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Special  arabian travel market issue

A Bigger & Better ATM 2015

The Arabian Travel Market 2015, scheduled for May 4-7 in Dubai, promises to be bigger and better. For 21 years, the exhibition has provided opportunities for business meetings between organisations from around the globe. This year, the market's spotlight theme is Family Travel, besides Travel Technology, Business Travel, Luxury and Wellness.



SUSMITA GHOSH

Over 23,500 visitors came to the Arabian Travel Market in 2014, marking a 12 per cent increase in overall visitors compared to 2013, with 14,838 meeting requests made. ATM 2015 is set to be even bigger with another new hall being added.

During ATM 2014, Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) launched an international promotion campaign, updated stakeholders, partners about its recent activities and plans for the near future.

"In general, we, at ATDD, had done our best to make use of such an international event in every possible way. We are taking part in ATM 2015 for the fourth consecutive year," informed **Faisal Ahmed Al Nuaimi**, General



Faisal Ahmed Al Nuaimi
General Manager
Ajman Tourism Development
Department

The results of ATM 2014 included that Ajman tourism revenues reached nearly AED 300 mn, compared to AED 220 mn in 2013

Manager, Ajman Tourism Development Department.

ATDD works as part of Ajman Vision 2021. Each activity held by ATDD should



Russel G.H. Sharpe
COO, Citymax Hotel
Landmark Hospitality

We have decided to build 3 new hotels to be ready by 2017 as World Expo 2020 will need a lot more mid-market rooms

serve as one of the targets of such vision. "Our success is measured by the results of the tourism sectors in Ajman. The results of ATM 2014 included that Ajman tourism



Freddy Farid
Area General Manager
Gloria Hotels & Resorts

We have noticed an increasing number of Dubai visitors from the business and leisure sector in 2015

revenues reached nearly AED 300 million, compared to AED 220 million in 2013. The number of hotel and hotel apartments' guests in 2014 increased to 850,000,



Kobkarn Wattanavrangkul
Minister of Tourism and Sport
Tourism Authority, Thailand

We would be implementing marketing strategies to attract ME tourists through 'Discover Thainess 2015'

compared to about 600,000 in 2013. Average hotel occupancy rates reached 65 per cent. The number of hotel establishments in Ajman reached 31 in 2014, com-



Khaled Sharabassy
General Manager
Tilal Liwa Hotel

We offer different customized packages for guests to discover the true spirit of Arabia

pared to 29 in 2013," Al Nuaimi said.

The launch project of Ajman Tourism Investment

Contd. on page 4 ►



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Sharjah woos Chinese travellers

Sharjah has been in the spotlight as a popular destination for Chinese tourists as Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) led the Emirate's participation in China Outbound Tourism and Travel Market (COTTM) exhibition recently for the second year.



TT BUREAU

Sharjah's participation in the specialised international exhibition that attracts global industry stakeholders is especially significant this year considering that the Emirate is celebrating its recognition as the Capital of Arab Tourism for 2015.

On Sharjah's participation in the COTTM Beijing 2015, H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa, Director General, SCTDA, says, "Sharjah's successful participation at COTTM Beijing in 2014 helped strengthen its position



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Director General
SCTDA

in the Chinese tourism market and enhanced its relations with the Chinese and Asian stakeholders. We look forward to welcoming more tourists

from China this year as we celebrate Sharjah's recognition as the Capital of Arab Tourism for 2015."

Sharjah has emerged as a major destination for tourists from China due to its safe and secure environment, family friendly atmosphere, wide selection of hotels and its cultural offerings. In view

Sharjah's hotels received more than 35,000 Chinese guests during 2014, registering an increase of over 130 per cent against the 2013 figures when the emirate received 15,000 Chinese guests.

The number of Chinese guests in Sharjah constituted 1.8 per cent of total number of

positive impact of SCTDA's participation in prominent exhibitions in the Chinese tourism market.

The SCTDA Director General says that COTTM Beijing has opened a new window for Sharjah to the Asian markets, which have emerged as the most promising outbound tourism market in the world. Tourists from the Asian market are increasingly attracted to the Middle East because of its rich history, culture and a plethora of leisure and entertainment options, including luxury hotels and facilities.

The number of visitors from Asian countries to Sharjah registered sustained growth in the past few years with hotels in the Emirate recording 19 per cent increase in the number of Asian guests. Sharjah received more than 313,000 Asian guests in 2014 as

against more than 263,000 in 2013, added H.E. Al Midfa.

The Sharjah pavilion at the COTTM Beijing was a blend of tradition and modernity and drew attention to the Emirate's celebrations over the winning of the Arab Tourism Capital Award for 2015, a recognition Sharjah earned on the basis of its cultural diversity, heritage and distinct tourism experience.

Sharjah's hotels received more than 35,000 Chinese guests during 2014, registering an increase of over 130 per cent against the 2013 figures when the Emirate received 15,000 Chinese guests

of the growing visitor numbers from China, Air Arabia recently started services to Urumqi, the largest city in Western China.

Highlighting the growing Chinese interest in Sharjah, H.E. Al Midfa stated that

international guests received during the year 2014, a 124 per cent jump over 2013 when they accounted for 0.8 per cent. The number of Asian guests of diverse nationalities in the Emirate's hotels also grew from 13.4 per cent to 15.9 per cent, highlighting the

Marhaba, China

- ◆ Number of Chinese guests in Sharjah constituted 1.8% of total number of international guests received during the year 2014, a 124% jump over 2013 when they accounted for 0.8%
- ◆ Sharjah's hotels received more than 35,000 Chinese guests during 2014, an increase of over 130% against the 2013 figures when the emirate received 15,000 Chinese guests



91% repeat exhibitors@ATM 2015

► Contd. from page 1

Map is now completed and its results will be announced on the first day of ATM 2015. Also, ATDD, every year, produces a promotional video on tourism potentials in Ajman. The 2015 film will be launched during the days of the event.

ATM 2014 was indeed very successful for Citymax Hotel as there were a number of pronouncements especially on mid market hotels. There was an announcement of another 20,000 rooms coming into this market segment. "We are excited and have decided to build 3 new hotels, to be ready by 2017 as World Expo 2020 will need lot more mid-market rooms," expressed **Russel G.H. Sharpe**, COO, Citymax Hotel, Landmark Hospitality. "We are looking at doubling the size of our portfolio in 3 years and again doubling it in another 5 years. Of late, the biggest por-

tion of travellers pouring in generally from India, China, and Far East," he added.

"Along with DTCM we are making new initiatives to start promoting this mid market segment in Dubai. Hence, we can able to see different types of travellers. Henceforth, the travel trade can have better packages and reasonable prices," he further stated.

Gloria Hotels and Resorts had announced two new properties joining the group during ATM last year. With the continuing expansion in the UAE, the Gulf and the Middle East, the hotel expects to meet and establish relations with new partners, strengthen relationship with existing partners while promoting expansions. "We have noticed 2.5 per cent increase in travel trade business in 2014 compared to 2013 which is a good sign of growth in the market. We are regularly participating

in road shows, workshops and travel trade shows in UAE and overseas. In 2014 we have organised more than 45 familiarisation trips for our overseas partners mostly from CIS countries, India, Germany and Turkey," commented **Freddy Farid**, Area General Manager, Gloria Hotels & Resorts.

"We have recently received a 4-star classification for our Dubai property – Yassat Gloria Hotel Apartments. We also have a huge renovation plan ongoing in Gloria Hotel. In terms of business we have already noticed an increasing number of Dubai visitors from the business and leisure sector in 2015 and expect further growth in this segment by end of the year," he added.

"ATM 2014 was extremely successful for Tourism Authority of Thailand as it provided the ideal opportunity for the regions' travel professionals and consumers to meet

with the delegation from all over Thailand and discover varied attractions which the country can offer the Middle East tourist," asserted **Kobkarn Wattanavangkul**, Minister of Tourism and Sport Tourism Authority, Thailand. "We would be implementing a range of marketing strategies

to attract Middle East tourists through the 'Discover Thainess 2015' campaign which includes 'Thai Experience', 'Thai Way of Life' and 'Thai Culture'. We would also be focussing on niche segments like Wedding and Honeymoons, Medical Tourism, Green Tourism, Gastronomy Tourism, Shopping and Sports Tourism.

While the UAE remained in top position bringing an estimate of 124,000 visitors to Thailand in 2013 other GCC countries were also seen emerging as potential expanding markets including Oman, KSA and Kuwait. In 2015, the Middle East will remain an important source market with an increase in total number of arrival by 31.05 per cent in 2014. Visitors from the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait already comprise the highest spending category of visitors to Thailand. Tilal Liwa Hotel to target growing markets at Arabian Travel

Market as attractive packages to attract families and groups looking for leisure getaway, will be unveiled

Khaled Sharabassy, General Manager, Tilal Liwa Hotel, mentioned, "The hotel is now positioned as an ideal destination for a perfect leisure travel getaway. We offer different customized packages for guests to discover the true spirit of Arabia. In addition, the hotel arranges complimentary return transfers to leisure guests from Abu Dhabi airport to the hotel based on a minimum of 3-nights stay only. This season, we have organised more adventure activities." The property anticipates a busy summer season thus it has prepared very attractive and competitive packages with extra added value to target families and groups. Tilal Liwa Hotel will be exhibiting in Arabian Travel Market 2015 under the management of Danat Hotels & Resorts. 🌟

Connecting Travel Trade

- ◆ In ATM 2014, 89% of visitors were completely or very satisfied with the quality of the exhibitors of the show and 14,780 meetings requests were made through My ATM (the online diary networking tool)
- ◆ 91% of exhibitors are likely to exhibit again and 87% of exhibitors are very satisfied or completely satisfied that ATM delivers the right visitors to them
- ◆ 66% of exhibitors attend ATM to gain new sales leads

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Expo excitement adds to ATM appeal

The Arabian Travel Market (ATM), scheduled to be held from May 4-7, 2015, in Dubai, is one such mega travel and tourism event that is held for four days, but is talked about round the year. The world has recognised Dubai as a happening place by choosing the city for Expo 2020. Tourism trends in the City of Gold, where 200 nationalities mingle in perfect harmony, amaze everyone.

The message shared at the launch session of the ATM 2014 seminar series was loud and clear. Dubai's goal of doubling the 10 million visitors welcomed in 2012 to 20 million by 2020 is the collective responsibility of all industry stakeholders. Middle East carriers, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA), saw an 8.7 per cent rise in passenger traffic in February 2015 compared 2014. While the tourism sector in the region itself is in a buoyant mood, the family travel market has been grabbing special attention, and not without no reason.

As per Thomson Reuters' data, the value of the global family tourism market was US\$140 billion in 2013 and is set to rise over US\$180 billion by 2018 with growth expected to continue at a rate of 4.79 per cent annually until 2020, compared with just 3.8 per cent overall tourism growth. It is for this reason that ATM 2015 has named 'Family Travel' as its spotlight theme.

A latest YouGov report has also revealed that the top three luxury holiday destinations for MENA residents are UAE (14%), Italy (10%) and Turkey (5%). Top-end hotels can profit from this trend with over a third of MENA residents usually staying in luxury hotels when travelling for leisure. ATM 2015 promises to be bigger and better with the announcement of an additional hall as the organisers look to build on record-breaking achievements. Going by the positive track record, accomplishing the mission may not be a hard task.

Cruise holidays sail steadily

Cruise awareness in the Middle East has grown over the years and more people are now trying to experience this concept. However, there is still a lot of opportunity for the growth of cruise tourism. One of the objectives of Travel Matrix is to popularize cruising as a primary holiday choice.

Being a cruise industry veteran with 20 years of experience in the Middle East cruise industry, I thought it is time to establish my own company, Travel Matrix in Dubai. We are engaged primarily in promoting cruise holidays to the Middle Eastern guests with the support of the travel trade partners. Launched by the industry specialist with an impressive track record, we expect Travel Matrix to make an indelible mark in promoting cruise holidays in the Middle East.

We have a team of highly experienced cruise specialists engaged in educating and training our trade partners on promoting and selling cruises. We also communicate, through various channels, to the guests the benefits of cruising by visiting multiple destination, hassle free travelling, best value for money, plenty of onboard offerings and so on.

Effective January 1, 2015, Travel Matrix has been appointed as the sole Middle East Representative for Celebrity Cruises, the cruise line with a passionate dedication to providing guests with a cruise experience that embodies modern luxury and fulfilling the travel industry's need for a high-quality, premium cruise product at an intelligent price.

We are extremely excited about our newly estab-

lished company. Our focus is on familiarizing cruising as the most preferred vacation choice for our guests. I would like to express our thanks to Celebrity Cruises for giving us the opportunity to represent them in the Middle East. With more ships in the pipeline, new and exciting itineraries in

Celebrity Cruises is building two new ships that will set the standard for premium world travel and deliver the next-gen modern luxury experiences that our guests know & love



2015 and more importantly sailing out of Abu Dhabi in 2016/17, we are confident of taking Celebrity Cruises to the next level.

Since the first sailing of Celebrity Cruises in 1990, it has evolved into being recognized as an industry leader, praised for providing spacious, stylish and sophisticated interiors, dining experiences elevated to an art form, personalized service, with a guest-to-staff ratio of nearly 2:1 and unexpected, trendsetting onboard activities, all designed to provide an unmatched experience for vacationers' precious time. The introduction of Celebrity Cruises' stylish, widely heralded Solstice Class of ships has reinforced Celebrity's position as an industry leader.

The modern day guests demand for a luxurious, relaxing and hassle free vacation. What sets Celebrity Cruises apart from other vacation choices today is our passionate dedication to providing guests with a cruise vacation experience that embodies modern luxury. Celebrity's

family fun concept provides something to keep everyone, from toddlers to teens to grandparents, entertained at sea.

Celebrity Cruises continue to enhance the kinds of destination experiences. Our unique 7 night itineraries in Europe, where most of it can be combined without any repeat ports have been a tremendous success. For 2015, we have recently introduced our new "Signature Event Sailings". These sailings coincide with iconic events happening around the world and our ships will be there (like Carnival in Rio, British Open in Scotland, Chinese New Year in Hong Kong).

Celebrity Cruises is building two new ships that will set the standard for premi-

um world travel and deliver the next generation of modern luxury experiences that our guests know and love. On this stunning new ship we will bring our guests even closer to the must-see destinations of the world, while indulging them onboard in the most luxurious accommodations, the finest culinary experiences, and the best hospitality delivered by our dedicated staff.

We are very pleased to see that the interest in cruising in the Middle East is growing year on year. Of course many factors contribute to this success, including the travel agents who remain at the core of the business and the guests who come home from their cruise and keep the business thriving through word of mouth because they enjoyed their vacation.

We expect this positive trend to continue and help us grow further and stronger in the coming years.



Lakshmi Durai
Chief Executive Officer
Travel Matrix
Middle East Representative
for Celebrity Cruises

Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Al Rigga announced

Carlson Rezidor further strengthens its portfolio in Dubai with the announcement of the Park Inn by Radisson Hotel Apartments Al Rigga.

Scheduled to open in May 2015, the vibrant mid-market property will be the second Park Inn by Radisson in operation in Dubai. It will comprise

149 studios and apartments, an all-day dining restaurant, a speciality restaurant, a banquet hall, a health club, and an outdoor pool. The signing brings

Carlson Rezidor's total portfolio in the UAE to 16 hotels with more than 3,800 rooms in operation and under development.

Stronger Cruise Arabia alliance@Miami

To promote the Arabian Gulf as a cruise tourism hotspot, Dubai, Abu Dhabi, and Oman came together to attend their second year as Cruise Arabia with tourism authorities of Qatar and Sharjah participating for the first time.



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The Oman Ministry of Tourism, Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority (TCA Abu Dhabi), Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DTCM) and newly joined Qatar Tourism Authority (QTA) and Sharjah Commerce and

Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) came together under the Cruise Arabia Alliance to represent the Arabian Gulf at the Cruise Shipping Miami, the cruise industry's global event ran recently in Miami, USA. To represent Dubai at the Cruise Shipping Miami convention,

DTCM was joined by nine other public and private sector stakeholders from the industry. Alongside Oman Ministry of Tourism were a number of Omani tour operators with the Abu Dhabi Tourism & Culture Authority present on the stand with co-participants.



Hamad bin Mejren, Executive Director, Dubai Tourism

"Cruise Shipping Miami is a key event for the global cruise industry and we are glad to have a stronger representation of the region this year. We are amidst a busy cruise season with over 150,000 cruise tourist and 30



ship calls only in the month of January 2015. This confirms that our target to receive 450,000 cruise tourists by 2016 is achievable. We are optimistic on the benefits of this convention from our previous 15 consecutive years of participation."

Khalid Al Zadjali, Director-Tourism Events, Oman Ministry of Tourism

"Our participation with Cruise Arabia in 'Cruise Shipping Miami' has yielded fruitful results and substantially contributed to our strategic tourism campaigns. This is our second year of taking part in



Cruise Arabia's series of road shows, which aims to position the Arabian Gulf as a premier cruise destination. Similar to our inaugural participation, we received good results and positive feedback."

Sultan Al Dhaheeri, Acting Executive Director Tourism, TCA Abu Dhabi

"TCA Abu Dhabi is working in partnership with Abu Dhabi Ports and Etihad Airways at Cruise Shipping Miami to provide a range of value-added services relating to porting, marketing and promotional activities to encourage cruise lines to consider home-porting in Abu Dhabi."



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→ Pricing Analyst (Job Code:002):

To review and evaluate pricing proposals based on financial trend analysis, market dynamics and regulatory issues. Also assess impact of various promotional activities and execute pricing initiatives. The applicant should be a graduate with a minimum of 3 years of demonstrated work experience in pricing, sales support, inventory management, distribution or sales function. Knowledge of related accounting and BSP processes will be preferred.

→ Route Managers (Job Code:003):

Responsible to optimize and maximize revenue opportunities for flights in assigned market territories. Monitor revenue impact of various marketing/sales promotional activities and inspire to build a motivated team of high performing analysts. Provide forecast to the sales, pricing and scheduling units and thereby assist in devising tactical changes to capture incremental revenues. The applicant should be a Post Graduate with a minimum of 5 years of demonstrated work experience in Airline Revenue Management with strong analytical skills and keen attention to details. Provided the candidate has 10 years of experience in Airline Revenue Management, graduate degree can be considered. Knowledge of RM Systems is an added advantage.

→ Route Analyst (Job Code:004):

To manage inventory allocation / discount class allocation based on guidelines, reduce spoilage & dilution on flights based on pre agreed targets. Critical Flight Management, Key Performance Indicator (KPI) analysis and post flight reviews and forecast generated by Airmax are to be done on regular basis. The applicant should be a Post Graduate (preferably in business, economics, statistics or related field) with a minimum of 3 years of demonstrated work experience in managing flights, routes and Group Revenue Management in the Aviation space. Provided the candidate has 5 years of experience in Airline Revenue Management, graduate degree can be considered. Should possess good analytical and problem solving skills, with attention to details.

For all the above positions the candidate must possess strong interpersonal, communication & presentation skills.

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Hattrick win for Golden Tulip Al Barsha

Louvre Hotels Group in Paris has announced Golden Tulip Al Barsha Hotel as the winner of 'Hotel of the Year 2014-MENA'. This award is presented to the best hotel of the region based on overall quality performance, branding and guests satisfaction.



TT BUREAU

Golden Tulip Hotel Al Barsha has won 'Hotel of the Year 2014-MENA' for the third time. The hotel has been acknowledged for displaying high hospitality standards on three separate occasions, with its previous awards coming in 2013 and 2011.

Tarek Lotfy, General Manager, Golden Tulip Hotel

that the team carries for the hotel, guests, business partners, company and to the owners. "Without the team's effort we wouldn't have reached such level and this has put a responsibility on the team to perform the best always," said Lotfy.

He further informed, "This award is due to the stability of the management as some of them in the team are



Tarek Lotfy
General Manager
Golden Tulip Hotel Al Barsha

This award is due to the stability of the management as some of them in the team are working for the property since over two to four years now

Al Barsha is very thankful and proud with his team's achievement and believes that it is the result of all hard work, commitment, integrity

working for the property since over 2 to 4 years now. Continuous training from our MENA region office and also the support received from the

investors by providing all the requirement, all the needs for flexibility of the management of the investors to give the tools to the hotel team to work. The staff participation in the operations and the social activity, the management provide to the hotel staff help to unify them working together as one team."

"We are promising our customer and guests that we will keep modifying, updating and developing both the services and the product of the hotel to be up to their expectation. Hopefully we would be able to get the Award 'Hotel of the Year' once again in 2015," Tarek mentioned, presenting special thanks to the investing company, Mirchi International Events & Usman Khan and to the Regional Office Management for their support to achieve this award.

Golden Tulip Al Barsha is a hotel with variety of facilities. The Ristretto lobby café at the hotel offers fine coffee and tea, pastries, bakeries, cookies for the guests in house and outsiders with formal design café lounge. Fresh restaurant offers fresh food all day dining with international buffet for breakfast,



dinner and A-la-carte menu around the clock. The famous theme nights are Chinese Night every Saturday, Healthy Food every Sunday, Pasta Night every Monday and Seafood Night every Wednesday. SKY Korean Restaurant offers one of the best Korean cuisine in Dubai. It's famous for its quality of food, which is home-made style. The Locker Room Sports Bar and Lounge, the largest sports bar in the city with 12 LCD

screens show all the world sports live from all over the world, offers 2 nights BBQ buffet (Thursday and Friday) inclusive of house beverage. The Catwalk Nightclub at Al Barsha offers special celebration on the weekends. The rooftop Spa, the specialist centre for massage — with all natural cure and treatment — the swimming pool, gym & sauna, Roz Saloon in addition to the back door fish restaurant "Serena" are some of the other amenities. 🌟

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Cove Rotana observes Earth Hour

The Cove Rotana Resort once again joined millions of others around the world in observing Earth Hour. Guests of The Cove Rotana Resort were encouraged to participate by turning off all non-essential lights, A/C, TV, and were invited to walk around the resort and enjoyed the natural breeze in support to this cause. A candle lighting ceremony was held in the hotel lobby and was joined by a large number of participants including hotel guests and colleagues.





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Turkish Airlines records 3.9% growth

Turkish Airlines recorded a positive growth of 3.9 per cent in passenger traffic from Abu Dhabi in 2014, compared to 2013. To celebrate the achievement, the airlines hosted the Annual Travel Agencies Awards and gala dinner event to honour travel agents in Abu Dhabi. The event, held at Khalidiya Palace hotel by Rotana, recognised partners for their continual support and contribution to driving not only the growth in passenger traffic from the Emirate, but also contributing to the 6.44 per cent total passenger growth in GCC markets compared to the previous year. The 'Best Increase Award' was presented to Akbar Travels of India Private.



Wooing German visitors

Alpha Tours Dubai is expecting to attract more than 80,000 German tourists in 2015, an increase of over 15% from 2014. Alpha Tours' partnership with one of the biggest tour operators in Germany has been attributed with this.

TT BUREAU

Alpha Tours held workshops with big German tour operators to update them with the new hotels and projects, selling Dubai to the German market and to encourage tourists to visit Dubai instead of going to other Euro countries like Spain, Canary Islands and some North African countries.



Samir Hamadeh
General Manager
Alpha Tours Dubai

Samir Hamadeh, General Manager, Alpha

Tours Dubai says, "Despite decrease in the value of the

euro, Alpha Tours is wooing Europeans to travel to Dubai. Some hotels in Dubai agreed to be paid in euro instead of dollars for that purpose."

"We are looking at increasing the number of tourists from East Europe by 30 per cent from some countries like Czech Republic, Romania, Slovenia Slovakia, among others," he adds.

"In cooperation with leading tour operator, JT Touristik, we have organised a promotion campaign in the German market, putting ads in the biggest TV channels in Germany, attracting artists and sports celebrities," Hamadeh says. Alpha Tours has moved to its new location in Business Bay and will soon launch a rebrand.

Europe connect

- Established in 1996, Alpha Tours holds a significant market share within the tourism sector of the UAE
- Alpha Tours top 10 markets include the UK, Russia, Germany, GCC, China and South East Asia, MENA, Italy, the USA among others
- It is expecting to attract more than 80,000 German tourists during 2015, an increase of over 15% from 2014.



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Decoding UAE's online travel space

The three co-founders of Musafir.com, Sachin Gadoya, Albert Dias and Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulla Al Thani saw a fantastic opportunity to crack into the online travel space and this led to the creation of Musafir.com.



TT BUREAU

Identifying the need of the hour and a gap in the UAE's online travel space, Musafir.com has grown to become the first premium-experi-

happens to be in efficiency, service quality and ease of use. "Those are the USPs we believe in and we have stood behind since the day this company was founded," says **Albert Dias**, Co-founder, Musafir.com.

Talking about the market share, Dias, informed, "As an OTA, the

Middle East doesn't stand in the place of other markets where we have ordered in statistics across the market. We are fairly confident that in the B2B online space we currently count for 15 to 20 per cent of the market space." In UAE, the numbers indicate that roughly 20 to 25 per cent business comes to online travel

agencies and the remaining tends to be with traditional businesses.

Happy with their growth in this space, Musafir.com is poised for further expansion. "We are tapping other markets in the GCC region including Qatar and Saudi Arabia. An Arabic website is also being devel-

oped to cater to a lot of native Arabic speakers," says **Sachin Gadoya**, Managing Director, Musafir.com. Regarding the B2B arm of the company, "80 per cent of our business tends to be driven from the B2B as opposed to B2C space. It is predominantly corporate business," Dias further stated. 📱



Albert Dias
Co-founder, Marketing & Technology
Director, Musafir.com

80% of our business tends to be driven from the B2B as opposed to B2C. It is predominantly corporate and on the OTA aspect of the business agents count for less than 5%

ence travel website in the region. Offering flights to over 3,000 destinations, hotel stays in over 85,000 properties around the world, endless holiday experiences are now available at a click of a button.



Sachin Gadoya
Managing Director
Musafir.com

We are tapping other markets in the GCC region including Qatar and Saudi Arabia. An Arabic website is also being developed to cater to a lot of natives

Generally, there is very little difference between other OTAs and Musafir. It's mainly in the actual technology that goes behind a lot of these products. At the end of the day it is about making sure that the technology works well and efficiently for the customers. So, the real difference



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Air Seychelles-Etihad sponsor Seychelles Carnival



■ Air Seychelles, the national air-

line of the Republic of Seychelles, and Etihad Airways, the national carrier of the United Arab Emirates, have renewed their sponsorship of the Seychelles International Carnival of Victoria for 2015. The announcement was made following the signing of a MoU

return flight tickets for the event, preferential cargo rates and an excess baggage allowance per passenger, worth a combined value of SCR 5 million. Etihad Airways holds equity investments in airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Aer Lingus, Alitalia, Jet Airways and

between **Manoj Papa**, CEO of Air Seychelles and **Sherin Naiken**, CEO of the Seychelles Tourism Board. As the official airline partners,



Virgin Australia, and is in the process of formalising an equity investment in Swiss-based Etihad Regional, operated by Darwin Airline.

return flight tickets for the event, preferential cargo rates and an excess baggage allowance per passenger, worth a combined value of SCR 5 million. Etihad Airways holds equity investments in airberlin, Air Serbia, Air Seychelles, Aer Lingus, Alitalia, Jet Airways and

Two good: Emirates & Qantas

With more than two million codeshare customers travelling on both the carriers, Qantas and Emirates Airlines celebrate the second anniversary of its airline partnership. From May 2015, Emirates and Qantas will be flying a total of seven daily A380 services from Dubai to Australia.

TT BUREAU

"The partnership has achieved important benefits for customers offering an integrated network, countless opportunities to earn and redeem points, setting the standard in customer experience," informed **Gareth Evans**, CEO, Qantas International.

"Customer satisfaction levels have reached record heights with a double digit increase in advocacy scores, received by international travellers. Qantas continues to develop its partnership strategy," he further stated. "Together we are taking more people to more places with Qantas customers now being able to access more than 70 Emirates destinations in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa."



Gareth Evans
CEO
Qantas International

Qantas customers now being able to access more than 70 Emirates destinations

Qantas Frequent Flyer members have flown and earned points on 1.6 million segments. It has flown nearly



Thierry Antinori
Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates Airlines

Through this partnership we are providing more tourism to Australia, opening up trade opportunities

16 billion kilometres on the joint Qantas and Emirates network. "The Emirates and Qantas frequent

flyer programs also give customers expanded opportunities to earn and redeem points," said Evans.

Thierry Antinori, Executive Vice President and Chief Commercial Officer, Emirates Airlines explained, "Through this partnership we are providing more tourism to Australia, opening up trade opportunities and flying more Australians on our extensive global network. In addition, customers can earn and redeem frequent flyer rewards when travelling with either Emirates or Qantas." From May 2015, Emirates and Qantas will be flying a total of seven daily A380 services from Dubai to Australia, offering Australian and international passengers more chances to experience our flagship aircraft as well as Concourse A. 🇦🇺

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Airport expansion projects@GALF 2015

The 3rd edition of Global Airport Leaders' Forum (GALF) is slated to take place alongside the 15th Airport Show in Dubai on May 11 and 12. It will have a stellar line-up of aviation industry stalwarts as speakers, including top decision-makers from the ICAO, IATA, ACI, SITA and EUROCONTROL.



SUSMITA GHOSH

Being organized by Reed Exhibitions Middle East, both the events will be held under the patronage of His Highness Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, President, Dubai Civil Aviation Authority (DCAA), Chairman, Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group.

His Highness Sheikh Ahmed said GALF has been bringing international aviation experts and leaders to Dubai for an unparalleled knowledge and expertise sharing experience which will contribute to our combined efforts towards the sustained growth of the global aviation industry.

"The importance of airports as global travel hubs has been growing. The mas-



Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum
President, DCAA, Chairman, Dubai Airports and Chairman and Chief Executive, Emirates Airline and Group

The massive airport expansions are needed to accommodate the growth in air traffic and airport development

sive airport expansions are needed to accommodate the



Daniyal Qureshi
Group Exhibition Director
Reed Exhibitions Middle East

The ME aviation industry is a key component of the region's economic diversification strategy

growth in air traffic and airport development continues to play



Angela Gittens
Director General of Airports Council International (ACI)

Airports are no longer simply points of departure and arrival, they are highly complex businesses in their own right

a strategic role in our future growth agenda. The huge and



Khalifa Al Zaffin
Executive Chairman
Dubai Aviation City Corporation

Airport Show and GALF are apex platforms that facilitate meaningful debates by bringing together key stakeholders

consistent aviation investments will have a positive

impact for all the industry stakeholders," he said.

Daniyal Qureshi, Group Exhibition Director at Reed Exhibitions Middle East, said, "The Middle East aviation industry is a key component of the region's economic diversification strategy and has been amongst the fastest growing globally. The pace of modernisation and expansion is expected to even increase over the next decade."

He added, "Regional aviation leaders are keen to develop the most technologically advanced, passenger friendly and operationally efficient facilities in the world. GALF has become an annual industry think-tank that presents global best practices, new ideas and a highly-essential opportunity for the regional aviation industry to

Contd. on page 14 ►



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Yas Island Rotana is 10 minutes from Abu Dhabi International Airport, 20 minutes to Abu Dhabi Business district and 40 minutes from Dubai. The hotel's 308 spacious rooms and suites are designed with international flair to suit guests seeking privacy, personalised service and unparalleled quality. Dining venues suit all tastes from stylish to informal, serving a delightful fusion of International cuisine.

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rotana.com

Airport modernisation plans on the anvil

► Contd. from page 13

cooperate with experts, innovators and industry leaders from around the world."

Angela Gittens, Director General of Airports Council International (ACI), a key GALF-2015 speaker, commented, "Airports are no longer simply points of departure and arrival, they are highly complex businesses in their own right which require the coordination of a vast number of stakeholders if safety, security and efficiency are to be maximised."

Another key speaker, Eng. **Khalifa Al Zaffin**, Executive Chairman of Dubai Aviation City Corporation which is developing Dubai World Central (DWC), informed, "The UAE has always been very passionate about its airlines and airports. The UAE has a long-term commitment towards the industry. Success in tackling airspace and regulatory issues are the key to sustained growth. Airport Show

and GALF are apex platforms that facilitate meaningful debates by bringing together key stakeholders."



Sultan Al Mansoori
UAE's Minister of Economy and
Chairman, General Civil Aviation
Authority (GCAA)

His Excellency Eng. Sultan Al Mansoori, UAE's Minister of Economy and Chairman of General Civil Aviation Authority (GCAA), will deliver a key note address on the opening day. The Middle East is expected to see US\$100 billion in airport development over the next five years. About \$40 billion airport investments are in place in the GCC, with the UAE topping the list. The UAE airports handled 101 million passengers in 2014. 📸

Redefining travel commerce

Travelport held two product roadshows in Dubai in February and March 2015. It attracted some of the most important travel agencies and industry colleagues from across the United Arab Emirates. The events welcomed over 100 agents from across Dubai and the Northern Emirates



Designed to familiarise existing and potential customers with the latest Travelport products, the roadshows redefined travel commerce, help streamline their businesses and grow their revenues.

"Travelport's 2015 Solutions Road show has been a huge success. We've seen exceptional attendance from the travel agency customers across Dubai, and



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

the Northern Emirates. We have also received positive

feedback on the events and in particular, our products. Travelport is leading the way with its innovative solutions that are adding real value to our customers," said **Rabih Saab**, President and Managing Director for Africa, Middle East and South Asia, Travelport. Delegates spent time exploring Travelport's indus-

try leading and point of sale solution 'Travelport Smartpoint', discovering how it can save travel agents' time and money. It also explained how Travelport's unrivalled content can be searched, sold and booked efficiently, in the same workflow, while providing increased opportunities for up selling.

About Travelport

- ◆ It is a Travel Commerce Platform providing distribution, technology, payment and other solutions for the \$7 trillion global travel and tourism industry
- ◆ Travelport has leveraged its domain expertise in the travel industry to design a pioneering B2B payment solution that addresses the needs of travel intermediaries to efficiently and securely settle travel transactions
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Gain first-hand experience at Amadeus

Trade visitors to Amadeus's stand at ATM 2015 will gain a first-hand experience of the upgraded 'Selling Platform Connect' (SELCO), a fully online professional booking and fulfilment platform. With customisation and personalisation as its key attributes, SELCO provides travel agencies access to their customers' bookings from anywhere in the world, from any device with an internet connection.



TT BUREAU

Amadeus is all set to launch its research study, 'Middle East Online Travel Review' during ATM 2015. The report will provide key insights in to hybrid travel agencies that sell across both online and offline channels. The report will also offer a micro analysis for hotels looking at brand affiliation and the impact of online penetrations.

Antoine Medawar,
Vice President, Middle East

and North Africa, Amadeus, says, "ATM 2015 provides the ideal opportunity to showcase our portfolio of cutting edge travel technology solutions that enable our customers to stay well ahead of the competition in an increasingly dynamic trade environment. As a key member of ATM, Amadeus aims to leverage the platform to redefine the travel landscape through developing effective and innovative collaborations with customers and partners alike."



Antoine Medawar
Vice President, Middle East and North Africa, Amadeus

Furthermore, Amadeus will host four seminars titled Hala Amadeus, Travel Wizard, Trends in Online Travel and Fraud/Payments, Hotel and Business Intelligence.

The first seminar, Hala Amadeus, to be organised by Amadeus Saudi Arabia,

will highlight the newly-launched application that offers live updates on industry news, products, and campaigns directly from Amadeus.

Another seminar, Travel Wizard, will showcase the application's graphic user interface (GUI) and the booking process flow, linking seamlessly to control credit limit, service fee manager, quotation management, quality control, back office and business intelligence.

Trends in Online Travel and Fraud/Payments, the third thought session, will highlight the growing security concerns in the e-commerce industry and explore solutions to counter frauds and make secure payments.

Amadeus@ATM 2015

- ▶ Amadeus will host four seminars titled Hala Amadeus, Travel Wizard, Trends in Online Travel and Fraud/Payments, Hotel and Business Intelligence
- ▶ Hala Amadeus will highlight the newly-launched application that offers live updates on industry news, products, and campaigns directly from Amadeus
- ▶ Travel Wizard will showcase the application's graphic user interface (GUI) and the booking process flow, linking seamlessly to control credit limit, service fee manager, quotation management, quality control, back office and business intelligence
- ▶ Trends in Online Travel and Fraud/Payments will highlight the growing security concerns in the e-commerce industry and explore solutions to counter frauds and make secure payments
- ▶ Seminar on Hotel and Business Intelligence will introduce participants to the significant benefits of Big Data

The final seminar on Hotel and Business Intelligence will introduce participants to the significant benefits of Big Data. Highlighting

solutions catering to the hotel industry, the seminar will also explore the challenges of offline hotel bookings for travel agencies.



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AJMAN: Where modernity

Combining the wonders of history and archaeology, the Emirate of Ajman offers a unique experience with recreational, ecological and religious attractions. Ancient archaeological sites showcase the heritage of the Emirate while Ajman's castles and forts, majestic mountains and spacious valleys provide a rich backdrop for the steady growth of hospitality and entertainment sectors.

TT BUREAU

"We are proud to make a significant contribution to the global eminence of the United Arab Emirates. Ajman's unique diversity, sustainable development and tourism initiatives combine to attract investment, create jobs, and raise the profile of the UAE," expressed **Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Humaid Al Nuaimi**, Chairman, Ajman Tourism Development Department.

"We, at the Ajman Tourism Development believe that tourism is a means of supporting multicultural communication, and we strive to maximise all the treasures we have to offer our visitors. We seize every opportunity to raise the public profile of Ajman and market it as one of

the world's best tourist destinations," he asserted.

Blessed with perennial sunshine and golden shores, Ajman is a hidden gem – a haven from the stresses of everyday life. Covering just 260 sq km, Ajman's modest size and relaxed rate of development is the Emirate's greatest appeal. Its beautiful 16km stretch of shoreline is best enjoyed with a stroll along the delightful Corniche, and its sandy beaches are heavenly for those who want to lie out under the sun or take a dip in the warm Gulf waters. "Indeed, the Gulf and the coastline are important here and Ajman is known as one of the largest dhow building centres in the region," asserted **Faisal Ahmed Al Nuaimi**, General Manager, ATDD. "While mainly modern boats



Sheikh Abdul Aziz bin Humaid Al Nuaimi
Chairman, Ajman Tourism Development Department

We, at the ATDD believe that tourism is a means of supporting multicultural communication, and we strive to maximise all the treasures we have to offer our visitors



Faisal Ahmed Al Nuaimi
General Manager
Ajman Tourism Development Department

The Gulf and the coastline are important here and the Emirate of Ajman is known as one of the largest dhow building centres in the region

Al Nuaimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the Union and Ruler of Ajman. Under Sheikh Humaid's leadership, Ajman has achieved steady economic growth; he is considered as the father of the community, often holding an open council so that his people can enjoy direct communication with him.

Ajman is a modern city that embraces its rich Arabian heritage and timeless cultural traditions.

The country's rulers are committed to safeguarding its heritage and are keen to promote cultural and sporting events that are traditional to the UAE, such as falconry, camel racing and traditional dhow sailing. Arabic culture, as seen through poetry, dancing, songs and traditional art, is encouraged, and weddings and celebrations are still colourful occasions of feasting and music.

Food & Drink

The UAE's trading past means that local cuisine uses a blend of ingredients imported from Asia and the Gulf region. Spices such as saffron and turmeric, along with nuts and dried fruit, add interesting

flavours to Emirati dishes. Fish is widely used in local cuisine, both freshly caught and preserved. Common Lebanese dishes are shawarma (lamb or chicken carved from a spit and served in a pita), falafel, hummus, and tabbouleh.

Dates are one of the most famed Middle Eastern delicacies; one of the few crops that thrive naturally across the Arabian Peninsula, they have been cultivated in the area for around 5,000 years. The serving of traditional coffee (kahwa) is an important social ritual in the UAE. Local coffee is mild, with a distinctive taste of cardamom and saffron, and it is served black without sugar.

National Dress

In general, the local population wears traditional dress in public. For men, this is the dishdasha or khanda: a white full length shirt dress, which is worn with a white or red checked head-dress, known as a gutra. This is secured with a black cord (agal). Women wear the black abaya; a long, loose robe that covers their normal clothes, plus



Ajman Museum



Ajman City

emerge from the yards these days, one may catch sight of a traditionally built wooden boat sailing out of the harbor," he added.

Further inland, the remote enclaves of Manama and Masfout enjoy the stunning backdrop of the Hajar Mountains, and provide an escape from the city and the summer heat. A melting pot of old and new, Ajman is a laid-back, sun-drenched destination with a world of adventure, wildlife and tradition to explore. Ajman's rich cultural inheritance and the customs of its society are the result of thousands of years of varying influences. The Emirate's human history can be traced back to around 3,000 BC following excavations at archaeological sites around the region.

Ajman's Ruling Family

The emirate of Ajman is ruled by **His Highness Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid**



Ajman Museum

meets timeless heritage

a headscarf called a sheyla. Some women also wear a thin black veil hiding their face.

The future looks bright for Ajman, with new luxury hotels, wildlife attractions and waterfront tourist resorts on the horizon.

As an up and coming area within the UAE, Ajman is attracting major developers who are keen to tap into the emirate's fantastic natural draws, including the varied wildlife of its mangrove creek and prime location on the Arabian Gulf coast. Destination hotels, marinas,



Zayed Mosque



Masfoot Castle



Ajman Cornish



AlZawrah

shopping centres and other attractions are all part of the changing landscape of Ajman

Hotels

Whether visiting for business or leisure, there are an increasing number of high-end, beachfront hotels appearing in Ajman. The newest on the scene is the Ajman Saray, a lavish beachfront offering from The Luxury Collection; while the Fairmont Ajman is expected to open in 2015. Both of these developments are situated in a prime position on Ajman's shoreline, with their own private beaches and views overlooking the turquoise waters of the Arabian Gulf.

Al Zorah Resorts

Stretching along a 7km length of waterfront in northern Ajman, this tourist resort is currently being developed by Al

Zorah (alzorah.ae). Located along Ajman's pristine beachfront and peaceful mangrove creek – and with views of Al Zorah Nature Reserve's diverse wildlife – this spectacular resort will feature five-star Oberoi and Lux hotels, creek-side residences, a beach club, a golf course (a first for Ajman), fine dining restaurants, a marina and a variety of watersports along the creek and at sea.

Ajman Marina

Ajman's attractive new 1.5 km marina district, near the Kempinski Hotel Ajman, partially opened in February 2014. When it is complete, this impressive waterfront project will include residential towers, hotels, a yacht club, restaurants, shops and a promenade for walkers, joggers and cyclists.

Ajman is conveniently located within a four-hour flight of one-third of the world's population.

Ajman is close to several major international airports – just a 15-minute journey from Sharjah International Airport, 30 minutes from Dubai International Airport, and just over two hours from Abu Dhabi International Airport. All three are global hubs, hosting carriers such as Emirates and Etihad that bring passengers from all over the world. Budget airlines including Air Arabia and flydubai also fly into the UAE. Further regional airports within easy reach of the emirate are located in Ras Al Khaimah and Fujairah, while Ajman is in the planning stages of construction on its own airport, expected to be up and running in the Al Manama area of the emirate by 2018.

Ajman Tourism with a difference

► Contd. from page 17

Ajman Museum

It was first established as Ajman Fort; one of the main historical attractions in the United Arab Emirates. It succeeded, over the years, to convey the reality of UAE life in different eras. This fort was the stronghold of the leadership, representing the political authority in the emirate and the first line of its defense. This historical landmark stands tall as a record of the exploits of ancestors and their immortal heritage, and thanks to a generous gesture of HH Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, Supreme Council Member and ruler of Ajman, he gifted this fort to the people of the United Arab Emirates by converting it into a fully-fledged museum.



Al-Murabbaa Watchtower

Located on the Ajman Corniche, Al-Murabbaa Watchtower is one of the most important tourist attractions in the emirate. It was built in the 1930s upon directives from late Sheikh Rashid Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi (1982-1981), the then ruler of Ajman to provide security for Ajman residents. It was rehabilitated in 2000 upon directives from His Highness Sheikh Humaid Bin Rashid Al-Nuaimi.



The Red Fort

The Red Fort was built during the time of Sheikh Humaid bin Abdul Aziz Al Nuaimi, and consists of four rooms and two towers, each made of two rooms. In 1986, following instructions from HH Sheikh Humaid bin Rashid Al Nuaimi, a complete restoration of the fort was completed and a third tower was added to the two older towers. Gravel and red plaster were used in the construction of the walls of the fort and hence it was named the red fort. Sandal wood was used in the beams and supports for the construction of the roofs.



Hassa Buweid (White Stones) Castle

This castle represents another legacy in the historical heritage of the Emirate of Ajman as Hassa Buweid is still present today since it was built by the late Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi in 1976 on top of a gravel and stones hill called "Hassa Buweid", in reference to its white color stones. The castle's main purpose was to provide protection and was designed as a square tower comprising two rooms similar, in architecture, to other castles built at the time.



Al Mareer Fort

This fort was built at the time of the late Sheikh Rashid bin Humaid Al Nuaimi, and it features a yard overlooking seven large rooms and a well, used in drinking water, in addition to a guard's tower. The fort was surrounded by palm trees irrigated by the old Al Manama Falaj (man-made water channels) that emanates from mountain tops relying on water supplied by rain fall. Ideally located in mountainous areas and valleys where high underground water levels were used to irrigate farms.



Masfout Gate

Masfout Gate was built by late Sheikh Rashid Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi in 1961. This is considered as a main entrance to the residents and visitors of Masfout. On this gate, those who come in read Arrivals are welcome, while those who go out read Good Bye if you want to go to Manama; otherwise another country. Beside the gate, there is a control tower for arresting skulkers.



Masfout Castle

Masfout Castle lies on top of mountains. It lies on the northern borders of Masfout. It is an old castle. It was built in the 19th century. The castle consists of two rooms and a gate. When late Sheikh Rashid Bin Humaid Al Nuaimi became governor in 1947, he renewed it. At that time, this castle (which was and still is lofty) was used as a means of protecting the area from bandits heading to the Sultanate of Oman.



Personalised traveller experience

Sabre Corporation has launched Sabre Marketplace Analytics, the newest data analytics solution that will enable airlines worldwide to capitalise on travel demand within the Sabre travel network marketplace. This capability will provide airlines with information to drive incremental revenue.



TT BUREAU

Sabre has recently launched a full suite of data-driven solutions across all of its customer segments to help customers leverage their own data to personalise traveller experience while pro-

vide their indirect and direct sales channels.

"At Sabre, our strategic investments have created capabilities in data science and analytics. A strong pipeline of solutions to help airlines, hotels and other

While there has been a lot of buzz about big data over the past few years, creating meaningful customer solutions that leverage data sets at this scale is still highly complex. Sabre is at the forefront of solving some of the most challenging problems

viding growth and revenue opportunities. For SabreSonic CSS customers, these new data-driven capabilities will provide airline decision makers with the broadest view of

segments in the travel ecosystem realise the powerful benefits of big data analytics," said **Daniel Naoumovitch**, CEO, Sabre Travel Network Middle East.



Daniel Naoumovitch
CEO
Sabre Travel Network Middle East

Until now, airlines have had little-to-no visibility into the shopping activity and travel demand patterns in the global distribution systems (GDSs) and historically were only aware of a portion of that demand once a booking is made. The Sabre marketplace uniquely provides airlines the insights necessary to help boost their business and amplify the value of this distri-

bution channel. "While there has been a lot of buzz about big data over the past few years, creating meaningful customer solutions that leverage data sets at this scale is still highly complex. Sabre is at the forefront of solving some of the most challenging problems associated with big data applications," said Daniel.

Sabre's research shows that meaningful personalisation in travel requires deeper insights than frequent flier data and other cursory identifiers that airlines use today. To deliver true merchandising to travellers, airlines need to understand and anticipate what travellers want. Sabre Marketplace Analytics provides this capability to facilitate airline, deliver more targeted offers to their travellers. 📊

R Hotels to promote its properties@ATM

■ R Hotels, the hospitality management division of the Ajman-based R Holding, announces its inaugural participation as exhibitor in Arabian Travel Market 2015. R Hotels will showcase its four properties in the UAE namely Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman, Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman, Ramada Downtown Dubai, and Hawthorn Suites by Wyndham in Jumeirah Beach Residence.

The stand will also highlight its new hotel located in Al Mina Road in Jumeirah, which is expected to open in the second quarter of 2015; and the recently-announced resort and spa in Palm Jumeirah with a target opening date of Q4 2016. R Hotels will be at Stand No. 7174 of the hotel pavilion. **Sumair Tariq**, Managing Director, R Hotels, commented, "We are expecting fruitful results from our first participation in ATM. As the top travel trade exhibition in the region, this is an excellent platform for us to promote our properties, high-

light R Hotels as a brand, and underline the group's development and expansion plans. We aim to make a mark in the Middle East's fast-growing hospitality landscape by cap-



Sumair Tariq
Managing Director, R Hotels

italising on strategic locations in the UAE and the region in the next couple of years."

Now on its 21st year, Arabian Travel Market is leading business-to-business event in the Middle East which brings together travel and tourism professionals in different sectors including hospitality, aviation, inbound and outbound operators, and tourism boards. ATM 2015 will run from May 4-7 at the Dubai International Convention and Exhibition Centre.



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Seamless blend of past & present

The Dolder Grand, towering dominantly above Lake Zurich, is a structure that consummately combines traditional and modern design down to the most minute of details, with a surprising result in hospitality that is as understated as it is extravagant.



With the historic structure built in 1899 at the heart of The Dolder Grand, 2008 was the year in which Zurich welcomed the graceful return of one of its most renowned landmarks. The fully restored structure, which serves as a testament to traditional architectural finesse, stood between two new ultra-modern wings designed by renowned architects at Foster + Partners, curving around it effortlessly. The structures stood as a statement that a new era in hospitality had begun. Inside, visitors are constantly reminded of this exquisite symbiosis of historical and modern.



Steinhalle, the listed entrance hall, forms an almost perfectly symmetrical entrance to the building with four Corinthian columns imposing over the minimally, yet practically furnished area. The lobby, with its fully-restored historical ceiling and antique fireplace incorporates modern

interior design elements, giving it an air of exclusivity. The Dolder Grand has 173 individual and luxurious rooms and suites, replete with traditional design elements combined with modern materials in warm colour-schemes, giving the rooms an eclectic mix that ensures a relaxing environment for guests. The Suites Deluxe, in the historic main building for example, incorporates subtle touches that are ever-present reminders of the hotel's illustrious past. In fact, staying true to history, the hotel lauds six listed rooms, each faithfully restored to their original appearance. The historical structure originally opened its doors as the 'Dolder Grand Hotel & Curhaus' in 1899. The Restaurant - the hotel's Michelin-Starred dining establishment, is spread below a fully restored historic ceiling adorned with traditional Swiss motifs, set amongst eloquently carved beams and woodwork.



20 Fortune Hotels in UAE by 2020

Having added 3 hotels in its UAE inventory in 2014, taking its tally up to seven hotels in different segments in Emirates, the Fortune Group of Hotels has set ambitious plans to have 20 hotels by the time Expo 2020 arrives in Dubai.



TT BUREAU

The Fortune Group of Hotels is excited about Expo 2020. "Our growth plan is in sync with the same as we have set our vision to have 20 hotels by 2020," informed **Praveen Shetty**, Chairman, Fortune Group of Hotels.

According to Shetty, they are proud of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum's vision for Dubai and his futuristic plans. Dubai, for the Fortune Group of Hotels,

would remain their target city for growth in future and added that they remain open to the idea of exploring possibilities in new territories as well.

"This year we shall be launching our premiere 4 star boutique hotel - Fortune Palace Hotel in Bur Dubai. It will have 120 keys and 6 F&B concepts including our signature brands like Freddy's - Sports Lounge and Desi Dhaba," Shetty mentioned.

The group is geared up to participate in ATM 2015 in



Praveen Shetty
Chairman
Fortune Group of Hotels

a big way and would co-exhibit with both Dubai Tourism and Fujairah Tourism to highlight its Dubai and Fujairah properties respectively. Thanks to expansion of flydubai and Emirates airlines, Fortune Group had an exciting 2014 as it opened up new markets for it. The loss of business from CIS was largely compensated with increased business from the Indian subcontinent, GCC and China.

The group is optimistic that sanctions against Iran would ease up in the near future which will bring in revenue from tourists and business travellers. Simultaneously, it is also hopeful about overall condition improvement in Russia and appreciation of its currency before onset of winter. Russia is a huge feeder market for Dubai's hospitality industry. Fortune Group is focusing on business and leisure travellers in the remaining months of 2015.

Besides attending ATM, WTM and MITT and road shows in various countries, it is also looking ahead to enter into new partnerships with more travel agents and sign them up as their exclusive GSA partners in potential markets.

The group has opened its sales offices in London and Canada to work closely with the travel agents who remain central to its future business growth plans in UK, Canada and USA markets.

A bit of good Fortune

- ◆ Fortune's sales offices in London and Canada will work closely with travel agents who remain central to its future business growth plans in the UK, Canada and USA markets
- ◆ Ideal locations of its hotels have meant the Group gets good share of travel agent business from India, Iran, China, Japan and Russia
- ◆ Besides attending ATM, WTM and MITT and roadshows in various countries, it will enter into new partnerships with more travel agents

Over 5 mn guests visit Global Village in 157 days

■ Global Village celebrated a record breaking season with a spectacular closing weekend of entertainment as Season 19 of the region's largest and most popular outdoor family destination for culture, shopping, and entertainment came to a close on April 11, 2015.

Average daily attendance has grown on last year's numbers as it attracted a total of 5 million visitors who enjoyed a new look Global Village, thanks to significant investment on new purpose built family facilities, and enhanced infrastructure. A special 3-day weekend of concerts and longer opening hours until 2 am ensured that visitors could get the most out of the final days enjoying spectacular music, cuisines from around the world, great shopping offers and pavilions showcasing cultural experiences from around the world.



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Egypt@ATM with renewed optimism

As Egypt's tourism revenue surged by 23.6 per cent in 2014, the country is participating in ATM 2015 with new tourism projects worth US\$ 5.3 billion showcasing its heritage, ancient tombs and timeless Pyramids.



TT BUREAU

According to Hisham Zaazou, Tourism Minister, Egypt, the country registered a 4.5 per cent increase in inbound tourist

up from US\$5.9 billion in 2013.

"Tourism is Egypt's second most vital income generator and employs over 12 per cent of the population. So

identify opportunities for healthy, sustained growth. We look forward, showcasing Egypt's cultural diversity at this year's show," said **Nadege Noblet**, Exhibition Manager of Arabian Travel Market.

This is led by the US\$1,653 million Emaar Misr Marassi Beach Resort project. Emaar Misr is also developing the US\$820 million Cairo Gate Mall while the UAE's Al Futtaim Group is responsible for the US\$500 million Al Maza City Centre



Nadege Noblet
Exhibition Manager
Arabian Travel Market

project and MAF's US\$400 million Mall of Egypt. Outside of Cairo, Luxor will have a US\$120 million Four

Seasons Hotel while Marsa Alam will be home to Tabarak Holding's US\$150 million Fantasia Resort.

Looking at outbound travel and domestic tourism and regarding technology, Egypt unlike other destinations in the MENA region, does not play as big a role in the decision-making process with direct bookings via local offices or telephone the preferred channel in Egypt.

"However the transition to online is already happening with 41 per cent of

Egypt's leisure travellers booking more than half their trips online over the last 12 months, as per YouGov findings," said Noblet.

Demand for luxury travel options is also growing, with 44 per cent of YouGov survey respondents reporting staying at a four-star or above hotel during their last leisure trip.

"Egypt also has a well-established all-inclusive leisure tourism product and this is proving to have high appeal to Egyptian travellers with 76 per cent likely to consider booking an all-inclusive luxury package; a figure even higher than that of respondents in the UAE and Kuwait," added Noblet. 🇪🇬

However the transition to online is already happening with 41 per cent of Egypt's leisure travellers booking more than half their trips online over the last 12 months, as per YouGov findings

numbers in 2014, with 10 million arrivals compared to 9.55 million in 2013. Tourism revenues also rose year-on-year by 23.6 per cent, an increase of US\$7.5 billion,

these figures are particularly welcome after a difficult few years and the highs of 2010. The ATM team is working in tandem with the country's proactive tourism sector to



A platter full of Incredible India

India Tourism, Dubai is gearing up to attend Arabian Travel Market 2015. Comprising 20 co-exhibitors, India Tourism Pavilion covers a huge space of around 310 sq metre. Various popular cultural programs will provide the visitors an opportunity to experience India.



TT BUREAU

The potential of tourism ties between India, the Gulf and the Middle East region will be witnessed in the presence of tour operators, travel agents, hoteliers, wellness and spa services providers from India during the ATM 2015.

"Because of the size, Reed Exhibitions have given us a very good location. Due to this we will get a very good mileage as well. This year ATM bags, which are distributed every year during the event, are sponsored by us. 15,000 bags which will be



IRV Rao
Assistant Director
India Tourism, Dubai

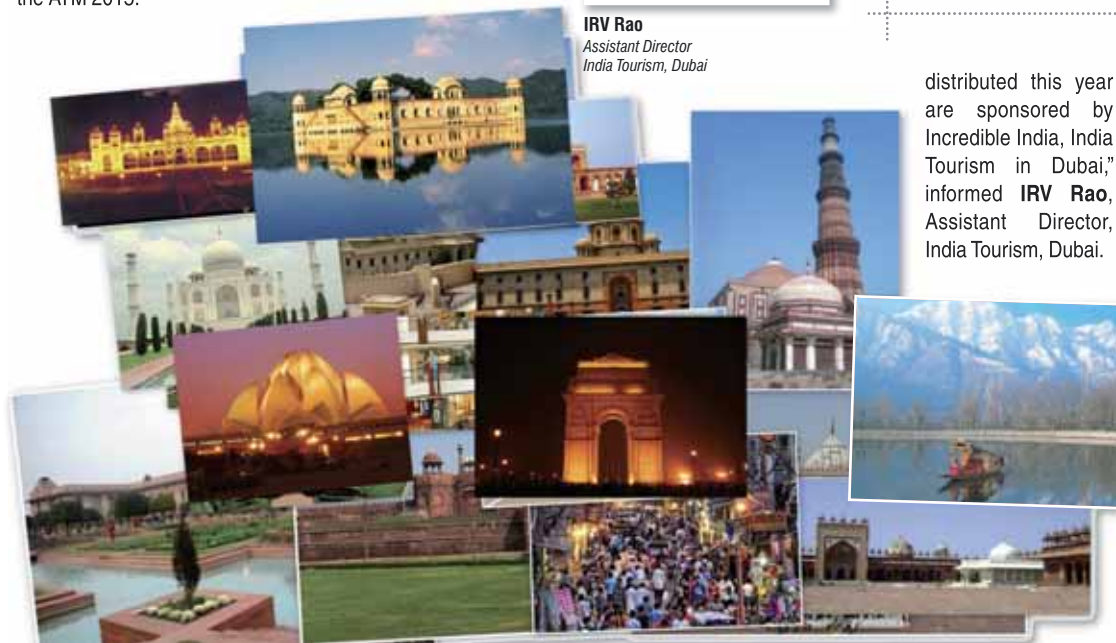
This year ATM bags, which are distributed every year during the event, are sponsored by us. 15,000 bags which will be distributed this year are sponsored by Incredible India, India Tourism in Dubai

distributed this year are sponsored by Incredible India, India Tourism in Dubai," informed **IRV Rao**, Assistant Director, India Tourism, Dubai.

It was emphasized that, India has established itself as a round-the-year destination, offering something for every traveller. This year the tourist flow is more with the decision, extension of e-Tourist Visa for tourists from 180 nations.

e-Tourist Visa (eTV) has helped increase in tourist arrivals to India from this part of the world. eTV facility has been introduced for three countries of the Middle East - UAE, Oman and Jordan. In January 2015, there has been an increase of around 1.77 per cent for the e-Tourist Visa facility which is there for the UAE Nationals. In February the increase was 1.83 per cent.

"Our target is to increase 20 per cent tourists traffic from UAE, Oman and Jordan and we are trying our utmost to meet this target this year," expressed Rao.



Rise of India Tourism

- ◆ India is showcasing itself as a round-the-year destination
- ◆ The Indian government's e-Tourist Visa (eTV) facility is helping the country to increase its tourists arrival
- ◆ In January 2015, there has been an increase of around 1.77 per cent for the e-Tourist Visa facility which is there for the UAE nationals
- ◆ In February 2015, the increase was 1.83 per cent
- ◆ 15,000 bags which will be distributed at ATM this year are sponsored by Incredible India, India tourism in Dubai

Online travel takes a leap forward

Destinia.com believes that providing a responsive website to customers is as an obligation rather than an option. With the web traffic from mobile devices being higher in MENA region, Destinia plans to cash in on this and become one of the region's top three online travel agencies by 2017.



SUSMITA GHOSH

Destinia.com, an international online travel agency with offices in Spain, Egypt and Dubai, celebrated its first anniversary in Dubai recently and aims to be one of the region's top three online travel

European market, and is speedily making us popular in the Middle East. For instance, we recently launched a new payment system - 'Pay@Home' - in response to our customers who now require more flexible, user-friendly ways to pay,"

In the MENA region, web traffic from mobile devices is higher than in Europe. In KSA and the UAE it has reached 64 and 61 per cent respectively and in 2014, reservations through this source reached 24 per cent in KSA and 22 per cent in UAE

agencies by 2017. Their future plan is to open office in Saudi Arabia and thereafter, Iran.

"Responsiveness to our customers' preferences has made us stand out in the

explained **Amuda Goueli**, CEO and co-founder, Destinia.com.

"Modern travellers use multiple gadgets and we want to offer them an optimum and



Amuda Goueli
CEO and co-founder
Destinia.com

consistent user experience, regardless of their location. In the MENA region, web traffic from mobile devices (phones and tablets) is higher than in Europe. In KSA and the UAE it has reached 64 and 61 per cent respectively and in 2014, reservations through this source reached 24 per cent in KSA and 22 per cent in UAE," Goueli further informed.

Destinia.com has unveiled their revamped web-

site. On top of the cleaner, slicker design, the website also offers fully integrated search tools and a completely responsive design, adaptable to every device.

"We see a responsive website as an obligation rather than an option. We've applied this principle of excellence to our mobile and tablet app as well, because the mobile user experience is undoubtedly better with native apps," he commented.

The updated app also has a built-in GPS system, which detects flights from the closest airport to the user, as well as hotels in the vicinity at the traveller's location at their destination.

The Destinia.com app, working for iPhone and Android devices, is free of charge and allows travellers to

have access to more than 300,000 hotels and 600 airlines all around the world, always at the best rates. The website is the first of its kind to offer its services in Arabic, currently works in 32 other languages.

Delectable Destinia

- ◆ Destinia.com app, for iPhone and Android devices, is free of charge and allows travellers to have access to more than 300,000 hotels and 600 airlines all around the world
- ◆ Pay@Home service allows customers more flexibility, and user-friendly ways to make payments
- ◆ Destinia website is the first of its kind to offer its services in Arabic, currently works in 32 other languages.

New Canada Visa Centre for UAE in Dubai

■ VFS Global, as part of a contract awarded by the Government of Canada introduced Canada Visa Application Centre (CVAC) services in Dubai for applicants wishing to travel to Canada. As per the contract, VFS Global will establish a robust worldwide network of up to 125 CVACs. This centre is the second such centre in the UAE. Canada Visa Application Services have also been introduced in Oman earlier in March. This global network of CVACs will provide increased access and enhanced administrative services to applicants through a consistent service delivery approach, which will also support biometrics implementation. VFS Global has opened of the CVAC at Wafi Mall in Dubai. It will provide exclusive service for the Government of Canada, and is authorised to accept applications in all temporary resident categories.



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Sharjah hotels fully occupied with Gulf tourists

Hotels in Sharjah are currently reporting 100 per cent occupancy driven by an influx of family tourists, especially from Saudi Arabia, according to Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA). The Emirate has attracted large number of families from across the region due its growing popularity as a family and cultural tourist destination.

Latest available figures from SCTDA show that guest numbers from Saudi Arabia are encouraging so far this year, with 42,150 guests arriving during the months of January and February alone. In January this year, Sharjah's hospitality sector received 28,861 Saudi guests, an increase of 4 per cent over 27,741 in January 2014. February witnessed a higher growth rate of 30 per cent with 13,289 guests against 10,200 during the same period last year. Family tourists from Saudi Arabia constituted 15 per cent of guests in Sharjah's

hotel establishments in January 2015 compared to 13 per cent in January last year. In February, the share went up from 6 per cent in 2014 to 9 per cent in 2015. Visitors from Arab countries account for nearly one-third of Sharjah's hospitality guests. According to SCTDA, their numbers witnessed 10 per cent growth in 2014 compared to 6 per cent the previous year. Sharjah's hospitality establishments received 2,036,014 guests in 2014, which was an increase of 3.4 per cent over the previous year when the Emirate attracted 1,969,224 guests. Visitors from Arab countries accounted for 28 per cent of total hotel guests and approximately half of the total hotel apartment guests. In recognition for its contribution to Arab tourism, the Arab Tourism Organisation has awarded Sharjah the title Capital of Arab Tourism for 2015, strengthening the Emirate's position on the regional and international tourism map.

Four Seasons debuts in Dubai

Four Seasons Resort's debut in Dubai's luxury hospitality market has been greeted well. The hotel at Jumeirah Beach captures the city's excitement in a new beach resort.

TT BUREAU

Simon Casson, Regional Vice President and General Manager, Four Seasons Resort Dubai, informed, "We have people from nearly 60 different nationalities working in our hotel. This diversity reflects our guests in Dubai as it's a major leisure market. There are certain segments which are predominant in the regional GCC and in particular Saudi Arabia is a strong contributor to Dubai."

Casson sees a huge interest on the fact of bringing this flagship hotel, Four Seasons finally in Dubai, more the interest during Arabian Travel Market. "We have partnered with DTCM and travel with them to different destinations of the world for road shows. We will be



Simon Casson
Regional Vice President and General Manager, Four Seasons Resort Dubai

hosting our own ATM party here in the hotel. We will not only be representing Dubai but also many of my colleagues from our hotels around the world will be there then establishing very strong Four Seasons presence in the ATM," he added.

Regarding the special summer and Ramadan offers, Casson commented, "We

have guests who mostly look for and appreciate value rather than discounts. So, we have promotions where you can stay for three nights and get one night for free. We are soon to unveil our Ramadan packages and quite a unique offering in terms of the F&B in the resort."

Four Seasons has travel partners from every part of the

Seasons look firstly within Dubai and value the partnership of all the residential and commercial travel agents on the ground and also work with wholesale travel partners.

Commenting on the future plans, Casson concluded, "Dubai is not only a competitive market but also one that already has a lot of well

We have partnered with DTCM and travel with them to different destinations of the world for road shows. We will be hosting our own ATM party here in the hotel

business and within only four months post opening, they have hosted about ten FAM trips so far and up to almost 500 familiarization trips visit from within the city. Four

established world class hotels. So we'll be bringing in personalised services for what Four Seasons is renowned for around the world."

Xclusively for the guests

Ever since inception in 2008, Xclusive Hotel has seen growth in Dubai market. As a young group based in Dubai, Xclusive is looking for enhancement to reach and exceed the satisfaction of the guests.

TT BUREAU

All the hotels have different set ups in tune with family environment like fully equipped kitchens and luxury space. There are one to two bedroom suites which give ample space availability to family who stay in the hotel.

The core market is a mixture of corporate and leisure. It tries to provide a 'home away from home' atmosphere and conveniences to the business and leisure travellers from various parts of the world. Most of the business comes from the CIS and the European market and also from GCC and Asian countries like India and Pakistan.

Nishchay Dheer,
Group General Manager,
Xclusive Group of Hotels



Nishchay Dheer
Group General Manager
Xclusive Group of Hotels

We achieved business close to eight to nine per cent in 2014. We have spent time in branding worldwide and participating in exhibitions in various countries

said, "2014 was a fruitful year for us, not only in terms of developing properties but also business. We achieved business close to eight to nine per cent in 2014. We have spent time in branding worldwide and participating in exhibitions in various countries. We would like to expand by branding ourselves and making a position for ourselves in the market. Look forward to take business on a higher level than now."

Dheer informed, "We have lot of promotions to be executed this year. Mixes of promotions are on the way like stay for three nights and get one night complimentary and so on."

Travel trade plays a major role in bringing business to Xclusive Group of Hotels. The group has around 34 to 36 per cent business from the trade.

8 new hotels, service apts@DIP

Eight new hotels and serviced apartments will be built over the next five years within Dubai Investments Park (DIP), the one-of-its-kind integrated commercial, industrial and residential community in Middle East, amidst surging demand and growth potential on offer due to the development's proximity to Al Maktoum Airport and the Expo 2020 site. The new hotels and serviced apartments, to be built by individual

investors, will be of various star categories and significantly enhance the three hotels currently operational within DIP — the 303-room Premier Inn, 165-room Courtyard by Marriott and the 252-room Armada Hotel. Operators of leading luxury hotel chains will be managing these new properties. With the new projects, the total number of hotel rooms within DIP will increase to approximately 2,000, which will further boost

DIP's lodging capacity and paving the way for additional accommodation for incoming business and leisure travellers to Dubai, besides creating a number of employment opportunities.

These hotels will provide a major boost to the hospitality sector as Dubai expects to attract as many as 25 million visitors during Expo 2020 — to be held between October 2020 and April 2021, including 17.5 million overseas tourists.

Ayla Bawadi opens doors



The Ayla Bawadi Hotel was officially launched during a press conference on March 16, 2015. A contract was signed between Nayel & Bin Harmal Investment with Ayla Hotels and Resorts for the management of the newest Ayla property on January 1, 2015. It is the second hotel to join the growing Ayla brand. The chic new property is well situated adjacent to Bawadi Mall and boasts 90 contemporary styled rooms, sophisticated suites, a trendy restaurant and cafe, among others. Bashar Tamimi, Managing Director of Nayel & Bin Harmal Investment, and Mohamed Soussan, Group General Manager of Ayla Hotels were also present during the press conference.

Online flight booking to UAE on the rise

Expedia.com, an interactive and comprehensive website, enables millions of travellers worldwide to easily plan and book travel online, whether for business or leisure. Also available as a mobile app, Expedia offers a wide selection of vacation destinations, cheap tickets among others.

TT BUREAU

Eman Barhoumeh, Expedia Senior Editor, says "We witnessed a notable rise of flights booked on Expedia.com to the UAE in recent years. In particular, Dubai has firmly established itself as both a key tourist destination and leading hub for business travel, as demonstrated by recent year-on-year growth of nearly 25 per cent for travel to that destination."

"Abu Dhabi International Airport witnessed record breaking figures during Q1 in 2015 and looking forward to its expansion. There is also increasing consumer interest in Sharjah, so will keep a keen eye on passenger trends in the months ahead," she added.

Travellers from the UK continue to make up the

largest share of inbound travellers, but now the emerging development in flight bookings and searches from Canada and the United States, as the UAE becomes an increasingly popular destination.

pared with Manchester, ranking second.

Flight bookings on Expedia to Abu Dhabi have risen by approximately 50 per cent from 2013 to 2014. Bookings to Abu Dhabi are

have steadily expanded on the site, with a recent increase of almost 25 per cent in year-over-year.

Finally, flight bookings to the surrounding Emirates have also recently increased over the past year, with a 17 per cent boost in searches for Sharjah Airport.

The data analysis also revealed that flight bookings made from Canada have experienced the strongest development from 2013 to 2014, increasing 35 per cent. Additionally, flights booked to Dubai from the UK have strengthened by 27 per cent over the same two year period, and Saudi Arabia and France by 24 per cent.

Dubai has firmly established itself as both a key tourist destination and leading hub for business travel, as demonstrated by recent year-on-year growth of nearly 25 per cent for travel to that destination

Eman Barhoumeh
Expedia Senior Editor

Flight bookings on Expedia to the UAE have experienced a strong upsurge increasing just over 25 per cent from 2013 to 2014. The most popular flight origin is London, with almost five times as many tickets sold com-

pared with Manchester, ranking second. Flight bookings on Expedia to Abu Dhabi have risen by approximately 50 per cent from 2013 to 2014. Bookings to Abu Dhabi are

expected to continue this growth trend as Expedia has recently seen a more than 10 per cent increase in demand for that destination.

Booking spree

- ◆ Flight bookings on Expedia to the UAE increase just over 25% from 2013 to 2014
- ◆ Flight bookings on Expedia to Abu Dhabi risen by approximately 50% from 2013 to 2014.
- ◆ Flight bookings to Dubai International Airport increase by 25 per cent
- ◆ Flight bookings increased by 17 per cent boost in searches for Sharjah Airport
- ◆ Flight booked from Canada to UAE increased by 35% from 2013 to 2014
- ◆ Flights booked to Dubai from the UK have strengthened by 27% over the same two year period, and Saudi Arabia and France by 24 per cent

Elaf Group sponsors STTIM, Riyadh 2015

Elaf Group of Companies, a pioneer in travel, tourism and hotel services in the KSA, has sponsored the Saudi Travel and Tourism Investment Market (STTIM 2015) under the patronage of His Royal Highness Prince Faisal bin Bandar bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, Governor of Riyadh Province. **Ziyad Bin Mahfouz**, President of Elaf Group of Companies and a member of the Tourism Development Council for the Makkah region pointed out that travel exhibitions are important for highlighting the tourism potential in the KSA, and especially tourism of religious goals. "We sponsored the STTIM this year to contribute and support to development of the industry as well as to explore the market and update all our target groups with our new hospitality offerings," said Bin Mahfouz.

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Fortune Hotel Deira, Deira Dubai – 3 Star
Fortune Classic Hotel Apartments, Al Qusais, Dubai – Standard Hotel Apartments
Fortune Royal Hotel, Fujairah – 4 Star
Fortune Hotel Apartments, Fujairah – Deluxe Hotel Apartments
Opening Soon... Fortune Palace Hotel, Dubai - 4 Star

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Future of Online Travel@WIT ME

WIT Middle East, the regional edition of the signature WIT conference, based in Singapore, was held in Dubai on April 8-9. Held for the last 10 years, it is the largest online travel gathering in Asia Pacific and brings together global and regional leaders to discuss the future of online travel. WIT Middle East was organised jointly by WIT and Bizgate Marketing Consultancy.



Growth story of online travel market

WIT Middle East 2015, held in Dubai from April 8-9, was attended by various online companies and professionals from every sector of travel industry. Among them Cleartrip, TravelStart, Ehjeez and Starwood Hotels & Resorts shared their views with **TRAUTALK**.



TT BUREAU

Stuart Crighton, CEO, Cleartrip spoke about the UAE market in terms of the online business. He informed, "The market has become matured in different ways. In terms of internet penetration and online business it's still in infant stage. So you're seeing the kind of competitive behaviour we currently see in the Indian market. Here, in last 18 months more competitions are arriving and will be prospect as the whole objective is to try and build the market place and create a great environment for consumers." According to Crighton, accommodation has grown fast. It is growing 120 per cent year on year. "There are tougher challenges too like packages; holidays which will struggle to come online globally. They



Stuart Crighton
CEO
Cleartrip

In last 18 months more competitions are arriving and will be prospect as the objective is to try and build the market place

may crack the code and bring it online," he added.



Remo Giovanni Abbondandolo
Middle East Head
Travelstart

Payments are our core factor and we are working strongly to make the customers feel safe

Remo Giovanni Abbondandolo, Middle East



Khalid Motik
Managing Director - Partner
Ehjeez Middle East

The statistics of online booking from last year to this year has increased from 25 to 40%. There is more demand online for hotels

Head, Travelstart, said, "We came to Middle East less than



Jitendra Jain
Regional Director, Marketing
Middle East, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Dubai

Now we have come to full circle and are going back to that one-on-one relation through massive scale through technology

a year ago. We have been focusing very heavily on UAE

especially on Qatar and Bahrain and soon in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. We have seen an exceptional growth and are growing double digit every month. We see a big potential for new market that we are entering in and hence very excited to get into it." As mentioned by Abbondandolo they focus on local content first like an Arabic website which is important to have a local presence in the GCC. "Payments are our core factor and we are working strongly to make the customers feel safe. We also collect cash in Qatar and Bahrain at the moment and planning to offer the same to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait soon. We have some offers for 24x7, also work with house exchange and many other traditional ways of payments,"

Contd. on page 29 ►



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Ramada Ajman talking green

With a view to create sustainable lifestyles and an eco-friendly organisation, Iftikhar Hamdani, General Manager, Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman tells TRAVELTALK how his team of individuals dedicated to the cause of the environment are involved in projects like participating in Earth Hour, Earth Day, World Environment Day, Beach Clean-up and so on.



SUSMITA GHOSH

QNarrate your journey to becoming a 'Green Hotelier'.

Our journey in becoming a green hotel actually started with economic reasons. Our main goal was to save energy, electricity and water in the hotel and we have created ways to address this issue including the use of small, eco-friendly light bulbs and other energy-saving schemes. In 2012, we decided to step up our green initiatives by launching the Zero Landfill Project. The idea for this is to achieve waste diversion from the landfill. Based on the initial waste composition analysis of Ramada Ajman, the major portion of the property's wastes are from food or organic waste, which can be used for compost; while the paper, plastics and metals can be recycled; and a very minimal portion which are considered as waste rejects will go to the landfill.

We partnered with different organisations including AIMS Group and Green Mountain Waste Management, to install a compost machine which will turn our organic wastes into fertilisers, which are then used for the hotel's gardens and plants. We did not spend a single dirham for this machine. In return, we provide them with the extra fertilisers (as we they are too much for just our farm and garden), as well as the recyclable wastes like the cartons, bottles, newspaper, etc.



Iftikhar Hamdani
General Manager
Ramada Hotel and Suites Ajman

After 3 years, we are proud to say that our hotel was able to save approximately AED 360,000 because of this project

In the previous years, we used to pay about AED120,000 annually for waste collection. After 3 years, we are proud to say that our hotel was able to save approximately AED 360,000 because of this project. In addition, we are able to divert approximately 985,500 kg of waste from the landfill.

In 2013, we launched the urban farm project, where we converted a portion of our parking lot into a farm

which grows seasonal crops, vegetables and plants, which are then used in our hotel kitchen. Since then, our journey still continues.

QPlease explain the impetus to continue your green initiatives and charitable drives?

I believe we have made a significant impact in terms of our green initiatives as 25 hotels across the Middle East have installed the compost machine. In addition, other hotels in the GCC and different groups from various sectors have visited Ramada Ajman to know more about this sustainability project. We also have received support and recognitions from different institutions including Ajman Municipality.

I have also participated as speaker in different regional conferences, seminars and forums to share our green practices and encourage other organisations to carry out similar initiatives.

In terms of our charitable drives, we have made a donation of AED 315,000 to different organisations to help the needy. This includes the AED 50,000 donation that we gave to Ajman Club for Handicapped which we raised through a fashion show in 2012. This also includes our donation for the underweight children in Niger, and for the drought in Somalia, which were done in partnership with Human Appeal International, as well as our donation for the flood victims in Philippines and Pakistan. In addition we have ongoing CSR initiatives: our hotels donate our old linen and bed sheets to different countries in Africa through Human Appeal International, and our used soaps are being sterilised and given to schools in Africa through Diversey. Plus, the excess foods from our banqueting and restaurant are distributed to poor families in Ajman. We would also like to include that last



Ramadan, we distributed 100,000 Iftar boxes to drivers across Ajman, in cooperation with Al Ihsan Al Khairiy Charity Organisation.

QPlease provide few facts and figures to prove that these initiatives are getting well-known day by day and benefitting populace to be a part of it?

As mentioned, there are now 25 hotels which are now using the compost machine and we are still receiving requests for show-around from different groups, not just in the hospitality industry but from other sectors including schools.

QHow have you planned creating awareness and what are the benefits out of it?

We will continue with our green initiatives and CSR initiatives through the show-around and by participating in different forums and seminars. We have the right mindset and a trained work force to sustain these projects.

In terms of awareness, in 2013, we organised a Go Green children's painting competition, in cooperation with the Ministry of Education. We distributed art sheets to students across different schools in the Northern Emirates. The idea is to raise awareness about the importance of "Reduce, Reuse and Recycle" approach, at a young age.

QHow do you plan to source out new markets for Ajman and what competition do you expect with the opening of new hotels in the Emirates?

Our main feeder markets for the previous years, which are Russia and CIS, have seen a notable decline. Thus, we have started to source new markets and to date, our main markets include 1) Turkish, 2) Germans, 3) China, 4) Central Asia, 5) GCC, and 6) India. We are optimistic about these new markets and we will continue to participate in roadshows and exhibitions alongside ATDD.

We are ready for the new challenges and with the growing competition in the emirates, we are still confident to be on top of the game as we have a strong grip in terms of corporate bookings.

Human Resource Sustainability

We are proud to say that our staff turnover is only 2 per cent annually. We may not pay the best wages but we appreciate and care for our staff, which is the core of the business. We provide them with empowerment in terms of making decisions and accountability, and provide them with opportunity for growth. We also organize sports activities and staff gatherings regularly to keep them active and motivated. 🌱



Cozmo eyes India market

With an aim to grow by 30% in the next three years, Cozmo Travel is planning to launch all over India in 2015. The company will be participating in ATM to network with travel stakeholders as well as exhibit its products.

TT BUREAU

Due to the political situation in other parts of the Middle East, more inbound travellers from the GCC into the UAE are expected. Therefore, summer looks quite positive for the UAE tourism. The 2020 buzz has also resulted in a lot of inbound movement from all over the world and Cozmo Travel is happy to get a small share of the same.

"We have new branches in Kuwait. We will be launching Cozmo Travel all over India in 2015. We are definitely looking at the business growth of 30 per cent in next 3 years and more thereafter," said **Jamal Abdunazar**, CEO, Cozmo Travel. Cozmo has introduced new products like fixed departure and are



Jamal Abdunazar
CEO
Cozmo Travel

We will be launching Cozmo Travel all over India in 2015

strengthening its corporate arm. Planning is underway to open up more branches within UAE, especially Dubai and GCC. There is a great expect-

tation from trade relations and activities between India and the UAE so the opportunities are huge. "We have seen tremendous potential by negotiating with the airlines, securing rate inventories from hotels and other land players since the beginning of the year till rest of the season especially for the peaks. We have kept our margins reasonable and focus more on volumes," he explained.

Cozmo Travel has been appointed as the Preferred Sales Agent (PSA) for Costa Cruises in UAE, KSA, Qatar Bahrain and Kuwait. In addition Cozmo Travel has become an 'Austrian Certified Travel Specialist' certified by Austrian National Tourist Office providing attractive packages to different parts of Austria.

25-40% surge in online booking

► Contd. from page 27

added he. Speaking on the growth of the company he further mentioned that there is double digit growth every month and a six digit figure in terms of traffic.

Khalid Motik, Managing Director - Partner, Ehjez Middle East, informed that his company is adding to the portfolio of online travel agent increasing the demand of the online booking. He commented, "The statistics of the online booking from the last year to this year has increased from 25 to 40 per cent. There is more demand online for hotels or other things that people demand. In the beginning we

will be focusing on the GCC market, especially on Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Kuwait."

Jitendra Jain, Regional Director, Marketing, Middle East, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, Dubai explained, "What interesting about this event is it actually brings together the thought leaders and people across the industry. It's not just one vertical like online, its hotels, airlines, metasearch, technological companies and so on. Hence very interesting to know what people are thinking and what sort of developments are going on, what future is and that's how benefit this event, bringing people together."

"We work in full circle now. As 100 years before, we had very personal relationship with the people around and with industrialization it has changed a lot. We had mass produce and used to reach people through TV and radios, true mass advertising. Now we have come to full circle and are going back to that one-to-one relation through massive scale through technology and social media. So from marketing standpoint it allows us to deliver real great experiences to a personalized level which we didn't get it before and that's exciting all about," he concluded.

Forum on investments in Al Gharbia

■ The 3rd Al Gharbia Development Forum to be held at the St Regis Resort & Hotel on Saadiyat Island on May 12, 2015, will focus on the emerging investment and will highlight the Al Gharbia, Abu Dhabi's Western Region's investment priorities

in petrochemicals, oil and gas, critical infrastructure, transport, housing, mixed use projects including retail, manufacturing, education, healthcare, agriculture and food processing as well as government and community services. Held under the patronage of H.H.

Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the Ruler's Representative in the Western Region, the Al Gharbia Development Forum is being organised by the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development in partnership with MEED.

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Centro Al Manhal & Al RawdaArjaan

Abu Dhabi

William Moujaes has been appointed as the new Cluster General Manager for Centro Al Manhal and Al RawdaArjaan by Rotana in Abu Dhabi. He held a number of managerial positions over the 9 years at the Rotana Headquarter in Abu Dhabi. Since he joined the Rotana Corporate Office in 2003, William rose in ranks to Assistant Director of Sales, Director of Sales for Rotana Hotels Area Sales Office Abu Dhabi & Al Ain, Abu Dhabi and Assistant Executive Manager for Park Rotana & Park Arjaan by Rotana, Abu Dhabi.



Concorde Hotel Fujairah

Fujairah

Concorde Hotel Fujairah has announced the appointment **Jerome Kandalajt** as its General Manager. Kandalajt holds a Masters degree in Hospitality Management and his hospitality career spans over 14 years. His passion, vision and determination have seen him progressively scale the ranks of the industry to attain the top management position and he has worked for several leading hotel brands such as InterContinental Hotels; Hilton Hotels; Shangri-la Qaryat al Berri, Al Raha Beach Hotel and lately Gloria Hotels.



Abu Dhabi Airports

Abu Dhabi

H.E. Eng. Mohamed Mubarak Al Mazrouei has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer, Abu Dhabi Airports. Al Mazrouei currently serves as a Board Member of Abu Dhabi Airports and is also a Board member of Abu Dhabi Ports Company. He has previously served the country in the Armed Forces. Al Mazrouei holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Civil Engineering, from the University of North Carolina, Charlotte, USA.



Ethiad Airways

Abu Dhabi

Othman Aleghfeli has been appointed as Area Manager Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) from his current position as Assistant General Manager for Ethiad Airways' Abu Dhabi Hub. In the new role, Othman will be responsible for overseeing the airline's operations and driving growth in the GCC. He will be the first UAE national to hold this position which is critical to the delivery of service excellence and a superior guest experience across the GCC region.



Four Seasons Resort O'ahu

Ko Olina

Sanjiv Hulugalle has been appointed General Manager of the new Four Seasons Resort O'ahu at Ko Olina. With a career at Four Seasons spanning nearly 20 years, Hulugalle is an experienced GM having been at the helm of another recent property opening, Four Seasons Hotel Beijing. This month, Hulugalle will make the transition to Ko Olina to lead the pre-opening team as the Hotel prepares to welcome guests in early 2016. Hulugalle's career has taken him around the globe leaving his mark at 12 Four Seasons properties over the past 18 years.



Golden Tulip Al Barsha Hotel

Al Barsha

Mourad Kamel has been appointed as Business Development Manager – Corporate, Golden Tulip Al Barsha Hotel. Mourad comes with an experience in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and of eight years with Golden Tulip Group.



Khalifa Port Container Terminal

Abu Dhabi Terminals

Simon Brebner has been appointed as Chief Commercial Officer (CCO), Abu Dhabi Terminals, manager and operator of Khalifa Port Container Terminal (KPCT). Brebner, who has worked in senior roles at ports, shipping and logistics companies in Europe, South America, Africa and the Middle East, will be responsible for leading ADT's commercial strategy, activities and performance. Having served most recently as CCO for APM Terminals in Bahrain and Morocco, he has more than 25 years' experience. Previously, Brebner served as GM, Maersk Line Latin America.



Centro Capital Centre by Rotanahas

Abu Dhabi

Ishan Sapra has been appointment as Chief Engineer by Centro Capital Centre by Rotanahas. An India national, Ishan holds a Bachelor in Technologies from the Guru Gobind Singh University, New Delhi, India. He joined Rotana in 2013, Park Rotana and Park Arjaan Abu Dhabi, as Assistant Director of Engineering. Prior to his collaboration with Rotana, Ishan has worked with companies such as The Ritz Carlton, Dubai International Financial Centre and the Taj Palace Hotel in New Delhi, India.



Kristina Savchenko has been promoted as Sales Manager - Leisure, Golden Tulip Hotel Al Barsha to support the sales leisure and travel agency. Before this promotion, the Russian national served as the Senior Sales Executive at the property, skilfully handling the leisure market.



Smiling all the way to raise diabetes awareness

The Cove Rotana Resort – Ras Al Khaimah Culinary Team along with other colleagues participated in the "Al Basma Camp" (The smile camp) for Diabetic Children under the patronage of **H.H. Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi**, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Ras Al Khaimah. The event was attended by more than 150 children from UAE, GCC Countries, Algeria, Jordan, Morocco and Sudan with the guidance of their supervisors. The Cove Rotana Team participated in this Corporate Social Responsibility event by providing nutritious meals and cooking classes, showing the children how to make simple, healthy and diabetic-friendly food in an easy way.





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