: "We do have clients who are multinationals and have staff who will be impacted. We take it as our responsibility to assist them to be informed about the changes." He adds that all foreign non-South African citizen staff should ensure that they are fully aware of the new regulations.

What are the main changes?

Visitors' visa with authorisation to work

This visa applies to those who are employed by a company abroad and have a need to work in SA for a maximum period of 90 days. No extensions will be

permitted on this visa.

Visa-exempt foreign nationals must now obtain a pre-approval letter for their Section 11(2) work authorisation from the appropriate South African mission overseas, rather than applying electronically with the Department of Home Affairs (DHA). For these nationals, there are likely to be lengthy delays as the overseas missions implement this new procedure.

Visa-required foreign nationals must apply for a Section 11(2) at a South African mission (rather than DHA) at the same time that they apply for a visa. These applicants may see improved processing times because they will now apply for their visas and Section 11(2) work authorisation in tandem rather than wait for pre-approval from DHA before applying for a visa.

Spouses and children

According to Intergate Immigration, one of the biggest issues, under the previous Act, was the lack of an accompanying spouse option. Under the new Act, spouses and children will now be permitted to immigrate to South Africa on an accompanying basis.

Critical Skills visa

Under the new Act, work visas have seen the removal of two categories, the 'quota' work permit and the 'exceptional skills' work permit. The two permits have been amalgamated and create the addition of a new work visa category – the 'Critical Skills' work visa.

'Quota work' permit holders and 'exceptional skills' permit holders will not be able to renew their work permits under the same terms. They will have to look at other work visa options as soon as possible.

The highlights of the new 'critical skills' work visa:

- No job offer is required to apply.
- It allows the holder to enter and stay in South Africa for 12 months to secure a position.
- It is based on a well-researched list of occupations that are badly needed in South Africa, helping foreign employees and employers.
- There are no restrictions in terms of the numbers in each listed occupation.
- No Department of Labour recommendation is required, so there is a quicker turnaround time.

- Deals with the professional bodies specific to the occupation.
- Can be a pathway to permanent residency immediately as well as an immediate five-year working visa.
- Qualification for a critical skills visa if you qualified as a Doctoral graduate (PhD) in South Africa.
- Freedom to move between employers.
- Less obligation on employers.

General Work visa

This visa will be issued for a maximum of up to five years.

Applications for general work visas will now require a certificate from the Department of Labour confirming that, despite a diligent search, the prospective employer has been unable to find a suitable South African or permanent residency holder to fill the position.

Intergate Immigration anticipates that there will be a longer processing time due to the additional step.

Intra Company Transfer visa

This visa, which is currently issued for a period of two years, has been extended

to a maximum of four years under the new Act. A person already in SA on an ICT visa will be allowed to extend their visa to maximise the four-year validity option. No further applications for extensions beyond this four-year period can be made.

Don't overstay your visa!

Probably the most important advice you need to give your clients is that they should not overstay their visa.

Intergate Immigration says much harsher treatment will be handed out to those who overstay their visa and can result in them being declared undesirable for as many as five years.

All foreigners will need to have a valid visa in their passport or face not being allowed back in to South Africa for a time period of between one and five years. If they travel out of South Africa without a valid visa or permit, they will be declared an undesirable person.

*Source: Intergate Immigration (www.intergate-immigration.com) and BAL Corporate Immigration (www.balglobal.com) ■

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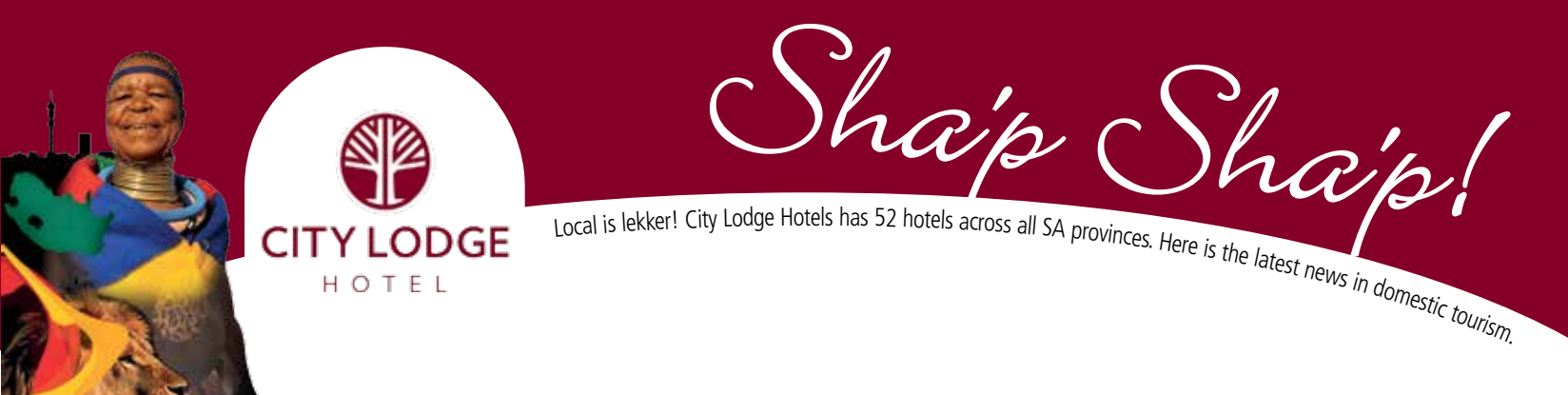
IN THE next few months, Sabre will introduce tens of thousands of new hotel properties into the Sabre travel marketplace through its strategic technology agreement with Expedia Affiliate Network (EAN).

EAN will also pilot the ZoomandGo app, a map-based hotel shopping and booking solution in the Sabre travel marketplace. The app integrates fragmented hotel content into a user-friendly interface that makes comparisons of hotel content easy for users.

Comments **Greg Webb**, president of Sabre Travel Network: "This agreement is a big win for travel buyers. Travel agencies will have more options to present to their customers

and, in addition, more hotels in the Sabre travel marketplace will have the ability to merchandise their products, property attributes and personalised offerings to travellers."

Through the ZoomandGo app, which is available via the Sabre Red App Centre, travel agents can leverage a wealth of data, including advanced map-based search capabilities, to search any destination in the world by street address, neighbourhood, airport code and local attractions. They will also be able to instantly sort search results by chain code, price, amenity and a number of other criteria to find the hotel they are looking for. ■



Sharp Sharp!

Local is lekker! City Lodge Hotels has 52 hotels across all SA provinces. Here is the latest news in domestic tourism.



Talks are ongoing to reopen the track.

Iconic Choo-Tjoe may run again

THE Outeniqua Choo-Tjoe, the Garden Route's iconic steam train that once operated between Knysna and George, may be resurrected if talks between private-sector interests and Transnet bear fruit.

Mike Asefovitz, senior manager: external communications for Transnet Freight Rail, said: "There are discussions around the future of the line with interested parties but it is still in discussion phase with nothing concrete tabled."

According to Friends of the Choo-Tjoe, a non-profit organisation formed in August 2010 to promote

the rehabilitation of the railway line, the service was suspended eight years ago due to massive storm damage to the line infrastructure.

The website (<http://www.friendsofthechoo-tjoe.co.za>) states that in 2012, Transnet estimated the cost of returning the Choo-Tjoe to the tracks was about R250m, which it could not allocate unless the line could be used for freight.

In February 2012, interest was shown by a Dutch group involved with the operation of Museum Stoomtram Hoorn-Medemblik, which incorporates a heritage railway.

Thompsons Africa offers safari-Cape Town combos

THOMPSONS Africa is offering two new safari-Cape Town combination packages following the re-introduction of scheduled air services directly into Skukuza in the Kruger National Park.

"We are extremely excited about what promises to be a much more cost effective, convenient and time-efficient travel solution for our customers," says **Craig Drysdale**, gm – global sales.

A two-night stay at Nottens Bush Camp in the Sabi Sand Game Reserve is combined with three nights at 15 on Orange in Cape Town. It includes three meals daily, local soft drinks, house wines and beer, two game drives and a bush walk per day at Nottens Bush Camp. In Cape Town, a cocktail and

transfers to the Victoria & Alfred Waterfront, Camps Bay and the city centre are included.

The second option is for a two-night stay at Lion Sands River Lodge on the banks of the Sabie River, and three nights at More Quarters Apartment Hotel in Cape Town. At Lion Sands guest enjoy three meals and two game drives per day, refreshments, local soft drinks and a selection of house wines, spirits and beers.

Included in both packages are meet-and-greet services at OR Tambo International Airport, scheduled flights JNB/SZK and SZK/CPT, return road transfers between Skukuza Airport and lodge, and return scheduled road transfers between Cape Town International Airport and hotel.

Sun City elephants to retire

TOURVEST Accommodation and Activities (TAA) will end its elephant-back safaris and elephant interaction activities at Sun City Resort from the end of August to rehabilitate the elephants.

TAA ce, **Gary Elmes**, said after 12 years of educating and enriching the lives of visitors to Sun City, it was time to enter the next planned phase and to release the elephants back into the wild.

Gavin Reynolds, ceo of Mankwe Gametrackers, which merged with TAA in May, said it had not yet been decided where the elephants would go because, although Pilanesberg National Park would be first prize because of its closeness to Sun City, it did not have an elephant management plan. Gavin said once the elephants had been placed in a park, there were plans to rehabilitate them into the wild.

Free WiFi at SA airports

AIRPORTS Company South Africa has launched a free WiFi service for passengers in the boarding areas of its nine airports.

Users will have either 30 minutes of WiFi connection or 50mb of data available at no charge. Once 30 minutes have lapsed, or 50mb of data is reached, users will be able to top up the service on a pay-as-you-go basis.

WiFi can be accessed through any AlwaysOn WiFi hotspot on laptops, smartphones or tablets

that have built-in support for WiFi or are equipped with a WiFi network card.

Users select AlwaysOn then follow the instructions on screen. They then open the device's web browser and are automatically redirected to the AlwaysOn login page. The option 'complimentary access' should be selected.

Users are required to register and provide their email address for verification processes. Once registration is completed users receive their free WiFi. ■



TNW6275SD



DISNEY

Disney destinations are a firm favourite with South Africans. Dorine Reinstein reports.

Orlando resort tops with SA travellers

AS DISNEY builds new resorts and theme parks across the world, South African travellers remain loyal to Walt Disney World in Orlando, Florida.

“Walt Disney World in Orlando is the largest of the Disney complexes,” says **Sarah Whiteside**, sales and marketing manager for Travel Vision, adding that, although it is less accessible and much further away than Disneyland Paris, for example, it remains far more popular than any other Disney theme park in the South African market.

According to Sarah, in the case of the Orlando operation, size counts. “While the other complexes feature one or two theme parks, Walt Disney World boasts four theme parks and two water parks. You could easily spend two weeks within the park and still not experience everything on offer.”

“Walt Disney World Orlando is the most popular Disney product we sell,” agrees **Megan D’Arcy**, Comair Travel product manager. She says the range and diversity of the accommodation on offer suits all the needs and tastes of South African travellers, and there are far more options on offer when

“You could easily spend two weeks in the park and still not experience everything on offer.”

it comes to attractions and new developments. “Walt Disney World Orlando has probably seen the most new developments recently. An attraction called New Fantasyland opened this year. Situated in the Magic Kingdom, the highlight of this new attraction is the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train. It

has also inspired the new Festival of Fantasy Parade in Main Street USA.”

Kay Ellison, product executive for Thompsons Travel, says not only is Orlando the biggest complex with the most hotels, it’s also the best-priced park. Kay adds that South African travellers like to combine a visit to Walt Disney World with either a cruise or a visit to another destination in the US.

Tour operators report that bookings for Disneyland Paris remain constant year-on-year but Hong Kong Disneyland fares less well.

Wendy Goutier, product and contract executive for Thompsons Holidays, says the main reason for this is that the Asian park is not very large and only has two hotels. “People would not necessarily plan a main holiday to Hong Kong Disneyland as they would to the US,” she says.

New Disneyland on the cards for Shanghai

SHANGHAI Disney Resort, the first Disney resort in mainland China, is expected to open at the end of 2015. It is located in Pudong and will include two themed hotels, a large retail, dining

and entertainment venue and an array of recreation facilities.

Besides the inclusion of signature Disney experiences, the theme park will also feature elements

unique to Shanghai Disney Resort. Throughout the resort, classic Disney characters and storytelling will blend with experiences designed specifically for the people of China.

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What's happening at Walt Disney World Orlando?

TRAVELLERS to Walt Disney World Orlando can expect to see an array of new developments in the near future.

- The recently extended New Fantasyland represents the largest expansion in the 43-year history of the Magic Kingdom and comprises the Enchanted Forest and Storybook Circus areas. Guests visit a far-off French village to spend time with Belle in *Beauty and the Beast*; they hop aboard a clam shell to venture into the undersea world of Ariel; take a roller-coaster ride with the Great Goofini; or spin through the sky with Dumbo, the flying elephant. The crowning jewel is the Seven Dwarfs Mine Train, which opened this year. The train is a family-style roller-coaster that pivots back and forth during twists, turns, hills and drops.
- This summer, Disney's Hollywood Studios is celebrating *Frozen*, the animated Disney film, with a daily character procession, sing-alongs, fireworks, a polar playground, ice skating rink and a nightly party featuring a live band, all themed to the worldwide phenomenon.
- New Fantasyland has inspired a new daytime parade, the Disney Festival of Fantasy Parade in Main Street, USA. It features innovative floats, vibrant costumes and an original soundtrack of songs from favourite Disney films.
- Disney is 're-imagining' Downtown Disney to Disney Springs. Anchored by a signature water tower and grand entry, Disney Springs will be home to over 150 shopping boutiques, restaurants and entertainment venues. Its completion is planned for 2016.
- Newly opened in Downtown Disney West Side is Fit2Run, serving both recreational runners and athletes. The United World of Soccer opened in late May, offering favourite team jerseys and other sports gear.



Take the train...

WORLD Travel is promoting a direct TGV train from Paris-Charles de Gaulle Airport to Euro Disney. The journey time is 10 minutes with three trains departing hourly.

In addition, the Eurostar has a direct service from St Pancras in

London to the Euro Disney gate, with a journey time of two hours and 40 minutes. There are also direct services to Euro Disney from other European cities such as Brussels, Lyon, Marseille, Nice and Bordeaux.

Walt Disney World Orlando's array of experiences. Photos: Disney©

SA travellers discover Disney cruising

SOUTH African travellers are increasingly discovering the benefits and pleasures of Disney cruising.

Kay Ellison says sales for Disney Cruise Line (DCL) are growing year by year and are a hugely popular choice for South African families.

"The main attraction is the imagination that goes into the product. The unique selling propositions of Disney Cruise Line are their imaginative dining plans, the separate areas they offer on board for adults, children and teenagers, the shows on board, and the fireworks at sea.

The two mega ships, *Disney Fantasy* and *Disney Dream*, are also the only ships afloat that offer 'virtual portholes' in the inside cabins."

Sarah Whiteside says: "There are decks of entertainment options to keep children of all ages busy while adults can also escape to exclusive areas such as the on-board spa, a selection of romantic restaurants and an on-board nightclub."

According to Sarah, kids love to meet the Disney characters on board and enjoy themed evenings such as the Pirates of the Caribbean

party. She adds that Disney owns an island called Castaway Cay in the Caribbean, exclusively available for Disney cruise passengers.

In 2014, DCL will offer new itineraries, including an expanded collection of European cruises highlighting the Greek Isles.

DCL will depart for the first time from homeports in Venice, Italy and San Juan, Puerto Rico. Also this summer, the *Disney Wonder* will sail seven-night cruises from Vancouver to Alaska, while a special nine-night cruise will call at Sitka, Alaska – a first for DCL.

All Star Music Resort special

TRAVEL Vision is offering a seven-night special for Disney's All Star Music Resort in the Animal Kingdom, Orlando, from August 31 to October 3. Under-18s stay free and only pay for entry to Disney Parks, flights and taxes. Prices start from R25 725 per adult sharing and include flights ex-JNB, Magical Express return airport transfers and a seven-day Magic Your Way Base Ticket, free transportation throughout Disney parks and a complimentary Quick Service dining plan. ■

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Chana Boucher uncovers East Africa's current pros and cons.

Can East Africa become a vital aviation hub?

WITH East African carriers offering flights from their bases to destinations not served directly from South Africa, there is potential for the region to become an important hub connecting passengers to other parts of Africa as well as Europe and Asia.

Chantal Phillips of Ethiopian Airlines, says East Africa is emerging as an aviation hub because of excellent connections and its geographical location. Ethiopian Airlines' network is designed to have "immediate connections from South Africa to the Middle East, Asia, Europe, North and South America," she says.

Richard Bodin, fastjet's chief commercial officer, says East Africa has yet to become such a hub for South African travellers but that the connectivity regionally is definitely growing in routes and frequency. "That can only be a positive for East Africa's future potential growth as an aviation hub for travellers further afield."

Richard says: "Key to this potential growth is government support. We make no secret of the fact that the Tanzanian government's support allowed us to establish our first African

base in Dar es Salaam, kick-starting our vision of democratising air travel across the continent by making it more affordable to more people to fly to more destinations, more often."

Kenya Airways declined to comment on the effect of the new visa regulations on its operations. The regulations will affect not only its direct flights between South Africa and Kenya but onward connections too, as the new visa fees and process also apply to transit passengers.

Chantal says it is difficult to determine whether more travellers will currently choose Ethiopia over Kenya as a transit point as a result of Kenya's visa action, and that this will become apparent in time.

Juan Nel, marketing manager for Africa Stay, believes high fares are a hindrance for the region. "Because of the limited number of airlines flying to the region, competition is low and therefore flight costs tend to be expensive, especially when comparing [them] to flights to other destinations such as Europe and the Far East. Most of the time it's because of high taxes," he says.



Fastjet is opening up East Africa. Photo: fastjet

Kenya visa may boost neighbouring destinations

ALTHOUGH East Africa, notably Kenya, has received some negative publicity lately as a result of acts of terror, the local travel trade believes the country as well as the rest of the region still has much to offer, even for the corporate and MICE traveller.

As of September 1, South African passport holders will be required to apply for a visa costing R750 at the Kenya High Commission.

Sarah Whiteside, sales and marketing manager at Travel Vision, says corporate travel will not be significantly affected by the new visa regulations as this market is less price sensitive. "We do find that people are nervous about the incidences of violence that have occurred in Kenya recently and that this is more of a deterrent than the visa regulations." Overall, Sarah says Kenya is an expensive destination but offers some unique experiences and instances of value for money at the coast.

Carolyn Riddick, marketing co-ordinator at Aviareps, which represents the Kenya Tourism Board, says Kenya boasts world-class meeting places. A number of initiatives are run to promote the country as a MICE destination.

Juan Nel says: "Even without the safety concerns, the effect of the visa will have a significant impact on tourism from South Africa. Kenya is a country with beautiful attractions and I personally love it and all its people, but the attractions they have aren't unique enough [for people to] pay more and go through more effort to see them. I honestly think people will rather look at other beach and safari destinations because of the new visa requirements."

Juan agrees that Kenya is expensive compared with other African destinations but is not the most expensive. "There is not really anything that can directly compare with the Masai Mara or the beautiful beaches of the Kenyan coast, but other destinations such as Tanzania,

Seychelles, Mauritius and Réunion are alternatives clients will look at," he says.

Richard Bodin says: "The burdensome bureaucracy and onerous costs associated with travelling to countries that expect leisure travellers to obtain visas is sure to discourage travel to those countries."

As a result, fastjet expects that Tanzania will see more tourist activity for as long as it has a more liberal visa policy than other countries in the region.

While Richard says the biggest percentage of fastjet's passengers on its Johannesburg-Dar es Salaam route are Tanzanians living and working in South Africa on home leave, there has been a steady increase in the amount of business traffic from South Africa to Tanzania. "Companies see the value in using fastjet to transport workers heading to Tanzania's mining sites, whether they are blue collar contractors or white collar corporate executives," he says.

Richard also believes that Tanzania will grow as a MICE destination. "The easier and more cost effective it is to reach a destination, the more appealing that destination will become to MICE organisers."

As for leisure travellers, Richard says most proceed to Kilimanjaro, the safari parks or Zanzibar. "We have noticed an increase in passengers flying to Dar es Salaam wanting to catch onward flights to our domestic destinations, being Mbeya, Mwanza and Kilimanjaro [and] we're seeing an increasing number of people spending a few days in Dar es Salaam too as part of an overall Tanzanian holiday."

But Richard cautions that, should the Tanzanian Government decide to remove VAT exemption at some stage, the cost of travelling to Tanzania for a holiday will increase and this could affect tourism growth figures. ■



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Travel Counsellors receives Queen's Award



Travel Counsellors is celebrating after being awarded the prestigious Queen's Award for Enterprise in recognition of the company's continued growth and overseas expansion. The company, which now has over 1 300 agents running their own businesses across eight countries, received the UK's highest accolade for business success for International Trade. Travel Counsellors has brought its business model to Ireland, The Netherlands, South Africa, Australia, Canada, Dubai and expanded into Belgium earlier this year. Since it expanded into Ireland in 2005, the company has experienced growth of nearly 120%, with global sales for the financial year end of £385m (R6,7bn).

World Cup fever!

Beachcomber Tours hosted members of the Club Travel group to celebrate World Cup fever on June 19 at the GrandWest bowling arcade in Cape Town. Showing off their sporting spirit are (from left) Kaycee Rich, Lize Du Plessis and Janine Mostert from Special Travel (Club Travel ITC).



Appointment

Janneman Britz has been appointed gm of Protea Hotel Fire & Ice! Cape Town. Janneman was previously gm of Protea Hotel Sea Point.



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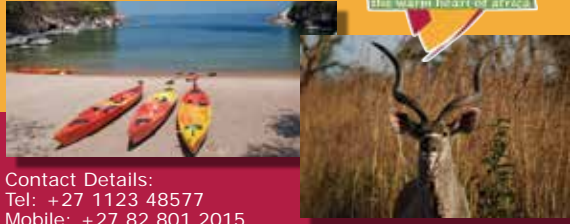
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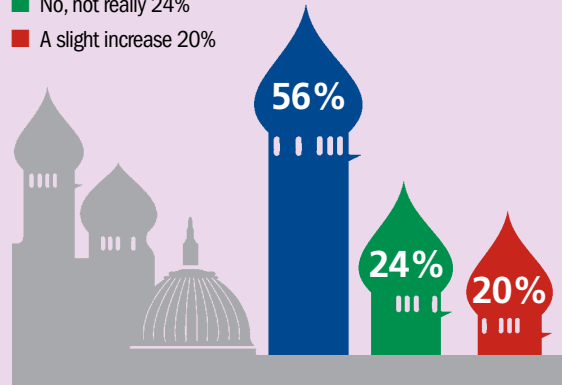
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Gulf carriers in demand

Are you seeing an increase in demand for travel on Gulf carriers via the Middle East?

- Yes, plenty 56%
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- A slight increase 20%



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There's no place like home

SAA aims to capture the hearts and minds of local travellers with its new 'Meet Africa's Favourite Airline' campaign. Through the campaign, the airline aims to create emotional connections with its audience and develop a sense of pride in the national carrier, says Kim Thipe, SAA's head of marketing. She says SAA has more domestic frequencies than any other airline in South Africa, offering 554 flights each week between Johannesburg, Cape Town, Durban, East London and Port Elizabeth. The campaign also aims to showcase the best of Africa and what makes South Africans unique. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



More carriers consider long-haul LCC model

DORINE REINSTEIN

THE concept of long-haul low-cost operations is taking off in Europe.

Lufthansa is the latest carrier that is considering launching a long-haul LCC, following Norwegian Air's transatlantic LCC launch earlier this month.

Lufthansa is looking at setting up a no-frills long-haul airline under the WINGS banner. The new airline will form part of a strategic overhaul to face competition from Middle Eastern carriers. The airline would not reveal details about which routes it was considering.

Axel Simon, Lufthansa's director of Southern Africa, told TNW it was in talks with Turkish Airlines as a possible partner for the operation.

In the initial phase, the airline is expected to operate with a fleet that will gradually be built up to seven B767 or A330 aircraft, with operations likely to commence in the European winter 2015.

It could be some time before Africa welcomes this kind of LCC model, but there is definite potential, says Aasa ce, Chris Zweigenthal. He says the continent remains an expensive destination in terms of operating costs and landing fees, therefore solid deals need to be negotiated to reduce these costs for LCCs.

Chris adds that, generally, low cost means few amenities, such as warm meals and in-flight entertainment, which could prove to be a problem for customers on a long-haul flight. "Will this be charged for?" he says.

Linden Birns, md of Plane Talking, says the long-haul LCC model has been an enigma for quite some time and airlines seem unsure of how to crack it. He says the model seems to be working well in Asia, and AirAsia X seems to have found a way to make a long-haul LCC work. The airline recently purchased 50 A330-900neo aircraft, a new aircraft type that reduces fuel consumption

by 14% per seat.

The cost of a long-haul LCC operation could prove to be a problem. "The normal model for an LCC is to increase the seating density on the aircraft and to cut out as much distribution and passenger costs as possible. However, on a long-haul flight these costs make up a very small portion of the total flight cost and so there is little scope to bring the fares down," says Erik Venter, ceo of Comair.

Adrian Hamilton-Manns, ceo of FlyAfrica.com, agrees the biggest risk is that the cost differential on long haul is not as pronounced. He adds that although the long-haul LCC model is difficult to perfect, Asian LCCs have succeeded in this venture, as well as charter airlines such as Britannia. "As local routes are exhausted and revenue opportunities become more difficult, it will make sense for airlines to explore new opportunities, including long-haul." ■

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