"It’s time to regulate the industry"

TARYN NIGHTINGALE

It’s time the travel industry was regulated to ensure its professionalism and credibility through an officially recognised industry body that can negotiate with government on behalf of the trade, industry experts say.

“I think the industry is realising that regulation is an opportunity to protect their businesses, whereas before they might have perceived it as a threat,” says Otto de Vries, ceo of Asata, who was speaking on the sidelines of the Asata conference, which was held from May 20-22 in Cape Town.

A hot topic at the conference was government’s move to implement a new ‘standard remuneration model’ that cuts all rebates and overrides from suppliers to TMCs without making provision for increased service fees.

“One of the challenges we found in our efforts to represent the sector on policy discussions with National Treasury is the position they’ve taken on the travel industry not being a regulated sector and, as a result, they feel they do not have the obligation to negotiate with us,” Otto said.

Regulation of the industry would imply firm-handling of those who deviate from an established code of conduct as well as a trading licence that would be obtained on certain conditions.

Currently the industry is self-regulated, with Asata recognised as an informal regulator. However, Asata’s mandate only includes members. This does not prevent anyone outside of Asata from operating unethically.

“Regulation would give an association like Asata the teeth to get rid of those that don’t comply,” says Allan Lunz, md of BidTravel, adding that it would clear the industry of all the debates regarding transparency and professionalism.

“Certain consortiums are unfortunately operating unethically as they are driving override revenue, which in my books is ‘dirty revenue’ while not being prepared to take on the risk and accountability that goes with the relevant earnings,” says ceo of eTravel, Garth Wolf.

“Regulations will force the directors of all agencies to become truly accountable for every rand that is processed through their lata licences.”

Legislation and a travel agent board could also help the industry improve on its equity and skills development targets, particularly with regard to training previously disadvantaged individuals, says Wally Gaynor, md of Chloe Travel. “This would attract new entrants into the industry to reflect the demographics of our country,” he says.

“The industry cannot be truly regulated without the involvement of government, an industry authority, who would like to remain anonymous, told TNW. “To be properly regulated would necessitate the industry to comply with government’s terms.”

SAA financials delayed – again

DORINE RENSTEN

NATIONAL Treasury has once again asked for more time to allow SAA to table its 2014/2015 financial statements. A new deadline has been set for July 15. This is the third extension; the airline was first due to submit financials in September last year.

SAA has been unable to table its financial results because it is said to be technically insolvent, needing a R5bn government guarantee to continue to operate as a going concern.

Whether SAA will receive a new guarantee depends on the appointment of a new board. The airline’s board of directors was put on notice by deputy finance minister, Mcebisi Jonas, in early May. Jonas said during a debate in the National Assembly that the airline would only receive financial support from the Treasury once a new board was in place.

Dennis George, general secretary of the Federation of Unions of South Africa (Fedusa), said that he supports Jonas’s statement that the airline should only receive additional financial support from the Treasury once a new board is in place. “It is important to transform SAA and to introduce new ethical leadership on the board of SAA to advance good corporate governance and to root out corruption.”
SA hotel chain announces expansion plans

Kim Emmanuel

PREMIER Hotels and Resorts has announced plans for further expansion in South Africa, with three new properties in the next five years. The three hotels are planned for the areas of Umhlanga, Fourways and Sandton. A site has already been acquired for the Umhlanga property and construction is expected to begin in early 2017, said Samuel Nassimov, md of Premier Hotels and Resorts at the group’s gala dinner at the East London International Convention Centre last month to celebrate 25 years in business.

“We would also like to have six or seven Express Inns throughout secondary cities like Bloemfontein, Uppington or Polokwane,” said Samuel.

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Details of Premier’s rebranding were also revealed at the gala dinner. Each of the sub-brands – Splendid Inn, Express Inn, Premier Resort and East London International Convention Centre – were rebranded with a different colour to represent the different market segmentation. Premier’s Pinetown, Port Edward and King David hotels will all be rebranded under the Splendid Inn brand.

“We would like to sub-brand to get the fair share of the market because right now we only offer full-service, three- and four-star hotels,” said Samuel. He explained that the idea behind the sub-brands is to provide accommodation that is not necessarily high-end but still full-service.

NCL takes on Mauritius-bound resort market

Helka Brins

NORWEGIAN Cruise Line is positioning itself in South Africa as an alternative to land-based resort holidays in Mauritius. “Our competition is the all-inclusive land resort, not another cruise line,” says Nick Wilkinson, gm for Northern Europe, Middle-East and Africa.

This is highlighted by NCL’s new global “Feel Free” brand campaign and “Free at Sea” promotion, which, Nick says, is already resonating strongly with SA clients. Similar to an all-inclusive land resort package, it allows guests to choose from four free cruise services: unlimited beverages, specialty dining, shore excursions or WiFi.

Nick says the “freestyle” cruising concept appeals to younger and multi-generational markets. It includes flexible dining and a variety of accommodation, ranging from studios for solo travelers to “The Haven”, NCL’s exclusive suite-only concept featuring, among others, three-roomed garden villas with private lounges, exclusive sundecks, butler services and private courtyards.

“Our competition is the all-inclusive land resort, not another cruise line.”

Nick says hotspots for SA clients this year will be cruises out of New York to the Caribbean; Alaska; South America; and the Mediterranean. NCL will also position five ships in Europe this year, representing a 31% increase in passenger cruise days over 2015 in European waters. “We believe that our [European] summer deployment and our 2017 sailings direct from the UK will allow us to drive growth across the African markets,” he says.

Three more ships – Breakaway-Plus II, Breakaway-Plus III and Breakaway-Plus IV – will join NCL’s fleet of 14 modern ships by 2019, representing a 40% increase in capacity. The cruise line is also investing US$400m (R5.8bn) in revitalising its fleet. The revitalisation includes an enhanced food and beverage programme and the launch of NCL’s private island, Harvest Caye, in Belize in November this year.
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Mango signs with Travelport

Mango has signed its first full content, multi-year agreement with Travelport, giving Travelport-connected agencies real-time access to Mango’s fares and inventory through the GDS. The airline will use Travelport’s merchandising solution to effectively display its full range of products and services through the intermediary channels in the same way its content is displayed on its website. This new global full content agreement provides the ideal platform to promote Mango’s content to travel agents in an innovative manner, says Nico Bezuidenhout, ceo, Mango. Travelport’s senior director of air commerce for Africa and the Middle East, Will Owen Hughes, says the company is delighted to offer travel agents visually rich and interactive content so they can market and sell more effectively to consumers.

SA hotel group expands into Africa

NEWMARK Hotels, Reserves and Lodges is expanding into Africa with the establishment of the group’s first office outside South Africa and the creation of the Kaufela Collection in Zambia. The new office is located in Lusaka and will focus on SADC countries, such as Zimbabwe, Tanzania and Zanzibar. “The Lusaka office is mandated to develop new territories for Newmark, under either the Kaufela Collection or the Newmark brand depending upon the standard or size of the property,” says Newmark’s director for Africa, Hans Heuer. The Kaufela Collection has already signed three independent lodges (100 rooms) and plans to add another 400 rooms by the end of the year. Newmark is in the process of taking on a new property in Zanzibar and a further 170-room business hotel in Lusaka. Newmark ceo, Neil Markovitz, says the group’s offering will not be compromised: “We turn down more properties than we take on; we’re very specific about the product portfolio.”

More room at Emperors Palace

EMPERORS Palace Hotel, Casino, Convention and Entertainment Resort, close to OR Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg, is undergoing further expansion. Construction has begun on 100 additional rooms for the select-service Peermont Metcourt Hotel at a cost of R112m. The three-star hotel will increase guest rooms to 348, taking the Peermont resort’s total room offering to 757, when it is completed in December 2016.

Turkish launches flights to US destination

TURKISH Airlines has added a daily flight to Atlanta to its network. Flight TK 031 departs Istanbul at 14h05 to arrive in Atlanta at 19h05 the same day. Return flight TK 032 departs Atlanta at 22h45 to arrive in Istanbul at 14h05 to arrive in Istanbul at 16h40 the next day. 22h45 to arrive in Istanbul TK 032 departs Atlanta at the same day. Return flight in Atlanta at 19h05 the same day. Return flight in Atlanta at 19h05 the same day. Return flight

SkyTeam opens new lounge

GLOBAL airline alliance, SkyTeam, has opened its latest lounge in Dubai International Airport. The lounge is in Concourse D, Terminal 1, and is available to Elite Plus and first- and business-class passengers of the 10 SkyTeam member airlines serving the airport. The Dubai lounge covers 960 sqm and has seating for 180 customers. Open 24/7, the new facility offers unlimited WiFi as well as a business centre with printing facilities. Numerous electrical outlets are located throughout the lounge to recharge electronic devices. Other services include complimentary hot and cold snacks, shower facilities, a digital art gallery, a selection of local and international newspapers and magazines; and a dedicated children’s room. There are plans to open more shared lounges across the network, starting with Beijing later this year.

For the record

In the May 25 issue of TNW, it was incorrectly stated that Rosa da Silva is from Dash Travel. Rosa is in fact the owner of Design Travel. TNW apologises for the error.
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ZENOBIA MOOLMAN has worked in the travel industry for more than 30 years and is md of her own agency, Dash Travel. She has booked travel for people in front of and behind the cameras of documentaries and reality series such as MTV meets Akon, MasterChef South Africa, I’m a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here, Power Couple and My Story. Of all the projects, Zenobia has completed in her career as an agent, booking travel for reality show Twende Kazi was the most difficult.

In November 2013, Zenobia was approached by Lucky Bean, producer of reality series Twende Kazi, which aired in Kenya and the UK. The show saw a circle of 25 teams of four, starting in Kenya and ending in the UK. Zenobia was tasked with booking travel for the winners of the show, which included a circle of celebrities and athletes.

Behind the scenes

When meeting with the production house, she says, “I had this huge map hanging on the wall with pins indicating the countries they wanted to go to and pieces of string linking the countries in the order they wanted to travel.”

At this meeting, Zenobia worked on a route that was realistically possible. The journey started in Nairobi, moved on to Addis Ababa, then Cairo, across to Morocco, off to Malaga, Spain then France and finally London. “The first thing I did was work out the budget on a worst-case scenario basis: what would be the total cost of booking an individual ticket for each person involved in the show?” Once she knew how much flights following the planned route would cost an individual, Zenobia could calculate how much she’d save if she cut a flight on a specific leg of the route.

The next step was to work out where alternative modes of transport – ferries and cars – could replace flying. During the initial stages of the relay, upon completion of their leg, cast members were flown home. Once the production team reached Morocco, it became more cost-effective to keep the cast travelling with the rest of the crew until the finale, even though they had completed filming.

And... action!

By February, all of the flights had been booked, production began and Zenobia entered the madness of the movie world. She was in constant communication with the ground handler and line producer so that together they could solve any unexpected problems. “At 05h00 every morning I had to check whether the cast had arrived in time for a flight. If they hadn’t, I’d immediately call the fixer (ground handler),” she recalls. Zenobia sifted through approximately 200 emails a day dealing with requests from cast members. “Sometimes one person would be more famous than the other and would only fly business class, but to stay within budget, some celebrities had to fly economy,” she says, adding that she had to take care when booking two celebrities on the same flight.

Zenobia faced many challenges throughout the project, one of them being booking flights to unusual destinations in Africa. “One Olympic athlete was living in Eldoret because the altitude was ideal for training – I’d never heard of Eldoret before. I used a domestic airline to get him to Nairobi,” she says.

When planning the trips to London she had to submit 75 UK visa applications. This was tricky and time-consuming to execute as she was immersed in flight bookings at the same time. “I paid my son to help me – he would sit in his flat and fill out visa forms and then send them back to me so I could check them,” she says.

With limited Internet connectivity in Africa, WiFi in some regions was either non-existent or too weak for footage to be downloaded and sent to the broadcaster. She had to make last-minute flight bookings so that someone could deliver a taped episode to the editors in Entebbe or Nairobi where there was sufficient WiFi connectivity.

Reaping the rewards

Although Zenobia says the work was the hardest thing she’s ever done in her life, she describes the experience as “perfect”. “I was intensely busy for two months and then I could relax afterwards. I made quite a bit of money because it was a high volume project.”

As commission earned on selling airfares is minimal, she predominantly earned income on service fees. The television and film industry is run by people who work on a freelance basis, she notes, so her services have received a lot of exposure within the industry. “They’ve nicknamed me ‘Vliegengel’ and because most of the producers I’ve worked with operate on a contractual basis, they’ve recommended me as they go along.”

Currently organising travel arrangements for a number of documentaries, Zenobia says she remains passionate about the television and film industry and would definitely take on another project like Twende Kazi. “I absolutely love the adrenaline,” she says.
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Asata members descended on the NH Lord Charles Hotel in Somerset West on Friday, May 20 for three days of conferencing. Asata’s 2016 Conference marked the industry association’s 60th birthday. Kate Nathan and Taryn Nightingale report.

Industry captains commit to self-regulation

On the last day of the conference, the leading lights of SA industry signed the Asata Charter. This served as a public commitment to South African consumers that business conducted by the members of those consortiums would be in accordance with the tenets of the Charter and that their agencies would continue to stand for professional service, ethical conduct and trustworthy behaviour, among others.

The Charter speaks of self-regulation of the industry via Asata and relies on members’ commitment to Asata’s success by supporting its mandate and actively promoting its value to all industry players. The items in the charter are:

- **Brand commitment:** Alignment of the consortium’s brand with Asata values of ethical conduct; professional service; trustworthy behaviour and market leadership.
- **Financial commitment:** Upholding consumers’ interests; being honest; taking responsibility for their constituents; engaging in fair, transparent business practices, as stipulated and reinforced in Asata’s terms of reference and constitution.
- **Ethical commitment:** Upholding Asata’s code of conduct; providing high-quality service; identifying and managing risk responsibly; constructive approach in dealing with problems and issues and confronting inappropriate behaviour and practices, while applying the highest ethical standards to further professionalism.
- **Legal commitment:** Being compliant with SA law according to Asata’s terms of reference.
- **Social commitment:** As good corporate citizens, contributing positively to society’s future. The Charter reflects members’ promise to ensure South African consumers will “Travel with peace of mind” when booking through an Asata member, says Otto de Vries, ceo, Asata.

All signed up – Garth Wolff (right), eTravel ceo, signs the charter with Otto de Vries, Asata ceo looking on.

Corporate travellers crave communication

CORPORATE travellers want better communication with their TMC. In a panel discussion moderated by Monique Swart, founder of the African Business Travel Association (ABTA), panelists Corrie Fourie, executive assistant to the md of Fresenius-Kabi SA; John de Beer, company secretary of Sandvik and Sivenash Naidoo, head of decentralised operations at Liberty Life said that communication between traveller and TMC was minimal and that both parties could benefit from the TMC asking the client for feedback.

“For me, it’s more about value than price. The only engagement that I have with the TMC is at the beginning of the trip and then I lose touch with them and I am left to navigate the journey on my own. I want a service that journeys with me to the end of the trip,” said Sivenash.

Corrie emphasised the need for more product knowledge to be communicated to him, saying: “When I ask: ‘What is the quickest way to Paris?’ can you tell me? Can you recommend an app that could tell me?”

All panelists agreed that they would be willing to pay more for better service provided that the TMC made the effort to understand what the corporate client was expecting. “I’m willing to pay anything if I know what I’m getting for it: the biggest cost you can save me is time. If you can save me 45 minutes, I’m willing to pay for it,” said John.

When asked about their biggest pain points when travelling, panelists wanted greater attention to their likes and dislikes. “Don’t just focus on my booking – know my likes and dislikes; know that I need my suitcase to arrive on time so that I can wear my suit at my meeting instead of being stuck in jeans and a t-shirt,” says John.

Corrie said that he wanted agents to make more of an effort at getting details like his name and title correct so that when arriving at a hotel he’d be greeted as a Mr and not a Mrs.
Use big data to grow domestic bookings

TRAVEL agents need to utilise the big data available to them so that they can provide the best value and service to their clients travelling domestically, and thus grow the sector.

The use of big data was a pervasive theme throughout the Asata conference and in his address, Minister of Economic Opportunities, Alan Winde, asked, “In this fourth Industrial Revolution, what are you doing to squeeze into the space of understanding today’s domestic traveller?”

Speaking at the conference, Melanie Leloup, trade relations manager at SA Tourism, presented the findings of a study on the habits and preferences of domestic travellers, conducted by the organisation. She emphasised the importance of understanding how SA travellers perceive domestic travel and said that data could be used to grow the domestic travel industry.

The data gathered from the study has helped SA Tourism identify the behaviours and expectations of SA travellers, which are then used as indicators of where value can be added to domestic clients’ trips and thus grow the sector, says Melanie.

Key findings in the study revealed that although SA travellers want to travel domestically, there is not enough information available to them about what the country has to offer. Affordability is top of mind for SA travellers and some want the option of paying for their holiday in instalments. Because travel is a way for South Africans to reward themselves, they want holidays that provide opportunities to refocus and reflect.

The Minister said that industry players have to start realising that big data is a mechanism the industry needs to engage with, and use it to ensure they add value for their clients. “Because if it’s not valuable, you’re not going to make any money,” he added.

SA Tourism is in the process of engaging big data as a driver for growth in the tourism industry, said the Minister.

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Lidia Folli (Tourvest), last year’s winner of the Diners Asata award for Exceptional Commitment, hands the trophy to 2016 winner, George Argyropoulos (Cruises International).

Thanks for a wonderful gala dinner and entertainment, SAA! (From left) Rahab Singwane (Travel Adventures Int’l), with Koos Mhlongo (Mango) and Yvette Mayime-Ngobeni (Travel Adventures Int’l).
Thank you Botswana!

Travelport hosted its Botswana Showcase and Gala Dinner on May 11. Darise Foster attended as a guest.

The Grand Palm Hotel in Gaborone was THE place to be for the local travel trade as Travelport hosted its annual Botswana Showcase and Gala Dinner. More than 100 travel agents and suppliers came together in Africa-themed attire to celebrate the trade’s success during the last financial year, while learning more about various supplier offerings. Master of ceremonies for the night, Alex Granger, opened the evening in song before giving an inspirational talk that looked at ways of becoming a top performer. Travel agency managers then broke away to hear Lance Brogden, ceo of Bastion Reinsurance Brokerage, provide clarity and answer frequently asked questions on its Default Insurance Programme.

A networking dinner was followed by the awards ceremony, where 15 awards were handed out to Botswana’s top performing agents and agencies, while some attendees won lucky draw prizes.

Galaxy Travel won the award for Smartpoint Adoption Photo: Darise Foster

And the winners are...

Top Performer and Producer
- Vintage Travel
- Travel Star
- Skylink Travel
- Travelwise
- Harvey World Travel
- Concorde Travel

Most Improved Agency
- Lucky Sky Travel Agency
- Spring Travel
- Skyways Travel
- AT&T

Smartpoint Adoption (Agency)
- Galaxy Travel
- Seipone Modisathebe

Industry Pioneer
- Travel House
- Gayathri Ananthakrishnan

Top Consultant
- Travelwise

Beyond Air Attachment
- Travelwise

Vintage Travel walked away with the big award of the night: Top Performer and Producer for 2015/2016 Photo: Darise Foster

Galaxy Travel won the award for Smartpoint Adoption Photo: Darise Foster

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Where do the opportunities lie?

Trends within the local car rental space, which reflect changes within the travel industry at large, indicate a need for agents to pursue opportunities beyond corporate travel.

The South African car rental industry is made up of four major segments – corporate/government, foreign inbound, domestic leisure and insurance replacement. According to the Southern African Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association (Savrala), these segments account for 36%, 21%, 29% and 14% of the total car rental industry respectively.

In an industry which generated R5bn in 2015 alone, the foreign inbound and domestic leisure segments showed promising growth last year, increasing in revenue by 11% and 4.5% respectively.

However, the corporate/government sector has shown negative growth of -3%, presenting both the car rental industry and agents with a significant challenge.

“Most TMCs in South Africa focus on corporations and do very little leisure business,” says Lance Smith, executive of sales at Avis Budget. “But corporates are cutting back on their overall travel itineraries. This trend is not exclusive to car rental.”

“It is now time for agents to identify the opportunities across the various segments of travel and get involved there,” he adds.

Consider other markets

For instance, conferencing and events remain a lucrative opportunity for agents, says Lance. Similarly, domestic leisure travel has delivered the biggest growth opportunity for the entire travel industry, says Bidvest Car Rental md, Paulette McGhee.

Agents should also take note of the emerging middle class. Melissa Storey, executive head of strategy, development and marketing at First Car Rental, told TNW that approximately 8.5m South Africans are considered “middle class”. “This is the primary growth market across our country,” she says.

According to Melissa, the middle class is bogged down by issues of expanding their assets beyond their means. “Our industry requires credit-worthiness in the form of a credit card with available credit. So even though South Africa’s middle class may be expanding, the spiralling debt is threatening further growth in the car rental industry,” she says.

“Even though we see our own customer base falling more into line with population ratios, it is gradual and not nearly as fast-paced as it should be,” adds Melissa.

In order for the middle-class market to grow at a faster rate, Lance says, it should be presented with enticing value propositions. “A lot of travel indicated in this market is VFR related. Often these customers would not rent a car or stay in a hotel. As such, it’s about building value propositions that would make sense for those people and therefore attract them, rather than offering a generic pitch.”

Travel agents will always add value in a true consultancy role, adds Melissa, whether in business or leisure travel.

Primary rental segments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corporate/Government</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Inbound</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Leisure</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insurance Replacement</td>
<td>14%</td>
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</tbody>
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What are the markets doing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segment</th>
<th>Growth in Revenue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Foreign Inbound</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domestic Leisure</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate/Government</td>
<td>-3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Savrala

There are 525,949 minutes in a year and at First Car Rental, every minute counts.

Since the inception of car hire in 1916, car hire companies have been trying to set themselves apart by brand ‘splashing’ airports and such, when in truth, what matters the most is, customer service.

*Rounded-up value. Actual: 365.242 days in a year = 525,948.48 min.
Tech will transform rental experience

THE car rental industry is adapting in order to cater to traveller demands and change needs to come in the form of relevant technologies, says Avis Budget’s Lance Smith. “Customers are demanding to be able to interact with car rental companies via mobile and that is right from point of reservation to point of payment and (probably even more importantly) while renting. Even at the point of picking up cars, a lot of customers are asking: ‘why do I have to stand in queues? Why can’t I go straight to the car?’” says Lance.

To address these demands, the industry has identified that the mobile phone is unique to the user and can therefore be used to pick the vehicle up directly from the car lot, without having to go to kiosks.

According to Melissa Storey, 40% of First Car Rental’s direct customers are using smartphones to search, book, contact the company, read newsletters and use mobile apps. As such, First Car Rental has already introduced the First Car Rental Show&Go Mobile Checkout Programme. Designed for business travellers, this mobile technology allows customers to go from airport arrivals straight to their rental car, bypassing the branch. Using a mobile device, the agent recognises the customer due to photo identification from their loyalty card 2D snap, and checks the renter out in less than a minute.

The First Car Rental Show&Go facilities are currently available at OR Tambo, Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, King Shaka, George and East London Airports.

The car rental industry is also investigating ways to enable customers involved in an accident to complete claim forms and record damage on their mobile phones, without having to go back to the station to pick up forms, says Lance.

“The toughest interaction between car rental companies and their customers – the vehicle check – will also be transformed in the future.”

Lance Smith
Corporate travel agents should welcome technological advancements in the car rental industry with regards to mobile because it will help them meet the needs of their customers, he adds. “For instance, a future development in the industry will see booking confirmation go straight to the cellphone of the customer. This will then be used to open and close the car itself,” he says.

Similarly, the toughest interaction between car rental companies and their customers – the vehicle check – will also be transformed in the future. “I think the technology that a lot of car rental companies are looking at now is to the development of 360-degree photographic booths so that when customers pick up their vehicles, they can drive through an electronic booth which will record all damage and condition of the car, then when they bring the car back, they drive through a similar booth and those two pictures should be matched and the conditions of the car noted.”

SOME car hire companies, such as Europcar, have responded to requests from travellers to minimise time spent at the rental desk through means outside of technology.

Europcar’s Ready2Go service allows us to sign our clients up so that by the time they get to the desk, they simply pick up the keys for their car, eliminating the need to sign any documents,” one agent told TNW. This benefits corporate travellers hugely because they no longer need to stand in long queues with leisure and international travellers, while individual travellers can sign up for the service on the Europcar website, the agent said.

Every minute a memory.

Bidvest Car Rental is proudly South African. That’s why we are inviting you to go out and explore the beauty of our country, whenever you can. With our premium service in 120 locations, we’ve got you covered, wherever the road takes you.

Bidvest Car Rental

Because every minute counts.
New payment methods for emerging markets

CLIENTS are seeking alternative ways to pay car rental companies. “In developing countries particularly, the vast majority of the population do not have credit cards, so they are requiring us to provide means for people with debit cards to rent cars. And that is something that the industry is working towards,” says Avis Budget’s Lance Smith.

The big issue at present is risk, he says. “We would need to take large deposits and should nothing happen to the car, we would need to refund the money back to the customer.” This would need to be done using dual-channel cards. While some individuals already own dual-channel cards, the majority still use single-channel cards to complete payments, making it difficult for the car rental industry to introduce any major changes at present, says Lance. He adds, however, South African banks are moving toward introducing dual-channel payment cards. “As soon as the banks enable dual-channel cards, we will be able to refund money back onto debit cards. I see this happening in the next three years.”

Remind your travellers

PAULETTE McGhee, md of Bidvest Car Rental rounds up her four top car rental tips for agents to advise their travellers:

1. Travellers have the option of hiring a GPS from the Bidvest Car Rental counters if they are unsure of their directions.
2. The longer the car is rented for, the less the traveller will pay.
3. When possible, consider weekend rates which are extremely competitive.
4. Always be on the lookout for the latest specials on the Bidvest Car Rental website for casual renters.

TRAVELLERS are able to search for a vehicle, get a quote and book a car in three easy steps using First Car Rental’s rent-on-the-go mobile apps, which are available for Android smartphones and tablets. The car rental company launched an iOS app for iPhones and iPads in September last year. The First Car Rental apps for iPhones and Smartphones allow customers across South Africa to modify and cancel reservations straight from their device. The apps also allow renters to view the fleet, send a message to customer services, call central reservations, find First Car Rental branches and, for account holders, log in to their corporate weblink account. The app also shows branch opening times and contact details.
CAR RENTAL

Expect increases in car rental rates

DUE TO tough trading conditions as well as vehicle pricing inflation, customers can expect to see greater than CPI rate increases going forward. “Vehicle pricing inflation of 20% needs to be recovered via pricing to the customer as the current environment is not sustainable,” Bidvest Car Rental md, Paulette McGhee told TNW.

To make matters worse, consumers are trying to curb spending. “The rand/dollar exchange rate, the price increase of most vehicle brands (and the increase in the interest rate as a result), together with the economic downturn in South Africa hit every business and consumer hard and the first avenue where spending is curbed is often travel,” says First Car Rental’s Melissa Storey.

To alleviate the situation, car rental companies will likely introduce products which allow customers to rent a car for a few hours, rather than an entire day, says Avis Budget’s Lance Smith.

“Traditionally, car rental companies bill per day, but customers have asked for more convenience around renting cars; i.e. renting a car for an hour or two and not for a day and this initiative will be introduced to the South African market in the not-too-distant future,” he says.

Did you know?

Budget Car Rental offers special weekend rates for the Western Cape. Travellers can save up to 5% on all pre-paid rentals. These rates are valid from Thursday at 12h00 to Monday at 23h59. The 5% discount does not apply to the R73 Rental Contract Fee which is included in the quotation.

Top tips for agents

PAMELA Eggleton, manager and senior consultant at Harvey World Travel Port Shepstone, offers the following tips for agents when booking car rental:

1. Book the type of car that best suits the travellers’ needs in terms of the length of stay.
2. Compare unlimited and limited kilometre options; i.e. if the traveller will only use 100km per day, some rental companies offer good rates while unlimited is preferable for international travel.
3. Strongly advise your clients that insurance cover is of the utmost importance, especially when travelling overseas. “They may think they are saving a few pennies by taking out limited insurance, but if they are hit with an unforeseen excess cost, the those few penny savings may amount to thousands of rands,” she says.
4. “Agents should consider using a car hire broker for international bookings,” Pamela says. “It is important to have that 24-hour support system, and it’s all done via a reservation portal.”
5. Clients should not take out more insurance than they need. “Sometimes after long flights, clients are bombarded with extra insurance without them really wanting it and - before they know it - their credit cards are debited for a horrendous amount.”

Win with First Car Rental!

FIRST Car Rental is offering agents and travellers the chance to win a holiday in the Drakensberg or Cape Town. Visit the First Car Rental website, click on the ‘competitions’ tab and answer one simple question to stand a chance of winning a prize valued at approximately R16 000. The prize includes Group C car hire from First Car Rental for three days as well as two accommodation options courtesy of Anytime Holidays: either three nights’ mid-week, out-of-season accommodation for two people sharing in a self-catering unit at Cayley Lodge near Central Drakensberg, or three nights’ mid-week, out-of-season accommodation for two people to Cape Town or King Shaka International Airport, depending on the accommodation option the winner selects.

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Budget and Go Because... Rewards are meant to be enjoyed.

Book your customers’ car rentals with Budget on qualifying rate codes and we’ll give you ClubRed Roses that can be redeemed for eBucks and exchanged for lots of other cool things - like your own rewarding holiday.

For more information visit clubred.co.za
Obituary
SUSAN RETNAARD

BILLY Gallagher, retired director of Tsogo Sun, passed away peacefully in his sleep on May 19 at his home in Johannesburg at the age of 67. A legend in the local and international culinary industry, Billy raised the profile of chefs to a profession in South Africa through his work with the South African Chefs Association and the World Association of Chefs Societies. He served terms as president and was also named honorary life president of both associations.

Born in a slum in Jarrow, north of England on August 17, 1948, he officially started working in the pot sink of The Bay Hotel in Seaburn the day after he turned 15 and fell in love with a life in kitchens. He had a remarkable career, working at the renowned

Billy Gallagher
Dorchester Hotel in London before coming to South Africa as a young chef in his 20s, with his pregnant wife Linda, to work at The Elizabeth Hotel in 1973. Hard work, dedication and culinary and business flair resulted in a steady rise up the ranks, to his joining the executives of Tsogo Sun, all captured in frank detail in his memoirs, Lettuce and a Lady’s Breast, published in 2015. The devastating events of the evening of March 7, 2000, when he was shot in a botched hijacking at 20h00 on his way home, rendered him a quadriplegic and confined to a wheelchair, ending his cooking career. However, after nearly a year of rehabilitation in the UK, he returned to South Africa and continued working full-time for Tsogo Sun, eventually moving from food and beverage to communications and PR.

As a natural nurturer of professional relationships locally and around the world (he had close on 5 000 friends on Facebook alone) and the driving force behind major initiatives such as the World Chefs Tour Against Hunger, Billy was mentor, friend and colleague to countless people. He is survived by his wife, Linda, and his sons Mark and Ian and their wives, plus his three precious grandchildren.

Appointments

Ryan Ruthven has been promoted to the newly-created position of divisional director: IT at City Lodge Hotel Group, effective July 1. He is currently head of IT at the City Lodge Hotel Group, a position he has held since July 2013. Ryan will now be a member of the group’s executive committee. A BCom Honours (Informatics) graduate from the University of Johannesburg, he was previously principal consultant at Mobius Consulting and an associate director at accounting and business advisory firm, KPMG.

Secretory to General Manager Central and Southern Africa
Perform general secretarial and administration duties. Previous airline and secretarial experience preferred. Email: minhua_mak@singaporeair.com.sg

Junior Marketing Coordinator
Prepare monthly revenue statistics. Prepare fare sheets and file fares. General administration work for the marketing department. Keep track of promotional budget. IT coordinator. 3 - 4 years previous airline or travel agency experience preferred with basic understanding of airfares and tariffs. Strong Excel and analytical skills is a must. Above average IT knowledge. Email: sally_george@singaporeair.com.sg

Product & Marketing Manager – S/Suburbs, Cape Town
Quantum Recruitment Group
Fantastic Southern Africa product knowledge & 6+ years’ tourism experience required by Safari Specialists. Excellent marketing & networking skills. Email: lee@quantex.co.za

Finance Manager – Johannesburg
Lee Botti & Associates
Industry related experience beneficial, knowledge of SARS, payroll, budgets etc. Join the leaders! Salary R25 000. Email: catherinep@nowjobs.co.za

Business Development Executive – Bloemfontein
Flight Centre Business Travel
Minimum three years’ new business sales experience within a B2B corporate sales environment, with the ability to work towards targets and goals. Email: Leigh.bouthill@flightcentre.co.za

Business Development Executive – Rosebank
Club Travel
Club Travel Corporate is expanding and recruiting for a Business Development Executive. Business development experience with ability to develop and grow corporate sales. Email: careers@clubtravel.co.za

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SAA financials delayed

From page 1

Meanwhile, there have been no further announcements with regard to the proposed merger of SAA, SA Express and Mango or a suggested minority partner for the airlines. Treasury was quoted in Business Day as saying it was finalising the terms of reference to issue a tender for advisers to give recommendations on the merger.

SAA boosts Mauritius flights

SAA will add an additional flight to Mauritius from July 20, due to an increase in demand.

“We have experienced a significant increase in South Africans wanting to travel to Mauritius. For the period January to December 2015, the number of South Africans travelling to Mauritius grew by 9.5%, passing the threshold of 100 000 passengers a year”, says Menon Ramasawmy, SAA manager for Mauritius and Indian Ocean Islands.

The additional flight will bring the route to double daily on four days of the week (Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday), growing the schedule from 10 to 11 flights per week.

‘It’s time to regulate the industry’

From page 1

requirements for regulation. This, however, does not mean government would control the trade. An independent body could undertake the mandate as long as it were to put a proposal to government outlining the merits and justifications for doing so.” Asata will be exploring the implications of a regulated industry and what this would mean for the trade over coming weeks. “We hope to have a framework soon,” says Otto. “We’d like to move quite quickly on this because we would like the sector to make a decision on whether they want us to pursue this on their behalf or not.”

Bank systems hinder French visa applications

DARISE FOSTER

A BSA bank is considering changing certain processes, as clients are having difficulty applying for French visas because their bank statements are in Afrikaans.

One agent told TNW her client had to withdraw an application for a French visa because the Capago office in Johannesburg said the French consulate would not accept bank statements that were in Afrikaans.

On requesting that ABSA change the bank statement from Afrikaans to English, the client was told by the bank that the statement could not be changed without re-doing the client’s Financial Intelligence Centre Act (FICA) validation, “which is something most clients refuse to do because this can take ages, in some cases,” the agent said.

Absa Retail and Business Banking ce, Jan Moganwa, confirmed that, currently, it was necessary for an individual’s FICA validation to be re-done if the language used on a bank statement needed to be changed. “When the language indicator is updated, the system will validate if the address corresponds with the language selected. However, if the address and language do not correspond, an error message will be displayed to update the address field. This will in turn will require the customer to re-do their FICA attestation. We can unfortunately not switch this validation off,” Jan said, adding that the FICA validation process is system generated and fully automated.

Absa told TNW the incident has highlighted a possible area where it could enhance its FICA attestation process and that it may investigate the possibility of building in some permutations within its validation rules going forward. “Our customers are the heart of our business and we are committed to making every interaction they have with our bank as easy and convenient as possible,” Jan said.

Meanwhile, visa application officer at Capago, Zandile Mayekiso, told TNW: “Bank statements in Afrikaans need to be accompanied by a signed and stamped visa letter from the bank, on the bank letterhead, which should be in English, confirming the account holder has enough funds to travel. This requirement is applicable to all Capago offices.”

Minor Hotels bags iconic Zambian property

MINOR Hotels has acquired full ownership of the Royal Livingstone Hotel in Zambia. The hotel group entered into a strategic partnership with Sun International in August 2014 to own 50% of The Royal Livingstone Hotel. Minor Hotels has now acquired the remaining 50% and will fully operate the hotel.

As part of the acquisition, Minor Hotels is rebranding the Royal Livingstone by adding the hotel to its core luxury Anantara portfolio. The five-star, 173-room hotel will be known as Minor Hotels’ full acquisition of the Royal Livingstone Hotel and the property’s rebranding to join the luxury Anantara portfolio gives us an opportunity to increase growth for the property by maximising the strength of the Anantara brand and by bringing new thinking into running the business. With this comes increased international exposure and smoother operations,” says Richard Hawkins, Minor Hotels’ regional director for Southern Africa.

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Minor Hotels adds iconic Zambia hotel

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Domestic travel: room to improve

What percentage of your revenue comes from booking domestic travel?

- Less than 10%  39%
- 10-25%  27%
- 26-50%  16%
- More than 50%  18%