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# Govt plans DIY bookings

SARAH ROBERTSON

**T**REASURY is requesting information from the travel trade to inform its plan to centralise all government bookings under a one-size-fits-all online travel booking solution.

TNW understands that submissions close on October 5 and that this will be followed by a tender to build the new system.

The online travel solution must provide a fully integrated, complete, easy-to-use and scalable platform to create, approve, book, manage, integrate and distribute all types of travel products and services, says the request for information (RFI).

The RFI also states that the system should be fully owned by government, offering B2B, B2C and B2B2C booking options.

While TMCs have responded positively to the development, the document is somewhat critical of TMCs. It says the conflicting priorities of TMCs are one of government's major concerns due to undisclosed revenue streams that are earned through incentives, rebates and commissions.

It adds: "Uncontrolled travel spend is largely caused by the reactive manner in which government

departments manage travel. In most cases, departments request third-party TMCs to arrange their travel requests without being able to effectively assess the efficiency of the services being rendered by the TMC before expenditure takes effect."

According to the document, government aims to use the tool to reap economies of scale for the estimated annual R10 billion spent on

travel. The system should also reduce unauthorised and wasteful expenditure, reduce outstanding industry debt, improve compliance with Treasury regulations and offer more data spend visibility.

Government travel and subsistence make up an average of 17,7% of government budgets and is currently growing at 5,5% per annum. Government wants

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## Fastjet's Tanzania ops hang in the balance

TESSA REED

FASTJET PLC has taken the decision to cease funding Fastjet Airlines Limited, its subsidiary in Tanzania, a move that could see the airline's operations in Tanzania cease.

**"Continued losses could mean ceasing operations in the country."**

When reporting its interim results for the six months ending June 2018, fastjet said: "Recent changes in the competitive landscape in Tanzania have caused the Board to evaluate fastjet's Tanzanian operations and the consequential financial

impact of continued losses in this operation, which could include ceasing operations in the country."

In the statement, fastjet PLC also warned that it needed additional funding by the end of October to enable it to continue operating.

However, fastjet ceo, **Nico Bezuidenhout**, quickly reassured the market that he was confident funds would be raised. "Having ring-fenced the funding obligation as far as Tanzania is concerned, the fastjet business is potentially in a better position than it has ever been before." He added that the company had two very strong growth markets

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**A 'lively' bunch**

Travelport's partners gathered at the tech company's Travelport Live Africa 2018 event in Hermanus in the Western Cape last week to discuss the challenges and opportunities disruptive technologies pose to the industry. For more on the event, see page 8. Pictured here at the cocktail function are, from left: **Scholtz Fourie** (Tourvest Travel Services); **Andrew McDonic** (Tourvest Travel Services); **Gary van der Walt** (Avis Budget); and **Philip Katz** (TravellIT). Photo: Natasha Schmidt

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# Acsa posts profit despite tariff cuts

TESSA REED

WHILE profits reported by Airports Company South Africa plunged 60% from the previous year, the company still posted a profit, its 24th in its 25 years of operation.

The company reported a profit of R800m for the financial year ending March 31, 2018, down from the R2bn profits posted for the previous financial year.

The decline was attributed to a 35,5% drop in aeronautical tariffs. A 5,8% increase in aeronautical tariffs kicked in on April 1 this year, but tariffs will be fixed for the next two years.

Tariffs have been a point of contention between Acsa and the aviation industry in the past, especially as huge profits came in the wake of sharp tariff increases, and came to a head in 2013 when Acsa posted a profit of just under R1bn. This was despite a decline in passenger numbers, after a period of rapid increases in tariffs, while Acsa doubled revenue over a period of four years.

When tariff cuts were announced in 2015, then Acsa cfo, **Maureen Manyama**, said the cuts were the Regulating Committee's way of incentivising the industry.

Reflecting on the results for the 2017-18 year, acting cfo,

**Dirk Kunz**, said Acsa would like to see faster growth in its non-aeronautical revenue streams, which include property rental, parking and retail.

He added that Uber and the Gautrain had negatively affected parking revenue and Acsa was looking at diversifying its offering to appeal to different users.

Infrastructure projects agreed on over the next three to four years include the long-awaited runway realignment project at Cape Town International Airport, which will begin next year. This project, although much wanted by industry, had been disallowed by the Regulating Committee in 2015.

Barsa ceo, **June Crawford**, pointed out that delays to the project had impeded industry growth because of the inability

of CTIA to approve additional A380 flights due to current constraints.

Acsa ceo, **Bongani Maseko**, when reporting the results at the end of September, said roughly R4,5bn would be invested in the project over the next three and a half years.

**"The Acsa results are very good considering the decrease in the tariff the previous year of 35,5%."**

Other projects planned include the expansion of the international arrivals terminal at CTIA as well as a new domestic arrivals terminal at the airport.

Additional parking at OR Tambo and King Shaka International Airport are

planned, as well as a new apron at OR Tambo. Approximately R20bn will be spent on infrastructure over the next three years.

According to Bongani, the largest projects have been funded and are ready to go out to tender.

"The Acsa results are very good considering the decrease in the tariff the previous year of 35,5%," said June, adding that aeronautical revenue was the major contributor to Acsa's revenue, with the regional and international airlines contributing more than 50%.

**Chris Zweigenthal**, Aasa ceo, told *TNW* that the association, along with IATA and Barsa, had worked with Acsa continuously to decide on infrastructure projects and had had good discussions over the past couple of years. ■

## Rubes® By Leigh Rubin



## Govt plans DIY bookings

From page 1

to slow the annual growth to 2,7%.

**Tim Straw**, ceo of Travellinck, is positive about the plans, saying it makes sense for the government to consolidate spend and optimise supplier deals. He added that the new system would allow TMCs to benefit from standardised and systemised government processes, which would hopefully reduce implementation, administration and finance costs to the TMC.

"This platform will never completely replace the service element and the TMC will still be a critical component of the supply chain. The platform should also allow the TMC to provide a more personalised service to the traveller as the

more mundane tasks should be automated, freeing up consultants to focus more on the people side of service delivery.

Tim also said he did not believe that the system and its planned B2C capabilities were aimed at eliminating TMCs from aspects of the supply chain. He said it was not in the interests of government to disintermediate TMCs and that the real goal of the system was to achieve transparency and control over travel spend.

**Morné du Preez**, ceo of Tourvest Travel Services, said the system would undoubtedly streamline processes and ensure that TMC products were aligned to travel policies, best airfares and rates, while removing underhand

transactions.

"Negotiated government rates will be available to all TMCs and, hopefully, the solution will also be able to monitor declined savings and non-compliance to ensure that the best value-for-money products have been booked and sold to individual government departments. Agency rebates should not be affected as every industry compensates on volumes," said Morné.

He also said that if TMCs did not have state-of-the-art IT and infrastructure, the system would be cumbersome to support and added that government might become more dictatorial about what they would be prepared to pay for bookings fulfilled by third-party TMCs. ■

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## Helen Johnston selects the top specials from Travelinfo

- **Topdeck.** 10 days, Great White North offer from R16 830pp. Offer includes nine nights' accommodation, breakfast daily, four dinners, entry to Glacier National Park, guided tours of all major cities, trip leader and more. Visit USA and Canada. Set travel dates, February 24 to March 5.
- **Rove Africa – Islands and Safaris.** Unwind in Zanzibar this December from R22 050pp sharing. Offer includes return flights to Zanzibar, approximate taxes, return transfers, seven nights' accommodation with breakfast, lunch, dinner and selected drinks daily, daily activities and more. Valid between December 1 and 22.
- **United Europe.** Experience New Year celebrations in London from R9 860pp sharing. Offer includes five nights' accommodation with breakfast daily and airport transfers. Set travel dates December 30 to January 4.
- **Club Med.** December Sun Maldives offer from R36 690pp sharing. Offer includes return flights departing Johannesburg, approximate taxes, and seven nights' accommodation with all meals, selected drinks, entertainment and more. Set departure December 8.



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On a high!



In September, the Globus Family of Brands hosted its top supporters for a lunch in the sky. Agents were welcomed with bubbly to steady the nerves before ascending 50 metres above ground for lunch. Accepting the award for top-selling travel agency for Gauteng on behalf of Thompsons for Travel is newly appointed ceo, Wendy Schulze (right) with Zephnie Viljoen, director Perfect Destinations. Photo: Tessa Reed

## Luxury brand debuts with new Mauritius resort

TESSA REED

THE Lux Collective, the global operator of brands and managed properties including LUX\*, Tamassa and Café LUX\*, has unveiled a new hotel brand, which is set to open its first resort.

SALT of Palmar will open on the east coast of Mauritius on November 1.

The resort comprises 59 rooms with seven different room categories, all overlooking the sea, garden or pool.

Activities include sunrise running clubs, sunset swims,

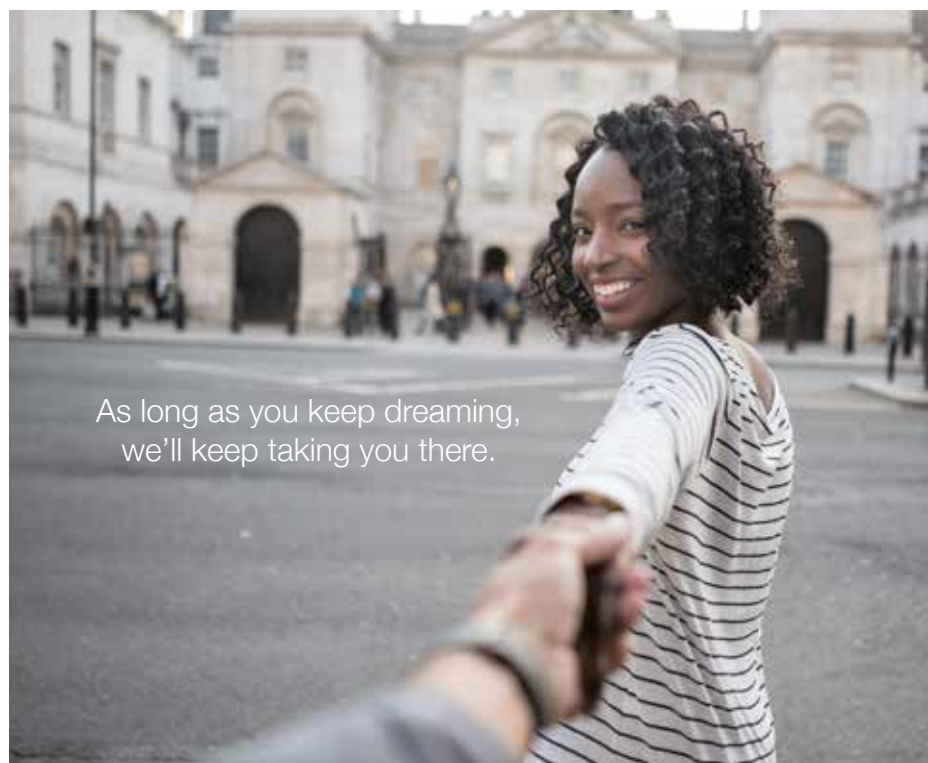
hiking and biking. Guests will also have the opportunity to help out on the SALT Farm, where fruit and vegetables are grown; learn to cook Mauritian chicken curry; and master local instruments, the maravanne rattle and moutia drum.

"We created SALT for an ever-growing breed of modern explorers and mindful travellers who are looking for more adventure and purpose than a traditional resort holiday," said Paul Jones, ceo of The Lux Collective. "Our hotel is located on a picture-perfect beach but we'll encourage

our guests to get off the beaten track and explore the island independently in convertible cars or by bike."

Rates start from US\$200 (R2 868) per double room per night on a bed and breakfast basis.

Commenting on future plans, Paul said: "I can't reveal too much at this stage, but in 2020 we will next open SALT of Wolong in Sichuan, China, right on the edge of a wild panda reserve. We've also got our eyes on other destinations in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, so watch this space!" ■



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## NEWS

# SilkAir to merge with Singapore Airlines

SARAH ROBERTSON

SINGAPORE Airlines' (SQ) regional airline, SilkAir, is to merge with its parent company over the next decade after undergoing a major cabin upgrade.

The US\$100 million (R1.4bn) upgrade will commence in 2020 and introduce new lie-flat seats in business class and seat-back in-flight entertainment systems in all cabins. This will mean closer product consistency with Singapore Airlines aircraft.

It is also expected that there will be transfers of routes and aircraft between the different airlines as part of SQ's ongoing efforts to

optimise its network.

SilkAir's network is mostly across Asia and south-east Asia, operating a fleet of 11 Airbus A320s, 22 Boeing 737-800s and B737 MAX 8 aircraft but is transitioning to an all B737 fleet.

Sally George, market development manager for Singapore Airlines, says the upgrade and ultimate merger will be beneficial to agents as SQ will be able to offer a more consistent product across all legs of the passenger's journey.

"There will be no change in our fare structure as SilkAir destinations have been included in our market fares for years," she adds. ■

## AirHeads



A snapshot of the week's airline news

### SAA on track with turnaround strategy

SAA has requested an extension to finalise and present its annual financial statement to Parliament. Pravin Gordhan, the Minister of Public Enterprises, made the request on behalf of the shareholders in a letter to the National Assembly. A statement released on Wednesday, September 26, however, reveals that the airline is on track with its turnaround strategy, with quarter one results showing that the company is ahead of the plan in its trading performance.

### FlySafair ups ELS frequencies from JNB, CPT

FROM October 1, FlySafair has upped its frequencies to East London from Johannesburg and Cape Town. JNB-ELS flights have increased to twice daily (up from one daily) and CPT-ELS flights have also increased to twice daily (up from twice a day on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays).

### CemAir adds RCB-JNB flights

CEMAIR has increased frequencies on its Richards Bay-Johannesburg route. The airline now operates four flights a week between Richards Bay and Johannesburg. Flight 5Z0209 departs RCB at 07h00 and arrives in JNB at 08h15 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays. Return flight 5Z0210 departs JNB at 18h15 and arrives in RCB at 19h30, Monday to Thursday.

### Gulf rivals said to be in takeover talks

EMIRATES is looking to acquire Etihad, according to a Bloomberg report that cites four unnamed sources "familiar with the matter". According to Bloomberg, both airlines initially declined to comment, but later denied that any talks were under way. Should the acquisition go through, it would result in the airlines' operations surpassing that of American Airlines Group.

### Air Namibia increases flights to GBE and DUR

AIR Namibia has increased frequencies from five to six a week on the Windhoek-Gaborone-Durban route, and will operate daily from October 28. The airline now flies to Gaborone and Durban on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, Fridays and Sundays, while Saturday will be added on October 28. The route is serviced by the Embraer ERJ 135, with 37 seats in economy class.

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# Avalon to offer India sailings in 2019

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

**A**VALON Waterways will include India and the Ganges for the first time in its 2019 itineraries.

The cruise line will offer a seven-day Kolkata to Kolkata itinerary, visiting Kalna, Matiari, Murshidabad, Mayapur and Guptipara; a 13-day Delhi to Kolkata sailing; a 16-day Delhi to Kathmandu and a 21-day Cochin to Kathmandu itinerary. Avalon also offers cruises in Europe, the Peruvian Amazon, Galapagos, Vietnam, Cambodia and Myanmar.

Avalon Active Discovery, the company's brand for

adventure travellers, will also add the Rhône for the first time next year with an eight-day Arles to Lyon itinerary. In addition to sightseeing and free time, clients on this cruise can visit an oyster farm, cycle through Camargue Regional Nature Park to spot flamingos, take a cooking class in Lyon, embark on a canoe trip, or take a Van Gogh-style painting workshop in Arles, among other activities.

**Janine Pienaar**, sales and marketing manager for Globus Family of Brands (Avalon's GSA in South Africa) told *TNW* that the new itinerary had been introduced due to increased demand for

the Avalon Active Discovery series. She said, as a result, Avalon would also be introducing Adventure Centres run by an Avalon adventure host, on its all-suite vessels.

The host will service active travellers by, for example, checking out a bike for their scenic ride through town; providing them with a Nordic walking stick for hiking; booking kayaking excursions or one of the complimentary fitness classes.

At the end of this year, Avalon will retire three of its ships. As a result, next year, all Avalon ships will offer panorama suites, which have proved popular with the SA market, says Janine. ■



## Having a ball at the Bull Run!

The travel industry gathered at The Bull Run restaurant, adjoining the Protea Hotel by Marriott Johannesburg Balalaika in Sandton, on Friday, September 28 for the Travelbags September lunch. All proceeds went to the South African Guide-Dogs Association. Pictured: **Linda van der Pol** (left), divisional head at Now Media, and **Aileen Scott**, partnership and travel sales manager at Europcar. Photo: Jade Kelmowitz

# TripAdvisor to offer 'expert travel advice' before year end

SAVANNAH FREEMANTLE

**B**EFORE the end of the year, TripAdvisor aims to position itself as a social media platform that also provides users with personalised, 'expert travel advice' from over 500 partnered suppliers (hotels, airlines, and car-rental companies), OTAs and social media 'influencers', publishers including *National Geographic* and *Condé Nast Traveller*, as well as other users.

When users log in to TripAdvisor their feed will display travel content tailored to their specific travel interests

based on an algorithm.

This content will take the form of videos, pictures, recommended itineraries, advice on where to stay and which flights and transfers to use, and articles on how to plan for the challenges a destination or itinerary presents. Users will also be able to compare supplier and OTA prices on TripAdvisor, select the offer they are interested in and click through to make a booking.

TripAdvisor said there were no plans for the company to become an OTA.

**Tracy Teichmann**, manager

of Sure Adcocks Travel, queried who would take accountability if a booking wasn't honoured or didn't meet expectations. "Who will take responsibility? TripAdvisor? The supplier? The influencer?"

TripAdvisor explained to *TNW* that customers would be making bookings directly with suppliers and therefore all customer service issues would be handled with the suppliers directly.

Despite this risk, Tracy believes the platform will encourage clients booking with SA agents to migrate online. "It will have a similar impact to

that of Airbnb."

**Vicky Steinhardt**, marketing and product manager at Pentravel, agreed. "I am confident clients will adapt to the new, improved TripAdvisor platform. Why wouldn't they, if the content is more relevant, personalised and mobile friendly?"

Tracy added that TripAdvisor would also use the platform's API compatibility to capitalise on the airlines' requirement to distribute NDC content directly to consumers. "It is another opportunity for airlines to cut agents out and it's easy for TripAdvisor to provide this

distribution service." However, **Richard Beadle**, head of advertising and sales at GSTA, said he didn't think the platform would steal existing clients. "Travellers who would be attracted to this platform are already tech-savvy enough to find this information online."

Richard and **Franz Von Wielligh**, gm of Flight Specials, suggest that the platform is an opportunity for the trade to market travel directly to consumers. "The trade can use this platform to direct users down a sales funnel and back on to its websites," said Franz. ■



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More than 200 business leaders from around the world came together at the biannual Travelport Live Africa event in Hermanus last week. *TNW's* Natasha Schmidt reports.

## The evolution of new distribution

**W**E'VE come a long way since IATA announced its intention to launch the NDC (New Distribution Capability) in Dublin in 2012. But there's still a way to go, says Travelport's global head of New Distribution, **Ian Heywood**. Airlines, travel agencies and aggregators are coming to the

party and are moving away from outdated technology, such as ATPCO, towards sophisticated API connections and distribution.

Currently, the travel industry has to manage using old and new technology. Ian expects this to be the case for a while, as airlines – particularly legacy

carriers that were built on early structures – struggle to update their systems, which is a costly and complex exercise.

"The trade is in a phase of experimentation. Airlines, agencies and aggregators are coming up with different strategies, engaging with technologies in different ways,

and investing heavily to be at the forefront of the distribution revolution," says Ian.

Travelport, the first GDS to achieve NDC Level 3 accreditation as an aggregator, will soon release its Smartpoint NDC plug-in, giving customers access to NDC content. This means new

content alongside traditional content in one workflow, offering agents and their clients personalised offers. "Airlines will move away from distributing 'fare' content to 'offers', which include dynamic pricing and ancillaries that depend on clients' needs and historical data."

## Africa outlook

AFRICA will set the pace for growth in the years ahead, says *The Economist's* **Herman Warren**, Network Director, Africa – Corporate Network.

Many African countries are expected to grow their GDP by as much as 5-8% in the next year. All eyes are on East Africa, which is the fastest growing region. Kenya, Tanzania and Ethiopia have seen robust growth in infrastructure and development and business confidence is strong.

On the other hand, sub-Saharan Africa is going in a "southerly" direction, says Herman. Particularly South Africa, which has officially entered a recession. GDP growth is forecast at 0.7%.

"2019 will be a challenging year for the South African travel industry," says Travelport's managing director for Africa, **Guido Verweij**. "Political uncertainty and

the weak rand impact on consumer confidence."

But travel agency partners are still investing in their systems, he says. They are focused on finding the right tools for their consultants and being at the forefront of technological developments.

**Mark Meehan**, who has very recently been appointed md of Travelport's newly formed Asia Pacific, Middle East and Africa region, is excited about prospects for the region. "There is something about Africa – a will to overcome, to progress and make opportunities. Africa is not limited by legacy and tradition but overcomes through innovation and creativity."

Africa is at the forefront of mobile technology and this is now paying dividends, says Mark. He also believes that airlines operating in the African market, while slow to



He's back! **Mark Meehan** (Travelport md, APACMEA) joined the conference, a week into his new role, to network with the trade. He's pictured here (left) with **Serendipity Group's** ceo, **Dinesh Naidoo**, and **Vijen Maharaj**, Travelport regional sales Durban.

engage with NDC and new technologies, will benefit from seeing other carriers "do it first".

Next year, Travelport will focus on the mobile space. In East Africa, Travelport

is working on integrating M-Pesa, a mobile phone-based money transfer, financing and microfinancing service, into its desktop. This will be launched by the end of the year.

In SA, new developments will include the launch of Travelport's Smartpoint web-based version. Agents will be able to access the platform anywhere, giving them more flexibility. ■



It's all about valuable partnerships. Pictured here, from left: **Sailesh Parbhu** (md, XL Nexus Travel), **Claudette Thorne** (Travelport country manager, SA), and **Marco Ciocchetti** (XL Travel Group ceo). Photos: Natasha Schmidt

## XL GO: a case study

JUST over a year and a half ago, XL Travel and Travelport teamed up to develop and launch a travel management app that would bring agents closer to their customers.

"When I took over as ceo of the XL Group, I realised that the relationship between agents and our clients was dwindling. In the past, our travellers depended on us 100%, but with advancements in technology they could simply go online," says **Marco Ciocchetti**. "I wanted a solution that would allow us to take back the relationship – by embracing technology. The idea of an app that could make sure our agents were with their clients 24/7, assisting them on their travels, was born."

XL Travel engaged with Mobile Travel Tech – a company that Travelport acquired in 2015, and is now known as Travelport Digital

– to find a solution. Rather than have expensive bespoke technology developed, the group decided to be the launch partner for the development of a white label app that lets agencies engage their travellers at each touch point of their journey.

"XL Travel is the first agency partner to adopt this technology. We have a long, established relationship with the group, which made things easier. We understood Marco's vision and we are invested in helping the group engage its customers in the way they would like to," says **Claudette Thorne**, Travelport's country manager for SA. Development is ongoing and the next release will enable agents to chat with their clients.

Each agency will be able to engage with its customers, personalising communication, for example special deals, to its client base. ■



# LOYALTY & REWARDS

Airlines, hotel groups, car-rental companies and other travel suppliers are continuously reviewing their loyalty programmes. Are they still as beneficial to travellers as they were in the past? Chana Boucher takes a closer look.

## Members benefit from more choice

**T**HE first frequent flyer programmes were launched more than three decades ago and usually awarded travellers one mile for every mile flown, and gave bonuses to those who travelled often and/or in premium cabins.

Since then, loyalty programmes have become a force in the travel industry, with almost all suppliers offering some kind of reward to repeat customers. The way they work, however, has evolved, arguably making it even harder to earn and redeem loyalty points, especially for less frequent travellers.

But a trend that could change this is the expansion of reward/loyalty programmes to incorporate other suppliers with whom points can be used or accumulated. The changes, however, have some experts questioning whether these programmes are still achieving what they set out to do. Is the shift to vary rewards keeping customers



**Mandy Lerena**

loyal to one brand?

Virgin Atlantic recently revealed plans to revamp its Flying Club programme next year. **Mandy Lerena**, Virgin Atlantic commercial manager South Africa, explains: "The Virgin Group and Virgin Atlantic are to launch a new Virgin-wide loyalty programme, Virgin Group Loyalty Company, with unique and differentiated reward opportunities, to reward

customer loyalty across Virgin-branded companies." According to Mandy, the new loyalty programme will offer members the chance to earn and spend miles across a range of products and services. "In the future, Flying Club members can look forward to an expanded range of valuable ways to earn and spend miles that will be powered by the new Virgin loyalty programme."

Mandy adds that a Virgin Atlantic Flying Club member is also able to earn and spend miles with a number of non-Virgin partners, including Hilton Hhonors, Marriott Rewards, Avis, Eurostar and more.

**Wouter Vermeulen**, Air France KLM gm Southern Africa, says Flying Blue has always made it possible for its members to spend and/or earn points with other retailers, suppliers or service providers, specifically car-hire companies and hotel chains. "On Flying Blue Pointsbound, you can use your miles to

book hotels and car hire, including within South Africa." Wouter says this has been expanded with the Flying Blue store, which allows members to buy products from retailers such as Apple, Sony and Fitbit. "You can also purchase 'experiences' such as a canal cruise in Amsterdam or a chauffeur drive through Paris in a vintage convertible, which is a good option I think," he adds. According to Wouter, local partners, including the Gautrain, are also being added.

He believes an expanded offering like this is mutually beneficial. "Their brand [other suppliers, retailers, etc.] is being introduced to consumers who may not have considered purchasing from them before and the value of the programme increases as it brings more ways to spend miles."

**Charlene Muller**, VIP consultant, Rennie's Travel Cricket SA, says clients love getting more for their money.

"By being able to earn and spend miles on suppliers other than the usual would be great. There are suppliers already allowing members to spend miles on items such as flower deliveries and gifts, and there is a buzz about that!" Charlene says all airlines, car-rental companies and hotel chains should look into offering clients more varied rewards. "I have heard quite a bit of reaction to an airline offering a new reward and even though the service hasn't been great, and the client hasn't been booking the airline, they are very excited to earn miles again. Suppliers need to make their clients feel valued!"

An agent who wished to remain anonymous, says suppliers partnering with others to offer rewards will encourage more support. "Sometimes travellers don't earn enough miles/points to redeem against the loyalty programme – for example, a free flight – so being able

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**From page 9**

to redeem their points at an alternative retailer/service provider gives the member the opportunity to shop where they want to, not where they are forced to. Some of my Voyager member clients complain that their miles are useless when they don't have enough and are trying to book flights using miles," she adds.

In September, SAA Voyager announced a partnership with NetFlorist, allowing members to use Miles to make purchases on the e-commerce platform.

However, **Melissa Nortje**, executive head: strategy, development and marketing at First Car Rental, says the company has no plans to extend its loyalty programmes (the First Club Card for consumers and Show & Go Card for corporates) to other suppliers. "Our loyalty programmes are directly related to the customer experience and this is where we focus our energy," she explains.

She says increasing customer retention by five percent increases profits by at least 25%. "Loyal customers are the best customers, plus it is up to 25 times more expensive to acquire a new customer than to retain a customer, so loyalty pays off on multiple levels. Every customer counts!"

## 'Work with us!' – agents

MANY travel consultants feel suppliers are increasingly looking for ways to work directly with clients, and loyalty or rewards programmes are another example of this.

For **Charlene Muller**, VIP consultant at Rennies Travel Cricket SA, the strict security protocols to redeem miles or points make it extremely difficult for consultants to assist travellers with these bookings. "It frustrates the travellers and creates friction between consultants and travellers. Suppliers need to be more lenient with these security measures, especially when agents can prove the client wants the transaction to be done by the travel agent. Suppliers want to deal directly with the travellers but need to understand that agents will always be involved. They need to work with us instead of against us!"

Travel Counsellor **Tasmin Rootman** agrees. "Simplifying the rules and the process with regard to upgrades and flight rewards would be great. I upgraded a client on Emirates through [the airline's] website within two minutes the other day. That is the way things should work," she says.

The use of rewards programmes linked to credit cards for travel is



becoming more popular. "More credit card companies are offering discounted flights and while this is a great saving for the customer, it is hard for the regular agent to compete with," says an anonymous agent. Making matters worse, she says it's very frustrating that the flight bookings on certain credit card loyalty programmes are not accessible to all agents. "It would be great if all agents could sell the fares that the various non-airline loyalty programmes offer. Travel agents lose clients to the loyalty programme's 'agents' as many times the traveller will book directly

before consulting their travel agent for assistance. In general, where airline loyalty programmes are concerned, it would be great to be able to make redemption flight bookings through the GDS rather than through the call centre or online on the airline's website," she adds.

Tasmin says when it comes to transferring points earned by credit card to flight miles, the process needs to be streamlined. "I don't mind doing award flights for clients as long as it doesn't take me longer to issue than it would to issue a normal paid-for ticket," she adds.



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# LOYALTY & REWARDS

Airlines				
Programme	Mileage expiry	Airline partners	Non-related points accrual	Top selling features
<b>Air Austral</b> Capricome	Three years.	Ewa Air, MK (MRU-PER flights only).	SNCF, Chronopost, rentalcars.com, LUX* St Gilles.	Family membership. A subscription loyalty card can be purchased, entitling holder to fare discounts of 5%-10% discounts in addition to normal level-two benefits. Cash top-up can be used in conjunction with points. Bonus points earned on joining and through promotions. Points can be transferred to third parties.
<b>Air Botswana</b> Teemane Club	Three years. Status is evaluated at end of year for downgrade/upgrade or maintenance. Diamond card miles do not expire.	-	Cresta Marakanelo Group and Peermont Hotels in Botswana.	Use of Pula Lounge at Gaborone and Shongololo and Mashonja Lounges at OR Tambo for Gold and Diamond members. Diamond members can invite one guest. For 1 000 miles, Gold and Diamond members can invite travel companions to Pula Lounge.
<b>Air France KLM</b> Flying Blue  <b>Kenya Airways</b>	Award Miles do not expire if passengers take a qualifying flight once every two years.	SkyTeam member airlines.	Hyatt, Best Western, Hilton, Accor, Starwood, Radisson, Avis, Hertz, Budget, Europcar. Pointshound website for miles at hotels in SA and abroad.	Combination of cash and miles can be redeemed for tickets or upgrades in any available booking class. Miles can be earned or spent on paid options such as seating, meals, excess baggage. Additional baggage allowance and business-class lounge access for Elite levels and discounted or free seats for all tier levels. Flying Blue store for online shopping including local partners Gautrain and Ooh La La confectionery.
<b>Air Mauritius</b> Kestrel Flyer	Three years.	Air France, Emirates.	Car rental, hotels, duty-free outlets, Air Mauritius Helicopter.	Free tickets, upgrades to business class, additional baggage allowance, priority check-in, business-class lounge access, on-board duty-free discounts. Benefits based on tier level benefits of Red, Silver, and Gold Kestrel Flyer members.
<b>Air Namibia</b> Reward\$	Five years. Awards requested before expiry must be used within 12 months.	Kenya Airways, Turkish Airlines, Ethiopian Airlines, TAAG, Lufthansa.	-	Free flights and upgrades.
<b>Air Zimbabwe</b> Rainbow Club	Miles expire after two years if member has not used Air Zimbabwe services.	-	-	Miles can be redeemed for travel or upgrades to business class.
<b>British Airways/BA Comair</b> Executive Club	Avios don't expire provided there is at least one valid earn/burn transaction within 36 consecutive months.	Oneworld alliance members. Aer Lingus, Air Italy, Alaska Airlines, Open Skies.	Hotel partners, car hire, financial partnerships and retail partners.	Exclusive member-only offers and deals. 25%-100% bonus Avios dependent on tier status. Priority check-in and boarding for Bronze, Silver, and Gold members. Extra baggage for Silver and Gold members. Global lounge access to over 170 lounges applicable to Silver and Gold members. Share and gift Avios to other members.
<b>Cathay Pacific</b> The Marco Polo Club	Three years.	Oneworld alliance members.	Travel, leisure, hotel, dining, retail, telecoms, finance, and insurance.	Guaranteed seat reservations across all cabins, up to 24 hours prior to departure (T&Cs apply).
<b>Delta Air Lines</b> SkyMiles	No expiry.	AeroMexico, Air France, Alitalia, China Eastern, GOL, KLM, Korean Air, Jet Airways, Virgin Atlantic, Virgin Australia, WestJet, SkyTeam partners.	Vacations, cruises, hotels, Airbnb, car rental, shopping, dining, gifts.	No blackout dates, upgrades, premium drinks at Delta Sky Clubs, travelling with Delta Private Jets.
<b>EgyptAir</b> EgyptAir Plus	Three years.	Star Alliance members.	Hotels, car rental, restaurants, financial, health and mobile services.	Redeem miles for free tickets, upgrades and excess baggage.
<b>EI AI</b> Matmid	Three years.	Qantas, AeroMexico, and airlines with codeshare agreements (B6/AA/IB/LX/S7/ET/CA/AM/QF/AR/TAP/JU/PG/TG)	Hotels, car rental, restaurants, and shopping.	Bonus tickets, points+money tickets, upgrades to economy class plus or business class, extra baggage allowance for TL members, utilising points, additional benefits for higher tier members.
<b>Emirates</b> Skywards	Three years.	Air Mauritius, Alaska Airlines, easyJet, GOL, Japan Airlines, JetBlue, Jetstar, Korean Air, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, S7 Airlines, SAA, TAP Portugal.	Hotel partners, car rental, financial, retail, leisure and lifestyle.	Cash+Miles. 'My Family' family members can now pool up to 100% of Skywards Miles earned on flights, and the nominated contribution of Miles from each member can be adjusted at any time.
<b>Ethiopian Airlines</b> Sheba Miles	Members must re-qualify for their tier status annually.	Star Alliance members, ASKY Airlines, TACA Airlines.	Shopping, lifestyle, car rental, hotels.	Redeem miles for class upgrades and award tickets, lounge access and extra baggage allowance.
<b>Ethihad Airways</b> Ethihad Guest	Ethihad: Mileage expiry depends on tier level: Ethihad Guest, two years; Silver, two and a half years; Gold and Platinum, three years.	Brussels Airlines, Oman Air, Jet Airways, Sri Lankan Airlines, Virgin Australia, American Airlines, airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Air New Zealand, Alitalia, Czech Airlines, Garuda Indonesia, Hainan Airlines, Korean Air, Malaysia Airlines, Royal Air Maroc, GOL, Philippine Airlines, codeshare partners.	Financial partners, car rental, hotels, telecommunications, shopping, leisure, lifestyle and points transfer.	Redeem miles for flights, flight upgrades, cars, hotels, holiday packages, and over 2 000 products via the Ethihad Guest Reward Shop.
<b>Air Seychelles</b>	Three years.	-	-	No black-out period for redemption.

# LOYALTY & REWARDS

Airlines				
Programme	Mileage expiry	Airline partners	Non-related points accrual	Top selling features
<b>Iberia</b> Iberia Plus	Points expire after three years of no activity.	<b>Oneworld</b> member airlines, Iberia Regional Air Nostrum, Iberia Express, LEVEL, Vueling, Avianca, Binter, Air Italy, Royal Air Maroc, Interjet.	Hotels, car rental, financial, shopping, wellness, leisure, rail, ferries, educational courses, taxis, fuel.	Avios can be used to book flights or upgrade to business class. Members can also pay for flights by combining Avios with cash.
<b>LAM</b> Flamingo Club	Three years from date of travel.	-	Hotels, car rental, fuel products, telecommunications.	Executive desk check-in.
<b>LATAM Airlines</b> LATAM Pass	Three years.	<b>Oneworld</b> member airlines.	-	-
<b>Lufthansa SWISS</b> Miles & More	Three years or no expiry if member has Frequent Traveller, Senator or HON Circle member status.	Star Alliance member airlines, Eurowings.	Over 270 non-aviation companies, hotels, car rental, shopping, subscriptions, books, banks and insurance, Miles & More credit cards.	Redeem miles for flights, upgrades, awards from the Lufthansa WorldShop, hotel and car-rental awards and more. Miles can also be donated to the Lufthansa help alliance programme.
Partner Plus Benefit (bonus programme for medium sized businesses).	Three years.	Lufthansa, SWISS, Austrian, Brussels Airlines, Eurowings, Air Canada, United Airlines.	-	Redeem points for cashback. BenefitPoints exchangeable for flight upgrades, FlyNet vouchers for on-board connectivity, lounge vouchers, free flights, chauffeur-driven transfers, or carbon offsetting.
<b>Qantas</b> Qantas Frequent Flier	No expiry if member earns/uses points once every 18 months (excludes family transfers).	Jetstar, and over 50 partner airlines (including Emirates and <b>oneworld</b> ) and their affiliates.	Credit cards, hotels, car rental, shopping, financial entertainment, dining and business services. (Some point accruals do not apply to non-Australian members).	Qantas Classic flight and upgrade rewards.
<b>Qatar Airways</b> Privilege Club	Qmiles expire at the end of three calendar years.	<b>Oneworld</b> alliance airlines and US Airways.	Hotels, car rental.	Redeem Qmiles or Qcredits at airports for an upgrade when flying out of Doha and other airports. Redeem Qmiles for an upgrade for a companion travelling on the same flight.
<b>RwandAir</b> DreamMiles	Silver, Gold, and Diamond tiers: two years. Emerald tier, no expiry.	-	-	Priority for free upgrades to business class for members with confirmed economy seats when economy class is full and business class is available.
<b>Singapore Airlines</b> KrisFlyer	Three years.	Star Alliance members, SilkAir.	Over 120 global non-airline partners.	Premium economy class - 125% earned for tickets purchased in S and T Class
<b>South African Airways</b> Voyager	Three years. A year is calculated from April 1 to March 31. Miles will not expire: 1) When 6 000 SAA Tier Miles are flown during a calendar year; 2) When Lifetime Platinum members spent R300 000 on the SAA Voyager Premium Credit Card during a calendar year.	Star Alliance member airlines. SA Express, Airlink, Mango* Emirates, Jet Airways, Jet Blue, Virgin Atlantic, and Virgin Australia.  *Mango is a redemption partner. Members can earn Miles when travelling on the SAA marketing flight where Mango is the operating airline."	Car rental, hotels, property, fuel, financial, retail, gifting, lifestyle.	Revenue-based accrual and reward structures, complimentary companion ticket for SAA Voyager credit card holders, Gold status for companions of Lifetime Platinum members when the qualifying threshold has been achieved, JourneyBlitz Award redemption seat sales at 70-85% less miles, highest 'cash-back' return of 5% when earning and spending on SAA-operated flights.
<b>TAAG</b> Umbi Umbi Club	36 months from flight date.	-	Hertz, Altis Hotels, Vila Gale Hotels. Discounts are dependent on Umbi Umbi status.	Silver and gold members check in at business and first-class counters. 5kg of additional baggage for silver members and 10kg for gold members.
<b>Turkish Airlines</b> Miles & Smiles	Three years.	Star Alliance members, Spanair, and Jet Airways.	Hotels, car rental, financial, telecommunications, technology, vehicle purchases, fuel products.	Free tickets or upgrades for traveller and companion.
<b>Virgin Atlantic Airways</b> Flying Club	Miles do not expire on active accounts on which members spend miles.	Delta, Singapore Airlines, Virgin Australia, SAA, All Nippon Airways, Jet Airways, Air China, Hawaiian Airlines, Scandinavian Airlines.	American Express, Hilton Hhonors, Marriott, Virgin Trains, Hertz, Avis, Visa Central, Sixt, Ulusaba, Mont Rochelle, Eurostar, Tristar, No1 Lounge, Hyatt.	Cabin upgrades and lounge access.

## Key

- **Oneworld** alliance partners: airberlin, American Airlines, British Airways, Cathay Pacific, Finnair, Iberia, Japan Airlines, LATAM, Malaysia Airlines, Qantas, Qatar Airways, Royal Jordanian, S7 Airlines, Sri Lankan Airlines.
- **Star Alliance** partners: Adria Airways, Aegean Airlines, Air Canada, Air China, Air India, Air New Zealand, ANA, Asiana Airlines, Austrian, Avianca, Brussels Airlines, Copa Airlines, Croatia Airlines, EgyptAir, Ethiopian Airlines, EVA Air, LOT Polish Airlines, Lufthansa, Scandinavian Airlines, Shenzhen Airlines, Singapore Airlines, South African Airways, SWISS, TAP Air Portugal, Turkish Airlines, Thai and United.
- **SkyTeam** partners: Aeroflot, Aerolineas Argentinas, AeroMexico, Air Europa, Air France, Alitalia, China Airlines, China Eastern, China Southern, Czech Airlines, Delta, Garuda Indonesia, Kenya Airways, KLM, Korean Air, Middle East Airlines, Saudia, Tarom, Vietnam Airlines, Xiamen Air.

# LOYALTY & REWARDS

Hotels			
Programme	How to earn points	Participating partners	Top selling features
<b>Accor</b> Le Club Essential Connected Upgraded Even More VIP	Stay at 2 800 hotels (budget and luxury).	Club Med, Huazhu, partner hotels, Finnair, Hertz, Europcar, Baglerina, Multiplus, Smiles, Orange Holiday, Shell, LATAM, HSBC.	Transfer points to participating partners. No expiry on points as long as guests stay once a year in an Accor hotel.
<b>aha</b> Real Rewards Classic Plus Premium	Earn 5%, 10%, or 20% of the value of accommodation spend. Tier upgrades are based on the number of nights stayed in a 12-month period.	Europcar.	No applicable membership fees, earn rands on accommodation spend not points, exclusive special offers to members, experiential discount benefits specific to regions, dining discounts, breakfast vouchers.
<b>BON Hotels</b> BONami	Earn BONami bonus card stamps when booking on member rate, at any participating BON Hotels.	-	Up to 20% discount on accommodation rates, including specials; up to 50% discount on meals; use of complimentary vouchers to the value of R16 000; early arrival/late check-out; room upgrades; free WiFi; parking.
<b>City Lodge</b> CLHG Rewards	Points are automatically earned for reservations made online at www.clhg.com, via a registered guest profile.	Courtyard Hotels, City Lodge Hotels, Town Lodges, Road Lodges.	5% upfront discount for bookings made online. 100 free CLHG Rewards points when signing up. Online redemption bookings for bed and breakfast. No blackout or availability restrictions on redemption bookings.
<b>Hilton</b> Hilton Hhonors	Base Points for stays at hotels and resorts within the Hilton portfolio of brands. The amount earned is based on the amount spent on the room. Also earn Hilton Honors Bonus Points when signing up for the latest Hilton Hhonors Bonus Promotion.	American Express Credit Card.	Lowest price on all Hilton hotels when booked direct on Hilton.com or on the Hilton Hhonors app. Members receive free in-room and lobby standard WiFi during stays. Members can use 'Order Ahead' on the Hilton Hhonors app to order extra pillows or a favorite snack for their room prior to arrival.
<b>InterContinental Hotels Group</b> IHG Rewards Club	Members can earn points at more than 4 500 hotels worldwide with opportunities to earn points through regular promotion partners.	More than 200 airlines and online portals, including Flights Anywhere and Cars Anywhere, Hertz.	Redeem points for reward nights at IHG hotels, flights on more than 200 airlines with Flights Anywhere, and car rentals through Cars Anywhere, and merchandise through the IHG Rewards Club catalogue.
<b>Legacy Hotels and Resorts</b> Legacy Lifestyle	Earn a percentage of spend in cash back when shopping at a Legacy Lifestyle Partner and on all bookings at Legacy Hotels & Resorts. R1 equals 1 Lifestyle Rand.	More than 270 fashion, dining, adventure, apparel, jewellery, entertainment and travel partners.	20% off best available rate immediately, and up to 10% more depending on status; and additional discounts at more than 250 hotels worldwide. Rands earned at one Legacy Partner can be spent at any other Legacy Partner.
<b>Marriott International</b> Marriott Rewards, Ritz-Carlton Rewards, and Starwood Preferred Guest (SPG) have merged to form one programme.	10 points per dollar spent for stays (except 5 points per dollar spent at Residence Inn, TownePlace Suites, Element and 2.5 points per dollar spent at Marriott Executive Apartments and ExecuStay properties).	MarriottMoments platform adds more than 110 000 experiences in 1 000 destinations. Moments Live, a collection of musical and culinary events.	Free nights, free flights, room upgrades and instant rewards.
<b>Peermont Hotels and Resorts</b> Crown Key	Points are added when booking through Central Reservations using a qualified room rate. Guests also earn points on qualified room charges, room service, laundry services, and telephone usage. For every R10 spent, members earn 1 point.	-	Bidvest vouchers, faster check-in, room upgrades when available, welcome drink on arrival, free WiFi, bottle of water in the room, movie tickets when available, newspaper at 4- and 5-star properties, 10% discounts at the spa, 15% discount on golf. T&Cs apply.
<b>Preferred Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> I Prefer Hotel Rewards	Receive points for every US\$ spent on nett room reservations at participating hotels booked through eligible channels. Reward certificates never expire and are transferable.	More than 650 independent hotels and resorts worldwide.	Use a combination of reward certificates and cash to purchase room nights or any other hotel services.
<b>Premier Hotels &amp; Resorts</b> Royalty Club	Earn 10% back on Royalty profile. This will be converted into Royalty Rands (1 Royalty Rand equals R1). Includes accommodation, dining and hotel services charged against room during stay.	Premier Hotels, Premier Resorts, Splendid Inn by Premier.	Discount on best available rate at properties across SA ranging from two- to four-star. Welcome platter in room. Best available room in chosen room category. Early check-in/late check-out.

# LOYALTY & REWARDS

Hotels			
Programme	How to earn points	Participating partners	Top selling features
<b>Protea Hotels by Marriott</b> Prokard	Earn up to 10% in accommodation spend at Protea Hotels by Marriott.	-	Up to 10% on best available rate of the day and 20% in Africa; 5% off special online offers and rooms upgrades. Complimentary accommodation. Vouchers. Exclusive dining discounts.
<b>Radisson Hotel Group</b> Radisson Rewards	Members earn up to 35 points per dollar spent on worldwide stays; earn points on food and beverage spend. Members can also earn points by participating in Radisson Rewards promotions and utilising car-rental partners. Radisson Rewards for Business also offers point bonuses and special incentives.	Airlines worldwide; Alamo, Avis, Budget, Enterprise, National, and Sixt car rentals; American Express, Diners Club, Discovery, Visa, and MasterCard, financial partners.	Members-only rates, discounts on food and drink, free award nights, partner redemption offers, rollover nights, complimentary room upgrade, early check-in and late check-out.
<b>Sun International</b> MVG Programme	Earn Casino and Leisure Points when playing slots, table games, staying in the hotel rooms, and dining at selected restaurants and bars. Points are valid for 364 rolling days. MVG points are equivalent to a rand value.	Discover Digital offers variable discounts based on card status. Group-wide recognition at partners based at Sun International properties. Green fees, accommodation, events, and entertainment early-bird and ticket offers.	Discounts vary at Sun International-owned food and beverage outlets and accommodation.
<b>Tsogo Sun</b> Tsogo Hotel Rewards	Earn SunRands on accommodation and on meals purchased at hotel-owned restaurants and bars. SunRands are valid for 24 months.	Nedbank Greenbacks, American Express.	7,5%-20% food and beverage discounts at hotel-owned restaurants and bars.

Car Rental			
Programme	How to earn points	Participating partners	Top selling features
<b>Avis Rent a Car</b> Preferred Loyalty Programme  Preferred Service Membership  President's Club Membership  Club Red Programme (travel agents)	Vehicle rental including car, van, luxury, truck, and safari, and chauffeur drive services.	British Airways, Avios Rewards, and selected partners globally.	Preferred Priority service (show your licence and go); global recognition, earn tier status, upgrades, and free weekend vouchers.  Preferred priority service, global recognition.  Preferred priority service, global recognition, free additional driver and vehicle upgrade.  Earn ClubRed Roses on qualifying rates, redeem for eBucks or cash on the new ClubRed Visa card.
<b>Europcar</b> Platinum Programme  Drive Club  Business Connect	Vehicle rental, including car, van rental, luxury, trucks, and chauffeur drive.	Kulula.com, SAA, Tsogo Sun, Discovery Vitality and selected partners globally.	Platinum: Exclusive membership discounts, additional benefits and inclusions.  Drive Club: 20% discount, free upgrades.  Business Connect: No credit card for rental collections. Corporate customers can use Ready Service to avoid queues upon collection. ID only is needed to collect keys.
<b>First Car &amp; Van Rental</b> First Club Card	Vehicle rental including car, van, luxury, and chauffeur-drive services.	FlySafair, The Capital Hotels and Apartments.	Direct from plane, mobile checkout. Complimentary access to Acsa Premiere Lounges for Platinum cardholders. Free vehicle upgrades. Discounts at loyalty partners.
<b>Hertz</b> Hertz Gold Plus Rewards  Honey Money Travel Booker Rewards Incentive	Vehicle rental.  Vehicle rental.	-	Complimentary access to Acsa Domestic Premier Lounge or Sky Lounge with car-rental reservations of three consecutive days or more; one vehicle group upgrade subject to fleet availability; free additional driver.  Based on car-rental bookings completed, cash reward uploaded to credit-type card for use at any outlet.
<b>Thrifty Car Rental</b> Moola Rewards (travel agents)	Book a vehicle from Group P to an E-Class Mercedes for one day or more and earn Moola Rewards.	-	Members receive Moola Rewards on an FNB gift card, which they can use at any retailer.
<b>Woodford</b> Woodford Advance	Vehicle rental.	-	Book rentals using points, upgrades of vehicles, free GPS and extra driver inclusions on specific tiers. No queueing.

\*Disclaimer: The tables contain a selection of the benefits offered by those loyalty programmes that supplied information.

## Just add cash...

"WHEN one supplier changes its rewards programme, it's a matter of months before competitors follow and then offer a similar product," says Rennies Travel Cricket SA's **Charlene Muller**.

This has been true for many of the changes to rewards and loyalty schemes over the years, with the latest being the possibility of combining rewards and cash for purchases. Travel Counsellor **Tasmin Rootman** says this makes it easier for members to use their points, not losing them to expiration before they've accumulated enough. "This is a positive move and one that all loyalty programmes should embrace," she adds.

Similarly, a consultant who wishes to remain anonymous says: "If members can combine points and cash, they can use their miles and see their rewards sooner. British Airways' Avios programme works with Avios and a cash co-payment option in a single transaction. My BA passengers have enjoyed

this, while the Voyager members have been limited to purchasing additional miles first and then booking their flights in a second transaction."

**Wouter Vermeulen**, of Air France KLM, says the Flying Blue programme was completely overhauled in June to make it easier for members to use. This included making it possible for members to use cash and miles to purchase an upgrade. "Some of the key changes are that it is now possible to earn and spend miles for excess baggage, à la carte meals on board and seats with extra leg-room. Members can

class, where previously this was limited. There is also more flexibility to spend miles because we have the new cash and miles options," explains Wouter.

Virgin Atlantic Flying Club, says **Mandy Lerena**, offers a Miles Plus Money option enabling customers to use miles and, in so doing, spend less money on a Virgin Atlantic flight. "With as little as 3 000 miles in one's account, one can reduce the cost of the flight and still earn miles and tier points on the discounted journey taken. The more miles used, the bigger the discount taken from the price of the flight," she adds.

Aha Hotels & Lodges recently restructured its loyalty programme too, says marketing manager, **Ruzandri Stoltz**. The programme now works on a cash system that lets customers see how much they've accumulated and have available to spend. "This works far better than points and is more assuring to customers as well as being easier to manage from a systems and booking point of view," she adds.



now earn miles based on the fare they paid and book a reward in any available

## Looking ahead

**Teresa Richardson**, head of marketing at The Travel Corporation (TTC), says in the past it was acceptable for a loyalty programme to offer a repeat client an upfront discount based on their status, but that this is no longer the way to approach loyalty.

"To take good care of your guests it is imperative to really know them and their preferences. We take this level of guest care very seriously across all our travel brands. From the time a booking starts right through to when our guests arrive home, we are working to make sure their experience with us is nothing but exceptional."

According to **Melissa Nortje** of First Car Rental, the "one-size-fits-all" loyalty schemes are already obsolete. She says no two customers are the same and that predictive and personalised experiences are the future. "There's no question that the product itself must be competitive and deliver superior value. But beyond the product itself, several factors can make a difference in gaining and retaining the much sought-after loyal customer – these factors are convenience, customer service, personal relationships, rewards, reputation and, to some extent, efforts in corporate social initiatives."

Wouter says loyalty programmes will continue to evolve in a manner that targets shifting customer preferences and behaviour. "We need to stay in touch with our customers and the changes that are taking place around us. Value will always be very important but we need



**Teresa Richardson**

to cater for new lifestyle preferences, the different types of communication platforms that are available and how we communicate our offer."

According to **Melissa Nortje** of First Car Rental, the "one-size-fits-all" loyalty schemes are already obsolete. She says no two customers are the same and that predictive and personalised experiences are the future. "There's no question that the product itself must be competitive and deliver superior value. But beyond the product itself, several factors can make a difference in gaining and retaining the much sought-after loyal customer – these factors are convenience, customer service, personal relationships, rewards, reputation and, to some extent, efforts in corporate social initiatives."

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**Royal Dutch Airlines**





**Collect double points!**

Small and medium enterprises that are part of British Airways' On Business programme now have the opportunity to double their rewards. On Business members travelling on BA's international flights or BA operated by Comair domestic and regional services before December 31 collect double points on up to five return flights or ten one-way sectors. This offer is available on all ticket classes that accrue On Business points as well as flights made on BA CityFlyer and SUN-AIR. On American Airlines and Iberia, it is subject to availability. The offer can be activated before making a booking on the On Business membership portal. "By doubling the rewards we hope to encourage small and medium enterprises to continue travelling and make the most of opportunities, even in the difficult economic climate," says **Cristina Graham**, BA regional commercial manager corporate, Southern and East Africa. Pictured: Cristina (left), and **Sue Petrie**, regional commercial manager trade, Southern and East Africa, British Airways. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl



## Changes ahead for TTC

THERE will be "significant change" to how The Travel Corporation rewards its loyal guests in 2019, says **Teresa Richardson**. "We have made a strategic decision to completely revamp our frequent traveller discount." Teresa says it will vary across brands, but for the 2019 season, TTC will offer customers an additional 5% off their trips for 60 days after the launch of a

brochure. This, she adds, is combinable with the early payment discount. "We are also going to offer handpicked special deals that give a past guest a much bigger saving. By changing our strategy on this we know we'll be giving our loyal guests the exceptional experiences across all brands that they're looking for, with even bigger rewards," says Teresa.

## Aha ditches membership fees

AHA Hotels & Lodges recently made a number of changes to its loyalty scheme in an effort to grow its loyalty base, maintaining focus on putting the customer first and offering a programme with beneficial rewards for its members.

One of the changes aha's **Ruzandri Stoltz** highlights is the elimination of a membership fee. Previously the Plus and Premium tiers were subject to an annual membership fee but now all three tiers – Classic,



**Ruzandri Stoltz**  
Plus and Premium – are free.

## Marriott unveils member-only experiences

MARRIOTT international has added more benefits for its loyalty members, giving them the opportunity to bid their points in exchange for access to experiences.

An example of the type of experiences on offer is a hands-on braai masterclass with celebrity MasterChef South Africa judge, **Peter Goffe-Wood**. This experience takes place at Irene Dairy farm and includes an ice-cream-making session together with a stay at the African Pride Irene Country Lodge, Autograph Collection.

The brand also offers a romantic island getaway to the Indian Ocean islands with a stay at the St Regis Mauritius resort. The experience includes a helicopter ride over the island. Alternatively, customers can opt for a stay at The Westin Turtle Bay Mauritius, which includes skydiving for two people, or a visit to Le Meridien Fisherman's Cove, Seychelles, for a private dinner at Anse Diribeach accompanied by a snorkelling experience. ■

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## Exploring Munich

Lufthansa recently hosted TMCs on a fam trip to Munich. A highlight was a visit to Zugspitze – at 2 962 metres above sea level, it is the highest mountain in Germany. From left: Garth Wolff, eTravel, André Schulz, Lufthansa, Dinesh Naidoo, Serendipity, Scholtz Fourie, Tourvest, Marco Tomasicchio, XL International, and Maria Martins, CWT.



## Well done!

Ricardo Paulo, an agent at Flight Centre Canal Walk, won an incentive as the agent with most G Adventure tour bookings for July and August. He won a G Adventures trip to the value of R25 000 plus R10 000 toward flights. Runner-up, Janine Woolward from Pentravel Clearwater, won a R6 000 voucher for any G Adventures trip. Pictured: Gayle Bannatyne from Development Promotions (SA GSA for G Adventures) and Ricardo.

## Obituaries

■ **Abe Mate**, sales executive at Kenya Airways, died suddenly on September 22. He was 46. He joined Kenya Airways from Singapore Airlines in 2014 as part of the sales team. Abe was well known in the



Abe Mate

industry and will be remembered as a professional, organised, happy, friendly and caring person as well as for his infectious laugh and radiant smile. Abe is survived by his father, sisters and brother.

■ **Digby Johnson**, founder of TravelWorks died on September 19. He was well known in the industry, having worked at Seekers Travel and Budget Rent a Car. In 2001, he founded TravelWorks,



Digby Johnson

lead for GBTA Southern Africa. "However, if you stood your ground, liked cats and enjoyed a single malt it proved a most rewarding friendship. Digby was indeed the captain of his soul," said Sharon.

consulting with corporates and public sector clients to cut the travel expenditure. The model was based on negotiating contracts with suppliers that would deliver savings to the corporate in the place of paying overrides or commissions to agents. "Digby challenged processes and systems with enough vigour to have suppliers turn on their heels and run out of his training sessions," said **Sharon Richards-Lund**, sponsorship and marketing

"Digby was a charismatic pioneer in the early days of corporate travel management in South Africa," said former *Travel Buyer* editor, **Kim Cochrane**. "At a time when the industry was reinventing itself and emotions were electric, he instilled confidence in our first generation of corporate travel buyers, motivating and empowering them to forge a successful – strategised – path ahead in their newly emerging roles."

## Appointments

- **Rami Mashini** has been appointed Bedsonline regional sales director for Africa.
- **Brian Dodge** has been appointed Latam's new corporate key accounts manager.

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Tour Africa with Trafalgar



Trafalgar has introduced 10 trips to eight African countries; South Africa, Botswana, Namibia, Zambia, Tanzania, Kenya, Egypt and Morocco. The Tollman family – the founders of Trafalgar’s parent company The Travel Corporation – have put the itineraries together based on their first-hand knowledge of the destinations. Visit the Trafalgar website for more details on the itineraries <https://www.trafalgar.com/en-za>. Pictured: Amanda Hardy (left), public relations and Teresa Richardon, md of The Travel Corporation. Photo: Shannon Van Zyl

# SWG sheds members to run a tight ship

SARAH ROBERTSON

**S**ERENDIPITY Worldwide Group (SWG) has revised its criteria for accepting ITCs to the consortium to ensure that only bona fide travel professionals are incorporated into the group.

As a result, the group has seen about 200 members leave during the course of the year.

Dinesh Naidoo, group operations director of SWG, says the group is on a drive for high-quality ITCs rather than a large number.

He says the group’s criteria were changed at the beginning of this year to ensure that all members

were PCI DSS compliant.

Additional internal requirements were also introduced, such as prior GDS experience and financial literacy.

**“We want to eliminate fraud from the group and have better control over our stable of members.”**

“We want to eliminate fraud from the group and have better control over our stable of members. With a smaller membership and higher joining criteria, it is more difficult for things to slip through the cracks.

“We have also determined that financial business knowledge is essential to run a successful ITC. Things can often go wrong when a good consultant starts up an ITC without a full understanding of financial procedures,” said Dinesh.

He added that the rationalisation was an ongoing process, saying that the few ITCs that had not reached compliance but wanted to continue with the group were on probation for the next three months to rectify deficiencies.

Should compliance not occur, these contracts would be terminated by the end of the year. ■

# SA loses shares of regional flights

TESSA REED

**W**HILE African airlines saw 2017 traffic rise 7,5% compared with the previous year, according to IATA statistics, regional passenger numbers at Acsa airports are down 1%. For the same period, international and domestic passenger numbers grew 5% and 4% respectively.

Commenting on Acsa’s financial results for the 2017-18 year, acting cfo, Dirk Kunz, said overall passenger growth at Acsa airports reflected good load factors and the larger aircraft that had been placed on routes into South Africa’s airports.

He explained that, while domestic landings had dipped 1% and international landings had only increased by 3%, passenger volumes had shown more growth. Regional landings showed no movement, suggesting decreased load factors on regional routes.

The decline in regional traffic comes at a time when South Africa’s economy has suffered, along with regional neighbours’ economies, driven in part by the weakened commodities market. This has resulted in a decline in air traffic on regional routes serving mining areas.

Reporting its financials

for the year ending March 2017, SAA also revealed that it had lost considerable market share – 23, 45 and 71 percentage points in the domestic, regional and international space respectively.

SAA’s loss in regional market share came alongside market share gains by Ethiopian Airlines and Air Namibia. SAA has not released its financials for the year ending March.

In September last year, SAA also announced a reduction in frequencies on its Brazzaville via Pointe Noire; Douala via Libreville; Kinshasa; Entebbe; Luanda; and Cotonou via Libreville routes. ■

## pulse poll

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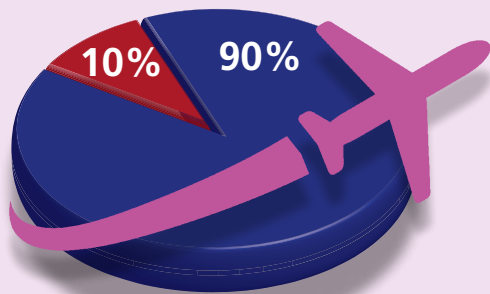


### Going up!

#### Have domestic product prices increased?

Has the current economic situation resulted in an increase in domestic product prices?

- Yes
- No



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# Fastjet’s Tanzania ops hang in the balance

From page 1

in its Zimbabwe and Mozambique subsidiaries.

In an interview shortly after the results were released, Nico was less confident with the outlook in Tanzania. Asked if the company could pull out of Tanzania, he said it was up to the local board and local entity to evaluate alternative

sources of funding. “From our perspective, there are alternative growth markets available on the continent and, in the short term, we see a better use of funding.

“Ultimately it would be a pity to pull the brand out of the market, given the fact that it is the biggest aviation brand in Tanzania.” He said historically, under a better competitive

environment, the business had generated substantial monthly revenue.

While not naming Air Tanzania outright, he made reference to the airline’s placement of a Boeing 787 on a one-hour flight sector, adding 280 seats. “We have seen that fares over the last two months have come down quite drastically.” ■

## For the record

- In TNW dated September 26, it was incorrectly reported that Cruises International had received a contract to sell Virgin Voyages. No contract has been awarded, although talks are ongoing. TNW apologises for the inaccuracy. Virgin Voyages was established in 2014 with the first ship set to sail in 2020.
- Rudolph Theunissen has been appointed commercial manager across Thompsons’ retail businesses: for Thompsons Travel and Thompsons For Travel nationally. In TNW October 3 it was reported that he had been appointed commercial manager for Thompsons Travel.