

Inbound pushes business

Al Naboodah Travel looks ahead to incorporate payment gateway with their online system by Q1, 2015. TRAVTALK talks to the CEO of the company to know more about its future plans and strategies.

 SUSMITA GHOSH

Expo 2020 is the major key for an overall positive trend. There are a lot of new projects coming up in Dubai. The growth in property and construction sectors will produce huge demand for new workers. It is expected that Expo will create 275,000 to 300,000 new jobs in UAE. Tourism/hospitality and construction sectors are expected to create highest number of jobs in UAE. The impact of travel and tourism will be significant.

"The inbound tourism helps in growing the businesses for most of the trades in UAE and in return outbound is growing day by day. The year 2015 is just a preparation and 2016 onwards, a much stronger impact is anticipated," informed **Nasir Jamal Khan**, CEO, Al Naboodah Travel.

The infrastructure and facilities in Dubai are getting better and larger in operation service. A total of 140 new



Nasir Jamal Khan
CEO
Al Naboodah Travel

2015 will be the year of initial preparation, much stronger and positive impact is expected for the year 2016

hotels are expected to open in Dubai 2016. The hotel apartments' room capacity is expected to grow from 82000 rooms at present to approximately 164000. Airline industry is also expected to benefit.

"We forecast a tremendous inbound traffic, 20 million visitors are expected per year up to 2020. The inbound tourism helps in growing the business for most of the trade in UAE, consequently outbound travel is growing day by day. 2015 will be the year of initial preparation, much stronger and positive impact is expected 2016 onward," he added.

The new attractions include, Crocodile Park, fish market, traditional souks, museums, Miniature Park and a Palm Park. There are four different segments while assessing the business of Al Naboodah in 2014 if compared to 2013. BSP is one indicator and then Low Cost Carrier (LCC) which is not included in BSP that's another indicator and then airlines' direct sale which is not included in BSP the tourism sector inbound and outbound. If all put together, the growth is not less than 20 per cent, expecting more business in 2015. 🌟

Alpha meets Natalie again

In alliance with Ras Al Khaimah Tourism Development Authority (TDA), Alpha Tours held its second congress recently, in association with Natalie Tours again. The success of the previous congress led to this edition.



Delegates meet at the congress in Ras Al Khaimah

 TT BUREAU

The congress was held in Ras Al Khaimah from Dec 8-12, 2014, bringing in 60 agents from Kazakhstan. The event focused on the efforts and initiatives of Natalie Tours bringing in tourists from Kazakhstan into the UAE.

Natalie Tours has carved a niche as one of the leading tour operators into the UAE, bringing around two million tourists from Russia and the CIS states over the past decade.

"After the success of the previous edition, another meet was in order. With the

continuous support and guidance that we've been receiving from Alpha Tours, we are confident that tourism in UAE will go from strength to strength," said **Vladimir Vorobiev**, President of Natalie Tours.

According to reports, the UAE tourism market is expected to grow further over the next three to five years, driven by strong air connectivity and the diversification of its offering. In Dubai, hotel guest arrivals have been growing at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 8 per cent between 2009 and 2013. In Abu Dhabi, Fujairah and Ras Al Khaimah, guest arrivals

have had a CAGR of 15 per cent, 18 per cent and 39 per cent, respectively, during the same period. While Abu Dhabi's tourism sector is driven by the corporate and MICE, the Emirate is diversifying its tourism demand base by focusing on the leisure segment

Adnan Aridi, Managing Director of Alpha Tours was pleased with the turnout. "Our association with Natalie Tours has really helped us understand what this growing market needs to get the next level. The meets have been very fruitful and this is only the beginning of a great chapter UAE tourism", he said. 🌟

Positivity among the travel trade for 2015

▶ Contd. from page 1

Of late corporates are cutting cost, though holiday packages' demand is rising. Travel trips from Asia rose 8 per cent in first 8 months of 2014 which is double the global growth. In 2015, Asian citizens will undertake above average trip.

"Online bookings are growing and bookings made by travel agents are declining and this trend will continue in 2015 as well. Airlines will continue with their policy of bypassing travel agents and offering better deals directly to customers through their online portals," asserted **Arshad Munir**, General Manager, SATA. "Travel trade will have to rely more on holidays and corporate travel. Though the current oil price is being at the lowest trend since 2009, yet it does not promise well for corporate sector in the



Hussein Hachem
Cluster General Manager
Al Bustan Rotana Dubai and Al Murooj Rotana Dubai

For 2015, we have a positive forecast and we are optimistic of further strengthening our position

short term. We are expecting regional holidays to have robust growth in 2015."



Arshad Munir
General Manager
SATA

Travel trade will have to rely more on holidays and corporate travel this year

"The momentum of Yas Island as a destination helped our hotels achieve double digit



Thierry Perrot
Area General Manager
InterContinental Hotels Group

I expect more growth, largely in part to the opening of Yas Mall, Abu Dhabi's largest shopping point

growth in RevPar. I expect even more growth in 2015, largely in part to the opening



HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Director General, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority

Tourism is one of the key global economic and social drivers and plays a big role in the economic progress

of Abu Dhabi's largest shopping destination, Yas Mall, the continued popularity of Yas

Island's theme parks, and the ever expanding array of marquee events held on the Island," explained **Thierry Perrot**, Area General Manager, InterContinental Hotels Group.

Yas Mall has had a tremendous impact already and its strength as a shopping destination will continue to grow and impact demand on Yas Island. Etihad Airways growth has been massive; with their projected 50 per cent increase in connections and destinations, and growing list of routes and markets surely ensures that Yas Island and Abu Dhabi Emirate will see increases in air travellers. The airport expansion is a clear indicator that Abu Dhabi is a destination on a growth trajectory.

"Online booking tools, travel websites, etc. will

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'Meeting Pods' at ibtm arabia

ibtm arabia has unveiled the design impression of its exhibitor 'Meeting Pods' for the transformation of the region's MICE event. For the first time, it's taking place at The St. Regis Hotel Saadiyat Island Resort in Abu Dhabi from Feb 10-12, 2015

TT BUREAU

An all-inclusive solution is the new meeting pod package, which provides no additional stand costs, freight or build up costs. The price also includes access to 9 networking opportunities, a diary of up to 30 mutually matched appointments, entrance to the ibtm arabia Knowledge Forum, part of the 'Discover Day' and catering throughout the entire event.



Lois Wilcox
Exhibition Manager
ibtm arabia

the focus of ibtm arabia 2015. The all-encompassing solution is a design that allows the customisation of an exhibitor's corporate branding, all done in advance of their arrival onsite. One price, no hassle and exhibitors arrive fresh for the beginning of their busy schedule. It will include some 30 appointments over the course of the event," said **Lois Wilcox**, Exhibition Manager, ibtm arabia.

ibtm arabia expects to match mutually over 6,000 pre-scheduled appointments between exhibitors and Hosted Buyers on a 1-1 ratio that includes both regional and international buyers and suppliers.

"The new concept is a result of feedback received from key industry stakehold-

ers including those from the private and public sectors, as well as other professional MICE organisations. It highlights the need to focus on time and resources purely on business meetings, knowledge and networking," added Wilcox.

New Concept

- ◆ The new concept is a result of feedback received from key industry stakeholders including those from the private and public sectors, as well as other professional
- ◆ An all-inclusive solution is the new meeting pod package, which provides no additional stand costs, freight or build up costs

Hosted Buyers the environment they need to undertake business meetings and that's

"Our innovative design gives both exhibitors and

The all-encompassing solution is a design that allows the customisation of an exhibitor's corporate branding, all done in advance of their arrival onsite

Travel trade sings happy notes for New Year

▶ Contd. from page 2

continue to impact travellers buying decisions. And let's not forget Abu Dhabi's expanding reputation as a MICE destination; this will continue to bring visitors to the Island for an experience unlike any other. And the opening of The Louvre on Sadiyat Island in late 2015 is going to be a crown jewel and absolute travel destination," he added.

HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority highlighted the successful growth of the tourism sector in the Emirate over the past few years.

Referring to 2014's 9 per cent growth in the tourism and hospitality sectors, Al Midfa emphasised the need for tourism infrastructure and facilities to keep pace with the growing demand, providing the best possible, world-class services and amenities to Sharjah's

guests for a perfect touristic experience.

The SCTDA Director General pointed out that tourism plays a critical role in the economic progress of nations. Al Midfa said that tourism now contributes as much as 8.5 per cent to Sharjah's GDP.

The Sharjah Tourism Advisory Committee, chaired by HE Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority, held its first meeting recently at the Sharjah Chamber of Commerce and Industry to discuss the latest developments and achievements in the tourism sector, amidst the challenges and massive growth faced by the industry in ME and globally.

This meeting is the first step in the development of consolidated plans and strategies, leading to a new era of growth in the Emirate's tourism sector, he emphasised.

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3 cheers for tourism

There are plenty reasons to cheer for in the Middle East as it unwinds the year 2014; The Middle East aviation sector continues to fly high registering strong growth; the hospitality sector has been shining and a multiple-entry visa system for cruise tourists in the UAE is likely to give further fillip to tourism.

The latest data from the IATA shows that Middle Eastern carriers once again recorded double-digit increases, mounting 13 per cent.

On the hospitality front, Abu Dhabi's 156 hotels and hotel apartments reported that months from January-September 2014 have been the most successful ones ever so in terms of guest arrivals, guest nights, occupancy and revenue. As per Abu Dhabi Tourism and Culture Authority figures, from the beginning of 2014 to the end of September, 2,498,672 guests checked into the emirate's accommodation, a 26 per cent year-on-year increase.

In the first half of 2014, Dubai hotels welcomed over 5.8 million tourists, the highest number on record. Interestingly, this was achieved despite a reduction of flights through Dubai International Airport due to upgrading of the runways, with strong growth being recorded from many key source markets, including China, Brazil, Australia and many European countries.

It is not just Abu Dhabi and Dubai. The Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority reported that during the first half of 2014, the number of visitors to the emirate reached one million, a 15 per cent increase over the same period in 2013.

In Ras Al Khaimah, the opening of new hotels has helped cope with the increase in visitors from the emirate's top five source markets, led by the rest of the UAE, followed by Germany, Russia, the UK and India. A total of 330,048 visitors arrived in the first half of 2014.

A multiple-entry visa system for cruise tourists in the UAE, introduced earlier this year, is expected boost ship calls by 16 per cent and passenger numbers by 7 per cent next season.

Overall, there is every reason for the tourism industry to look forward to a vibrant, result-oriented new year.

Discover Thainess in 2015

Tourism Authority of Thailand launched a new campaign, Discover Thainess, for 2015 offering the foreigners the essence of 'Thainess' through the Thai way of life, Thai culture and Thai experiences. This distinctive character of 'Thainess' draws tourists to explore and share their experiences with local Thai communities.

All through the year, we have numerous festivities and celebrations that we would like everyone, most especially our visitors from the GCC and the rest of Middle East region to enjoy and experience.

JANUARY

In January, there are numerous parades and events happening throughout the country that will give our visitors an extensive look on our exquisite traditions that is unique and vibrant with the entire amazing backdrop that is Thailand. This time of the year is also perfect for people who would like to start their year fresh and revitalized, as Thailand is home of numerous world class spa resorts and clinics that will surely make you face the new year with more energy and vibrancy.

FEBRUARY

February is a month to celebrate Chinese New Year. For centuries, China and Thailand has forged a lasting kinship through our shared history and descendants of the mainland China, who have become a prevalent part of Thai society nowadays. And for the month of love, we celebrate along with the annual celebration of the Lunar New Year. For this month, both Thailand and China will jointly celebrate the auspicious occasion of the 60th anniversary of HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, revered as "The Best International Friend of China," with spectacular performances from China and numerous festivals right on the street in the heart of Bangkok's Chinatown.

MARCH

March is Muay Thai month. Known as fast, furious

and frightening sport, Muay Thai is truly a one-of-a-kind martial art where literally all body parts are used as weapon to fight the opponent. The first record of Muay Thai is dated as far as half a millennium ago. Since then, the art of Thai boxing has been passed down from masters to students. It was only until later in the 19th century that the sport found its way to international fame.

Also this month, Thailand will arrange a grand Wai kru ceremony right at the birthplace of the art master in the Ayutthaya Historical Park. Practitioners all over the world (as well as visitors) are invited to join in this once in a lifetime experience in commemoration of the art and the grandmaster of Muay Thai.

APRIL

In Thailand, April is synonymous to wet, as this month we celebrate the Songkran festival or Thai New Year. Repeat travelers to Thailand are not new to this tradition, water splashing on the streets amidst the summer heat. Many people connote Thai New Year as just throwing water celebration but in fact there is a deeper essence behind it. It is all about Harmony, bringing people all together as one big happy family and sharing the fun altogether.

MAY

May is about Music. Each year, we light up stages after stages and bring hundreds of thousands of audiences to their feet. In 2015, Hua Hin will take its turn to host the Thailand Music Festival where headliners as well as up and coming artists will share to throw one of the most explosive and extravagant shows together while

enjoying Thailand's top beach destination as your backdrop.

JUNE

The year will never be complete without June as this is the month of Thailand Grand Sale. Thailand is known as the one of the best shopping destinations in the world and we live up to expectation of our visitors. Shopaholics can enjoy numerous offers from major credit cards as several unique and privilege discounts are being offered during this time. So make sure that you have save a room for shopping!

JULY

While the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) is on the pipeline, Thailand will initiate AEC Folk Music Festival in July as we believe that music is the vehicle that helps us form a strong bond across 10 different cultures.

AUGUST

This month, we welcome everyone to join us in a celebration aesthetical exchange where music from all over the region is brought together in one place in Thailand. Thailand is popular for the smooth silk produce and August is the month to pay homage to this wonderful blessing as we celebrate the Queen of Silk Festival. You could never ever leave Thailand without trying our dishes.

SEPTEMBER

In September, we will celebrate Thailand International Food Festival where number of Thai and international chefs will come together in one spectacular culinary journey where live demonstrations and gastro-nomic creations await you!

OCTOBER

October is TTT: Thailand Time Trial season which will be held in the provinces of Chiang Mai and Lamphun. A thrilling ride awaits all participants in search for the King of the Hill.

NOVEMBER

You have never been to Thailand unless you have celebrated the Loy Krathong festival which is held annually in November. For more that centuries now, the full moon night of November is the night where Loy Krathong festival is celebrated. It represents the bond between the traditional Thai way of life and the river which is the bloodline of the country.

DECEMBER

Before end of the year December, we celebrate our National Day and the Kings Birthday which makes everybody in the country in festive mood with the sound of His Majesty's blues on background, it's the perfect way to reflect and be ready for another year ahead.

2015 is the best time to Discover Thainess so I would like to invite everyone to visit Thailand and discover it for yourself.



Chalernsak Suranant
Director, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Middle East office



Publisher : SanJeet
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Desk Editor : Archana Sharma
Design : Nityanand Misra
Business Development Manager : Cristina De Guzman
Manager Advertising : Geetika Pathak
Sales & Admin Assistant : Eric Gomez
Circulation Manager : Ashok Rana
Manager Production : Anil Kharbanda

is published
by SanJeet on behalf of
**Durga Das Publications
Private Limited**

Printed at
System Graphics India Pvt. Ltd.
A-1, Naraina Industrial Area,
Phase-I, New Delhi - 28 India

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ADIA greets first NIKI flight

Characterised by a low cost, full service method of dealing with clientele, NIKI Airlines, a subsidiary of Air Berlin and headquartered at the Vienna International Airport, holds true to its tag line – ‘The passenger comes first’

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Providing regular scheduled services to various European cities and tourist attractions, the NIKI Airlines has instigated its first regular service to Abu Dhabi in partnership with Etihad Airways.

The new flight service operational at Abu Dhabi International will provide flights between Abu Dhabi and Vienna arriving in AUH at 19:50 and departing at 02:40. The Austrian airline is the seventh airline to enroll the Etihad partners programme. Etihad Airways has placed its ‘EY’ code on the service as part of a codeshare agreement with NIKI and connects the flights with leading destinations across its network in the Middle East, Africa, India, North and South Asia and Australia.

The partners programme launched in October 2014 differentiates itself from comparable predecessors by

Abu Dhabi Airport is pleased to welcome NIKI Airline to the capital as part of our commitment to offering more routes while strengthening our links with major European cities

welcome NIKI Airline to the capital as part of our commitment to offering more routes while strengthening our links

agreement serves to reinforce AUH’s position as an international aviation hub and Abu Dhabi Airport looks forward to offering its world-class services to yet another strategic airline partner.”

This service marks the first long haul for NIKI Airline and the debut of its business class offering. This codeshare alliance will also allow Etihad Airways a more direct access to the route plying between Vienna and Abu Dhabi creating the distinct possibility of follow up route links to other destinations across the network operated by NIKI Airline.

Ahmad Al Haddabi
Chief Operations Officer, Abu Dhabi Airports

offering more comprehensive airline alliance presenting benefits beyond pure commercial cooperation, including network and frequent flyer alignment.

Ahmad Al Haddabi, Chief Operations Officer at Abu Dhabi Airports said, “Abu Dhabi Airport is pleased to

with major European cities. This new service is aimed at passengers travelling both for business as well as for leisure.

The timings are geared towards making convenient connections in Abu Dhabi for onward points in the Gulf, Asia and Australia. This

And the 1st Service

◆ This service marks the first long haul for NIKI Airline and the debut of its business class offering

Rotana awarded at the ‘Travel Oscars’ Grand Final

Rotana, the leading hotel management company in the Middle East, Africa, South Asia and Eastern Europe, has been recognized for its continuous efforts and success by attaining a special achievement award for the World’s Leading Business Hotel Brand at the World Travel Awards, the premier global awards event that promotes excellence in the travel and tourism industry. Furthermore, the Beach Rotana Abu Dhabi has brought home top honors at the event, taking the World’s Leading Corporate Resort title. The awards were announced recently at a black-tie gala event in the paradise island of Anguilla in the Caribbean.




(L-R) Omer Kaddouri, President & CEO. Right Mr. Greg Alan, Area Vice President - Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Salalah

Abu Dhabi hotels report 20% increase in guest nights


■ Abu Dhabi’s 156 hotels and hotel apartments are nudging closer to the Emirate’s 3.1 million guest target for this year with figures just released by Abu Dhabi Tourism &




Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi) showing 2,838,842 guests checked into the destination in the first 10 months of this year – 25 per cent uplift on the same period in 2013.



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ME charms agents

Oceania Nautica recently visited Dubai and Abu Dhabi where travel agents were taken on a guided tour of the numerous up-market facilities on board and later hosted to a 6 star 5 course sit-down lunch with beverages.

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Oceania Cruises' 1,250-guest Marina debuted in January 2011 and her sister ship, Riviera, debuted in May 2012. They join their sister ships Regatta, Insignia and Nautica in offering the finest cuisine at sea, warm and personalised service and a destination experience that is second to none.



Ashley Noronha
Managing Director
Best Orbit Travel & Leisure Services

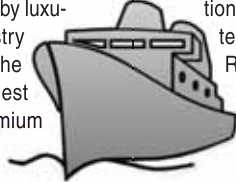
facilities for outdoor activities and sport around the world," informed **Ashley Noronha**, Managing Director, Best Orbit Travel & Leisure Services.

As the leader in destination cruising, Oceania Cruises sails to more than 330 ports around the globe. Itineraries are unique in that they call on the perfect mix of must-see marquee and boutique, ports. "Multiple overnight calls afford an in-depth, enriching destination experience and allow travellers to immerse themselves in the cuisine, culture and history of the ports we visit," he further stated. Oceania Cruises formed in 2002 by luxury cruise industry veterans is the world's largest upper premium cruise line.

Oceania Cruises has included Dubai to their yearly cruise calendar as Dubai and the UAE has grown in prominence for its hospitable culture, architecture, hotels, shopping malls and sport around the world

"Oceania Insignia will visit Dubai in Sep 2015 offering a 20 days cruise to Singapore. Oceania Cruises has now included Dubai to their yearly

cruise calendar as Dubai and the UAE has grown in prominence for its hospitable culture, architecture, luxurious hotels, shopping malls, outstanding



Cruise lovers tally up 19%

With the arrival of the Rotterdam recently, Dubai's cruise season got a boost. In Nov 2014, Mina Rashid have welcomed 11 ship calls carrying over 39,954 passengers and crew with nine of the 11 vessels staying overnight in Dubai.

TT BUREAU

Dubai Cruise Tourism, part of Dubai Tourism, is set for a busy season, with a total of 110 cruise ship calls carrying more than 381,000 passengers arriving over next seven months. The number of cruise lovers is set to rise by 19 per cent on the 2013/2014 season. It explains an additional 60,000 sea-travellers will embark, disembark or transit at Mina Rashid, Dubai.

Dubai Tourism forecasts further growth for the cruise sector. It's spurred by the upcoming opening of an additional new 27,000 m2 terminal at Mina Rashid later this season and the new cost effective Multiple Entry UAE



Hamad bin Mejren
Executive Director
Dubai Tourism

Tourism commented, "We are set to record significant growth in ship calls and in the number of cruise lovers. We are expanding our facilities with the opening of a new terminal and with the availability of new multiple-entry UAE cruise visa, ensure an increasingly attractive destination, Dubai."

We are expanding our facilities with the opening of a new terminal and with the availability of new multiple-entry UAE cruise visa, ensure an increasingly attractive destination, Dubai

visa implementation for the cruise tourists.

Hamad bin Mejren, Executive Director, Dubai

"We have growth targets for cruise as part of our Dubai Tourism Vision for 2020 as we

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115 ships call on Oman

The plans for the formation of a long-term tourism strategy were revealed at The Seatrade Middle East Cruise Forum in Muscat, Oman by HE Maitha Al Mahrooqi, undersecretary at Oman's Ministry of Tourism.

TT BUREAU

The Ministry of Tourism, Oman, reported 18 per cent increase in cruise pas-

were the executives from Costa, Crystal Cruises, Cunard, Holland America Line, MSC Cruises, Noble Caledonia, P&O Cruises,

Muscat and Khasab offer passengers a different experience after the cityscapes of the UAE. In Oman, they can find heritage, culture and



Maitha Al Mahrooqi, undersecretary at Oman's Ministry of Tourism (fourth from left) at the event

sengers for 2014. According to **Khalid Al Zadjali**, Director of Tourism Events, Oman's Ministry of Tourism and host of the Forum, "In 2013, 115 ships called into Oman, a figure that is set to increase significantly over the coming three years."

For high level discussions to debate the future of cruising in the region, present

Princess Cruises, Royal Caribbean International, Seabourn, Silversea, and TUI Cruises along with GCC government representatives from the ports and tourism sectors.

"Oman is an essential part of TUI Cruises' Middle East itineraries," commented **Tine Oelmann**, Director Port Operations, Shorex and Ground Handling. "Both

nature, highlighting the diversity of this region." TUI Cruises' Mein Schiff 2 is currently operating its second Middle East winter cruise program incorporating seven day butterfly cruises out of Dubai and the German brand is set to return again in 2015/16. Plans were also unveiled to deploy a 3rd ship, Mein Schiff 3 to the region for 2016/17.



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Largest ever FAM to Dubai

As India is one of Dubai's biggest source markets, DTCM hosted the largest ever FAM for the Indian travel industry.

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Dubai welcomed the largest ever tourism industry Mega FAM trip comprising travel operators, wedding planners, MICE operators, niche segment specialists and media experts representing 16 cities across India from December 6-9, 2014.

Hosted by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing

(DTCM), the Mega FAM which included 440 representatives of the travel industry partners, aimed to provide Dubai's Indian trade partners with a first-hand experience of all that Dubai has to offer as a business and leisure destination. "This FAM trip was a huge success, we were pleased to be able to welcome and host such a large group from India, which is one of our key source markets.

In fact, in the first six months of 2014, India had been our second top source market and saw tremendous growth.

It continues to be a key focus for us and roadshows to India and FAM trips such as these are a great way to ensure our partners in the market remain up-to-date with everything going on in Dubai – the first-hand experience is also the ideal way to drive enthusiasm for the destination.

In addition, this was a valuable exercise for our stakeholders in Dubai who through face-to-face meetings and networking sessions were able to exchange information and ideas which will prove beneficial as we further strengthen business relationships with our partners in India," said **Issam Kazim, CEO, DTCM.**



Scotland taps ME market

The Scottish travel industry is directly tapping the Middle East clientele base. TRAVALTALK reports...

SUSMITA GHOSH

Since the induction of direct flight between Dubai and Glasgow by Emirates Airlines ten years ago, the number of visitors from the Emirate and the Middle East has gone up. Presently, it is flying twice daily. It has further resulted Qatar Airways to fly five days a week from Doha to Edinburgh and furthermore Etihad Airways setting up its services from next year onwards.

The number of visitors from Qatar has gone up 33 per cent from a comparable period in 2013. Now Scottish Development International is looking ahead to Saudi market and also is in the process of headhunting an F&B (Food and Beverage) specialist for the region.

Tom Marchbanks, Middle East Regional Manager, Scottish Development



Tom Marchbanks
Middle East Regional Manager
Scottish Development International

Scotland has established itself as a primary destination for high-end tourists from the Arab world

International in this regard informed, "Scotland has established itself as a primary destination for high-end tourists from the Arab world, offering its

authenticity, excellent hospitality and diverse experiences. This enthusiasm into direct investment in the hospitality sector from the Gulf region is clearly reflected in our latest figures."

The Middle East region is recognised as being the fast growing market with valuable opportunities for Scottish organisations and their international growth plans. "In response to demand, Scottish Development International (SDI) opened a Middle East office, in the British Embassy, Dubai in January 2010. "The role of the office is two-fold - Trade and Inward Investment. Since four years, SDI in the ME has supported numerous Trade Missions who have visited the region and helped setting up their offices here," elucidated Marchbanks. Scottish hotels rank themselves as second best out of 13 competitive nations when it comes to total investment returns in the leased hotel sector.

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IndiGo on Cloud 10

IndiGo announces the addition of daily non-stop flights from Dubai to Kozhikode and Bengaluru. Now, IndiGo will offer a total of ten daily non-stop flights to eight Indian cities with a capacity of 12,600 weekly seats.

 TT BUREAU

Effective December 15, 2014, IndiGo introduced a new daily non-stop flight between Dubai and



Aditya Ghosh
President
IndiGo

Bengaluru and a new daily non-stop flight between Dubai and Kozhikode from January 2, 2015. Kozhikode will be the 32nd domestic and 37th overall destination in the IndiGo network.

IndiGo will see both business and leisure travellers travelling to and from Kozhikode and Bengaluru. The airlines cater to various segments, providing maximum connectivity from across

Dubai has always been an important part of our destination network and our 8 daily flights from the city is the acknowledgment to the good prospect for both inbound and outbound business

the country and Middle-East on its network.

Aditya Ghosh, President, IndiGo said, "2014 has been a landmark year for us, winning Airbus Excellence Award-the first for an Indian airline. We placed our firm order of 250 A-320, inducting our 100th aircraft. We are

delighted about adding new connections from Dubai. The new international flights from Dubai to Kozhikode, our 37th destination and Bengaluru are testimony of our commitment to the business and leisure

travellers." "Dubai has always been an important part of our destination network and our 8 daily flights from the city is the acknowledgment to the good prospect for both inbound and outbound business and leisure travellers besides the students and young working professionals belonging to the regions," Ghosh added.

Abu Dhabi-Dallas direct

Scheduled to start from April 16, 2015, Etihad Airways will offer direct services between Abu Dhabi and Dallas/FortWorth International Airport with Boeing 777-200LR aircraft.

 TT BUREAU

Dallas/Fort Worth International Airport welcomed Etihad Airways and its new service from Abu Dhabi with traditional 'shower of affection' water cannon salute from the Airport's Department of Public Safety.

Protection (CBP) before boarding their flight in Abu Dhabi. Abu Dhabi is one of the few airports outside the United States to offer an onsite US CBP facility.

"Etihad Airways is pleased to introduce Dallas/Fort Worth as our sixth destination served within the



James Hogan
President and Chief Executive Officer
Etihad Airways

With more than US\$ 320 million in total trade last year with the UAE just through DFW, the new route opens the door for additional economic opportunity for North Texas

Sean Donohue
CEO of DFW Airport

Unique about the service from Abu Dhabi to DFW is that arriving passengers can be pre-screened by US Customs and Border

United States," said **James Hogan**, President and Chief Executive Officer of Etihad Airways. "We appreciate the
Contd. on page 11 ▶

We appreciate the support from the DFW International Airport, which led to our planned increase in frequency to include nonstop daily flights, beginning April 2015

Kwality

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Cruising high on seas

▶ Contd. from page 6

aim to become the world's leading destination for family tourism. Not only are we actively seeking to increase the volume of cruise travellers from the traditional source markets of North America and Western Europe, but we are also looking to attract first time global cruise travellers from China and the Far East, as well as India and the sub-continent. There is a real opportunity to grow intra-regional cruise tourism with our GCC

neighbours, expect to welcome 450,000 annual cruise tourists by 2016 and to record continued, sustainable growth into 2020 and beyond." This season, the number of vessels using Dubai Cruise Terminal as their home port increases to six and these vessels are expected to make a total of 83 trips in comparison to 63 trips in 2013/2014 season. Dubai Residency and Nationalization Department confirmed that following an initial announcement in August, 🌟

The New Pullman Dubai City Centre Residences

After almost a year of renovation and an investment of over AED100m by owner Majid Al Futtaim, Pullman Dubai Deira City Centre hotel will be opening and re-launching their refurbished cosmopolitan residences this month - providing guests with a distinguished residential address to call their own. The Pullman Dubai City Centre Residences proposes chic and comfortable living; offering a range of layouts to cater to all needs with studios, one bedroom and 2 bedroom apartments, plus an added option of connecting rooms to create up to 4 bedroom apartments. Pullman residences also facilitate to those guests with reduced mobility.



Geared up for green initiatives

Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman beefs up green initiatives through a series of awareness programmes on waste management. It has been imparted to different sectors like schools, government entities and private companies.

TT BUREAU

To communicate the importance of recycling and proper waste disposal, especially to the younger generation, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman recently gave a tour and a brief lecture about the zero landfill project to students from Al Manar Iman School.

Iftikhar Hamdani, General Manager, Ramada Ajman, who pioneered the environmental initiatives, commented, "Our team aims to reach out and impart our knowledge on proper waste management, not just in Ajman, but also in other Emirates. We hope that through these initiatives, we can motivate both public and private entities to join us in our efforts in protecting the environment for the future generations."

Ajman also hosted a number of site visits in its



Iftikhar Hamdani
General Manager
Ramada Ajman

compost and recycling centre, as well as in the urban farm, to various groups including representatives from Dubai Municipality, international visitors from Prague, Czech Republic, teachers from Umm Suqeim Model School and

Green Hope UAE volunteers, among others.

Hamdani is also taking part as a speaker

in several sustainability conferences to share the hotel's green initiatives. He was one of the speakers in the recent Hospitality



People being made aware on green initiatives

We hope that through these initiatives, we can motivate both public and private entities to join us in our efforts in protecting the environment for the future generations

Expansion ME Congress; his conferences in 2014 include World Food Day, Hotel Show's Vision Conference 2014, Hotelier ME's Sustainability Summit and the inaugural UAE Green Festival. 🌟

One month, one property

The Golden Tulip is the 8th largest hotel group in the world with over 230 properties in 42 nations. The group is planning to furthermore unveil a property a month until the regional properties exceed 70 in 2015.

SUSMITA GHOSH

The hotel chain is moving in a new direction now by bringing the convenience of using a social media app to make and confirm bookings at any of hotel group's properties worldwide.

Tarek Lotfy, Regional Revenue Director, Golden Tulip MENA elaborated on what sets the hotel group apart from its contemporaries. "The Facebook page for the group also has a reservation engine which allows guests the convenience of staying up to date with the group's activities while having the option of making their bookings on the same page," he commented. "The mobile app provided to guests also presents further



Tarek Lotfy
Regional Revenue Director
Golden Tulip MENA

The Facebook page for the group has a reservation engine which allows guests the convenience of staying up to date with the group's activities

utility. It can act as an alternate key to open a room besides the app also allows food reservations and other relevant bookings and services."

In the future, the group is hoping to add another feature of convenience which will allow guests to have a detailed look at the room they booked. The hotel which has posted a 23 per cent increase from a comparable period in 2013 is optimistically expecting to have an over 50 per cent increase in occupancy rates in 2015. In one of the biggest deals in the field of tourism for this year was to sign with Djoser Hotel management. It was agreed to change the hotel's name to Narnar Golden Tulip instead of Djoser for a period of ten years, renewable for two terms. 🌟

World Luxury Hotel Awards

City Seasons Muscat Hotel, represented by their General Manager, George Demitry, became the winner of the Luxury City Hotel category for 2014. The 8th annual World Luxury Hotel Awards was celebrated in South Africa.

TT BUREAU

Local and international award winning hospitality super stars shone bright at the gala dinner ceremony

"We are so pleased to have our hotel recognised in this prestigious award," said **George Demitry**, General Manager, City Seasons Muscat. "The 334-room

With an excellent service delivery and quality as well as attention to details, City Seasons Muscat is the flagship of the City Seasons properties

George Demitry
General Manager, City Seasons Muscat

the country's business accomplishments." "We are very proud of such achievement. With an excellent service delivery, offers and quality as well as attention to details, City Seasons Muscat is the flagship of the City Seasons properties. It has perfectly led the role since its opening that are cornerstone to the vision of what great hotels should be all about," announced **Sheikh Ahmed Mussallem Bin Ham**, Vice President, City Seasons Hotels. "City Seasons Muscat is leading the way of where we want to see all our hotels in all their categories. Winning the award of Luxury City Hotel is the proof that we are on the right track," added Bin Ham. 🌟

hosted at the Bay Hotel's majestic Rotunda in Camps Bay, Cape Town, alongside leading hoteliers from around the globe.

hotel, that opened its doors some four years ago, is located in the heart of the commercial districts and is a true milestone to

International flavour, local taste

Destinia.com, one of Europe's online travel agencies, has re-launched in the Middle East with 63 million website users in 2013 with a bespoke service for discerning GCC-based travellers. A new sales office in Dubai in January 2014 was opened. It's their second launch in the Middle East following Cairo office in November 2007.

TT BUREAU

Destinia offers 24-hour booking, 365 days a year and innovative services including a Google glass reservation app, bitcoin payment and a soon to be

with ambitions to become the leading online travel agency in the Middle East by 2017.

Destinia.com has experienced increase in sales of 46 per cent in 2013 in the Middle East, representing 20 per cent



Amuda Goueli
CEO and Co-Founder
Destinia.com

teen billion dollars in 2015, according to PayPal. More money is spent on travel than on any other online purchase in the region and there is presently no strong local online travel agency."

voucher via email. It's easy, convenient and secured," confirmed Goueli.

Presently Destinia.com is firming up agreements with local tour operators to offer products and services that are more suited to local tastes and also form alliances with regional travel agencies as technological partners under the Online Travel brand name. Online Travel is the sister company which offers the Destinia.com technology to traditional travel agencies to offer an online service.

Destinia.com was the first international travel website in the market to offer its webpages in Arabic in 2007. "The Middle East market is very discerning and keen to embrace new technology. Destinia has launched 'pay from home' system in December 2014, sparked by statistics showing that almost 80 per cent of local buyers prefer a 'cash on delivery' payment method. Clients make reservations online, a courier visits their homes and uses an app to record payment of the invoice, after which the system sends out a reservation

cent and expects the MENA region to represent around 30 per cent of the company's overall sales in the next three years. "E-commerce is a growing industry in the Middle East," commented **Amuda Goueli**, CEO and Co-Founder, Destinia.com, "The Middle East market is experiencing considerable growth and is estimated to reach fif-

of the company's overall sales. During 2014, Destinia.com has witnessed further double digit growth from the Middle East's sales further increasing by 120 per

launched 'payment on delivery' facility, in December 2014.

Destinia.com anticipates annual double digit growth during the next three years

The Middle East market is very discerning and keen to embrace new technology. Destinia has launched 'pay from home' system in December 2014, sparked by statistics showing that almost 80 per cent of local buyers prefer a 'cash on delivery' payment method

Strategies

◆ Destinia.com is firming up agreements with local tour operators to offer products and services that are more suited to local tastes

Opening doors to better biz

► Contd. from page 8

strong response and support received from the DFW International Airport and the communities of Dallas and Fort Worth, which led to our planned increase in frequency to include nonstop daily flights, beginning April 2015."

"With more than US\$ 320 million in total trade last year with the UAE just through DFW, the new route opens the door for additional economic opportunity for North Texas and it will also open new avenues of tourism and cultural exchange that benefit our customers," said **Sean Donohue**, CEO of DFW Airport. "We are pleased to add another international destination and carrier to DFW Airport's growing international business connecting more than 50 destinations around the world." On international expansion spree, DFW had added 18 new international destinations in the past four years. With the addition of the new Etihad service, DFW now hosts 23 airlines and 55 direct international destinations. ✈



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Union Home Minister & Tourism Minister, Government of India, launched landmark Tourist Visa on Arrival (TVOA) enabled with **Electronic Travel Authorization Scheme (ETA)** recently. The TVoA enabled with ETA Scheme will facilitate nationals of 43 countries to travel to India for tourism for 30 days. The facility will be available at 9 international airports in the country. It will encourage people to travel with short-term planning, while travelling to other countries and bring family members while on business visits.



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With a climate favouring year-round sports and leisure, Shahdag ranges from winter lows of -20°C to pleasant summer evenings of 20°C. It is an incomparable location for one of the world's largest national parks, and within it, one of the region's largest ski resorts. Breathtakingly beautiful, a haven hidden from time, Shahdag is an experience not soon forgotten.

HOTELS & ACCOMMODATION

Set in the spectacular scenery of the Shahdag National park, and surrounded by stunning mountain views the Shahdag Mountain Resort offers a wide range of

active travellers. It is an ideal base from which to enjoy the magnificent Shahdag Mountain Resort.

GAYA RESIDENCES: Providing highly adaptable accommodation, families can stay together but still enjoy separate rooms.

SHAHDAG HOTEL & SPA: It is the first contemporary Azeri mountain lodge. Designed to offer a modern feel while at the same time respecting the local culture, Shahdag Hotel & Spa offers guests a level of service equal to any luxury hotel anywhere in the world.



SPORTS & LEISURE: The Shahdag Mountain Resort will offer guests a seemingly endless list of thrilling sports and leisure activities all year round. From children to adults, from novices to pros, the Shahdag Mountain Resort promises to deliver unforgettable excitement and entertainment, all set against a backdrop of stunning natural beauty and invigorating mountain air.

WINTER SPORTS: There is a choice of 19 ski slopes suitable for different experience levels, with exciting snowboarding, snow jet skiing and ice skating facilities.

SUMMER SPORTS: There is an endless variety of adventure and outdoor activities, from canoeing, climbing and parachuting to horse riding, trekking, mountain biking and golf.

RESTAURANTS: Here, at the Shahdag Mountain Resort, we have something for everyone. Whether it's a quick cup of coffee or a romantic dinner for two, a fresh fruit breakfast or a family feast our restaurants and bars are ready and waiting to cater for your every need. Our restaurants and bars can be found in each of our hotels. For more information take a look at the individual hotels for an overview of what's on offer.

OFFERS & PACKAGES of Shahdag Mountain resorts:

Shahdag Mountain Resorts have something for everyone. Upon arrival, enjoy some of the local delicacies awaiting you in your upgraded Superior Room.

Relax and recharge your energy for a one, two, or three-night stay in one of our spacious rooms overlooking the breathtaking views of the Shahdag Mountain Resort.

Wake up to a generous buffet breakfast before stopping off at our Ski and hire shop where you will find our friendly staff ready to help you choose from our wide range of equipment.

Your ski pass will give you access to over 19 ski slopes from beginners to expert - there is something for everyone.

After a long day on the slopes why not indulge your senses at Ovdan's Spa. Relax in the sauna or steam bath, Hamman hydrothermal circuit or indoor pool, the choice is yours. A chance to unwind in total luxury. On your departure date, check out time is at 16:00.

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Your Pure Ski package includes your ski pass giving you access to more than 19 ski slopes

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Our Fully Equipped package includes your ski pass and equipment hire.

THE ULTIMATE SKI EXPERIENCE

The Ultimate Ski Experience package includes your ski pass, equipment hire and a private ski instructor to give you one to one tuition.



contemporary accommodation that can be enjoyed by everyone. Each establishment has its own unique appeal and charm and offers a variety of modern, stylish rooms and suites for you to choose from.

ZIRVE HOTEL: Lift Base, Hotel Zirve is a contemporary three star+ hotel specifically designed for ski lovers and

PIK PALACE SHAHDAG: Pik Palace Shahdag is a premier luxury destination in Shahdag Mountain Resort, located 230 kilometres North from Baku. Set amid majestic mountains, the hotel offers 167 oversized bedrooms and suites that provide maximum comfort for couples and families.



Etihad Guest

Abu Dhabi

Yasser Al Yousuf, an Emirati national, has been appointed as the new Managing Director for Etihad Guest, Etihad Airways' award-winning loyalty programme and its partners Air Serbia, Air Seychelles and Etihad Regional. Effective immediately, Yasser assumes the role at a time of rapid growth in the business as Etihad Guest continues to evolve into a broad-based lifestyle programme. Etihad Guest is one of the existing programmes within Etihad Airways' new loyalty business, Global



Etihad Airways

Abu Dhabi

Etihad Airways has announced the appointment of **Shane O'Hare** as its Senior Vice President, Marketing. O'Hare brings an unrivalled mix of experience in airline marketing and management, having held a range of senior executive positions in the Gulf and internationally. Most recently, he served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Royal Jet, the largest private jet company in the Middle East. Over a seven year period, O'Hare helped develop Royal Jet into one of the most successful private jet brands in the world. Prior to that, he held senior marketing roles at Gulf Air, Star Alliance and Ansett.



Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts

Hong Kong

Steven Taylor will join Shangri-La Hotels and Resorts as Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) on January 5, 2015. He will be based in the group's corporate office in Hong Kong and report to Greg Dogan, Shangri-La President and CEO. In his role as CMO, Taylor will oversee all functions across Shangri-La's Sales and Marketing Division, including revenue management, sales, digital marketing, brand communications, loyalty and partner marketing, customer insights and relationship management, reservations and distribution and corporate communications.



Virgin Atlantic Airways

Dubai

Terry Smith – Manager Sales, Middle East, Virgin Atlantic Airways 'Virgin Atlantic Airways has appointed Terry Smith as Manager of Sales for the Middle East. Smith will be based in Dubai and will support and deliver on Virgin Atlantic's sales strategy for the UAE and GCC markets. Having worked Virgin Atlantic for twelve years, Smith has worked across the UK and European sales structure, most recently managing the European Offline team.



India and Dubai

Nick Parker has been appointed Country Head – India and Middle East for Virgin Atlantic. Nick has been with Virgin Atlantic for over a decade from where he brings a depth of commercial and sales based experience. Prior to this recent appointment, Parker was the Regional Manager for the Caribbean with Virgin.



Shangri-La

Abu Dhabi

Shangri-La Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi, Shangri-La Residences and Traders Hotel, Qaryat Al Beri, Abu Dhabi recently welcomed **Nicolas Villemain** as Director of Sales and Marketing. Villemain joins the Qaryat Al Beri complex with 15 years of extensive hospitality experience gained in the Middle East, France and Brazil. Previously, he was Director of Business Development at a luxury resort in Dubai. Villemain is of French-Canadian origin and holds diplomas in business administration from the University of Maryland and Swiss hotel management from Hotel Institute Montreux in Switzerland.



Hawthorn Suites

Dubai

Osman Nasir takes the role of Director of Sales and Marketing Hawthorn Suites. He will lead the Sales and Marketing department in setting and achieving targets to maximise revenue, and directing corporate sales and marketing strategies to compete in the market. He will also be responsible in strengthening relationship with the hotel's existing partners and generating business leads on both local and international scale. Nasir boasts 16 years of hospitality sales experience in Dubai. He was formerly affiliated with Dusit Residence Dubai Marina.



Novotel Dubai Al Barsha

Dubai

Four-star luxury hotel Novotel Dubai Al Barsha has confirmed the appointment of a new Hotel Director, **Souffian Zaeraoui**. Bringing with him a vast experience in hospitality, the hotel is excited about this new addition to the team. Souffian Zaeraoui's association with the Accor group started in 2007 when he joined the Novotel Cardiff Centre as Food and Beverages services Manager. In 2009, he joined the Pullman Paris Tour Eiffel rooms department and also the integrated IMHI programme, which is a two-year MBA in Hospitality Management from ESSEC Business School in Paris.



Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa

Dubai

The Habtoor Grand Beach Resort & Spa, the Al Habtoor Group's flagship five-star luxury beach resort in the Dubai Marina, has appointed **Khalid Saeed** as Hotel Manager. Khalid has more than 15 years of experience in the UAE's hospitality industry, having spent his entire career with the Al Habtoor Group across its portfolio of properties. Saeed was previously the General Manager of the Metropolitan Hotel Deira, a position he held for almost three years. Khalid has experience in all aspects of hotel operations, and is fluent in Arabic and English.



Biz travellers' club by Rotana

Catering to the needs of the business traveller, Club Rotana offering was launched recently by Rose Rayhaan by Rotana, property of Rotana's alcohol-free Rayhaan Hotels & Resorts brand.



Karim Nahas
General Manager
Rose Rayhaan by Rotana

TT BUREAU

Business tourism currently accounts 20 per cent of Dubai's tourism sector, with experts projecting it will double in 2012-2020, in line with the overall tourism growth rate. A recent survey by the International Congress and Convention Association showed that the number of

associations, conferences and meetings in the Middle East has trebled over the past 10 years.

Offering a concept that anticipates the common needs of the business traveller makes a lot of sense operationally as well, enhancing the guest experience

"The business-leisure split at properties in prime business locations like Sheikh Zayed Road is

50/50. Offering a concept that anticipates the common needs of the business traveller makes a lot of sense operationally as well, enhancing the guest experience," said **Karim Nahas**, General Manager, Rose Rayhaan by Rotana.

Guests booking any Club Rotana rooms or

suites will also enjoy complimentary access to a Club Rotana Lounge from 7am-11pm. Besides access to the lounge, hotel guests who book Club Rotana accommodation will enjoy Club Rotana privileges aimed at boosting convenience and enabling business travellers to hit the ground running.

"We are confident that the launch of the new Club Rotana will enhance our guests' experience and further strengthen the positioning of the property amongst its competitors in Dubai," concluded Nahas.

Travelport invests in Turkey

The company has announced a series of new investments in the growing Turkish travel industry on Dec 17, 2014. With the announcement, new offices distributing Travelport's Galileo and Worldspan products and services have opened in Istanbul, taking over from the current Travelport operator, Turkish Airlines.

TT BUREAU

The enhanced infrastructure and customer service investments cement Travelport's presence and commitment to the travel industry in Turkey, where the company has been operating for 20 years. It also responds directly to the continued growth of the country's travel sector – Turkey's total travel expenditure exceeded US \$29 billion in 2013, according to Timetric, the leading global business information service.

The new investments will deliver a range of benefits for Travelport customers in Turkey including technology, products and customer services. This will be backed by a local support team and Travelport consultants to help fast-track growth for business



Rabih Saab
President and Managing Director
Africa, Levant, Middle East and
South Asia, Travelport

and leisure travel, online travel agencies (OTAs), travel management companies (TMCs), and consolidators.

Rabih Saab, President and Managing Director, Africa, Levant, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport commented, "Turkey remains one of our key geographical sectors. As one of the fastest

growing and most tech-savvy of the Middle East economies, we are very pleased to further enhance our presence here. This investment underlines our continued commitment in supporting the regional travel

our distributor, help grow our business here for the past two decades. Our two companies will continue to work closely to benefit the travelling public in the region and beyond," further stated Saab.

This investment underlines our continued commitment in supporting the regional travel industry with our latest products and solutions, combined with our in-depth knowledge of the sector and our global reach

industry with our latest products and solutions, combined with our in-depth knowledge of the sector and our global reach."

"I am grateful to Turkish Airlines for their support as

Ibrahim Koyman has been appointed to head up the new distributor operations. Based in Istanbul, Koyman will oversee the company's business development strategy as well as the day-to-day operations. 🇹🇷

Gateway launches hotel booking technology in ME

Gateway, an online hotel booking engine providing Middle East agents with B2B booking solutions and dedicated customer care and support, has announced that contracts with UAE travel agencies have increased 105% between April and Oct 2014, compared to the same period in the previous year. Gateway also introduced its new technology 'application programming interface' (API) in the Middle East, which offers extended functionality for travel agents.

Gateway's Hotel API allows travel agents, who already have their own booking system, to easily integrate Gateway's wide portfolio of 200,000 unique hotels. These hotels can then be booked, modified and cancelled within their own booking interface. The new API also offers an offline data component, which has been added to provide a treasure trove of hotel information, including a detailed hotel description, pictures, facilities, etc.

Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah's Royal Suite

Located in the heart of the Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah with sea views of the Dubai skyline and Palm Jumeirah, the Royal Suite provides guests with the ultimate luxury of privacy. A sprawling 1567m², including balconies and indoor areas, the sanctuary takes the grand title of largest suite in

Dubai. The journey begins as guests arrive in a classic chauffeured Bentley or landing their private helicopter on the seaside helipad. Guests are greeted by the Personal Concierge, a key attribute of True Waldorf Service and escorted to the private lift, located in the exclusive VIP arrival area.

Aviation to drive 37% of Dubai economy

Since establishment in the 1950, the aviation industry in Dubai has come a long way. Today, roughly, 90,000 flights per quarter are available to nearly 18 million passengers using the Dubai International Airport. With the World Expo set to take stage in Dubai in 2020, conservative estimates stake 37.5 per cent of Dubai's GDP by the aforementioned year to just aviation and related services.

TT BUREAU

The figures are a part of a larger study done by the global research firm Oxford Economics as a follow up to a similar report in 2011. His Highness

Between 2003 and 2013, the number of passengers carried by airlines in ME and North Africa has increased by more than 300 per cent

and tourism industry of the Gulf nation.

Aviation in the last half century has shown substantial growth, a trend Dubai and the rest of Emirates has been party to. As stated by His

playing a bigger role in world air traffic than ever before. According to figures from Airbus, in less than 10 years between 2003 and 2013, the number of passengers carried by airlines in Middle East and North Africa has increased by more than 300 per cent. "Previously, European airports were the default hubs for travellers flying East to West, or North to South. Today, more and more



Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum
Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, Chairman of Dubai Airports and President of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority

backed up by the Oxford Economic report which affirms in 2013 a passenger going through Dubai International airport could catch connecting flights to 81 per cent of the world's cities. This is naturally not simply applicable to passenger transport.

The overall economic impact of both aviation and tourism related activities will rise to US\$53.1 billion in 2020. To facilitate this growth, infrastructure is already moved into place. It includes an increase in airport capacity which encompasses expansion of airspace, airfield, stands and terminal areas to allow Dubai International to accommodate 60 per cent more aircraft stands by 2015 and serve 90 million passengers

by 2018. By 2020, Dubai International is estimated to receive 126.5 million passengers, almost 30 per cent higher than its original 2010 assessments.

Other Gulf Nations and the Middle East at large are attempting to follow Dubai's example to use aviation and tourism as an economy driver. The airlines are also expected to face some challenges like aero politics, global economics, etc. But His Highness Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum is confident that prospects for Arab carriers are bright as they continue to compete commercially while working together through platforms like AACO (Arab Air Carriers Organisation) to confront issues of common interest collectively. 🇦🇪

Sheikh Ahmed Bin Saeed Al Maktoum, Chairman and Chief Executive of Emirates Airline and Group, Chairman of Dubai Airports and President of the Dubai Civil Aviation Authority elucidates on the drastic growth shown by the aviation

Highness "47 years ago, in 1967, the world's airlines transported less than 300 million passengers annually. Today, airlines serve an estimated 3.3 billion passengers. What's more, the 31 airline members of AACO are



travellers are flying via hubs in our region as we can offer better connection times and a better travel experience. This huge shift in global aviation is a suc-

cess story for us. As individual airlines and together with our home countries, we have made the world sit up and notice," Sheikh Ahmed further informed. This statement is