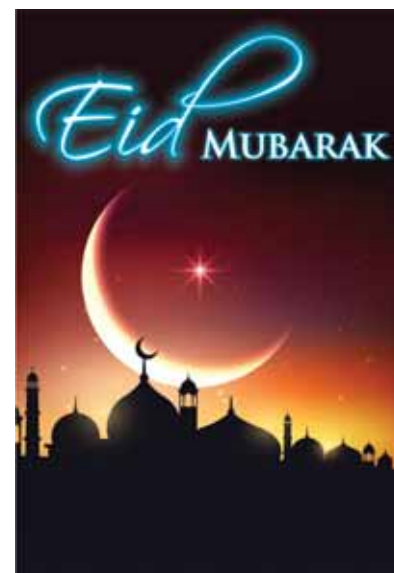


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# Benchmarking luxury

A few years ago luxury was an indulgence for the discerning, sophisticated, high echelons of society. Today, as the middle class becomes more affluent, there is a change in the “face of luxury” in terms of travel, retail and hospitality trade.

 SHEHARA RIZLY



Robert Sinclair Barnes  
Strategic Marketing Director  
Amadeus IT Group

“Our latest report confirms that we have entered a new age of luxury travel, where luxury is curated, real-time and experience-led. Human desire for more rewarding experiences is providing an essential catalyst to evolve and improve travel industry quality and service stand-

ards. Luxury means different things to different people and this is especially true today. As emergent middle classes seek the material aspect of luxury travel, more mature markets are craving a new, evolved kind of luxury. This is why offering customers a relevant personal and exclusive experience will become even more crucial. Understanding your business' role in delivering an end-to-end luxury experience for a traveller is key to improving collaboration, and reinforcing an industry-wide push for consistent luxury service. Exploring the latest technologies and innovations for making the industry work better as a whole is key to achieving a new level of luxury that has never existed before.”

“Luxury in the Gulf has evolved during the past few years. From being perceived as a rare product that only some lucky few can own to becoming a status symbol; today the meaning of luxury is changing and is becoming more personal and immaterial. Each one of us has the right to dream and access a part of luxury even if small. Luxury can mean a perfume, a bag from a well-known brand or a jewelry piece for some, a dinner or a trip with the family for others. Whatever it is, we as a Group would like to be part of those dreams.”



Patrick M Chalhoub  
CEO  
Chalhoub Group

“The luxury travel market is growing faster than any other: 6.2%, a third faster than overall travel. This was the inspiration for our latest piece of research, Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel, which focuses on the behaviours of luxury travellers and looks at market trends. Global consumers are increasingly spending their disposable income on experiences rather than material goods. And to help travel providers achieve the personalisation necessary to satisfy luxury travellers, this report also identifies six luxury traveller tribes: Always Luxury; Special Occasion; Bluxury; Cash-rich, time-poor; Strictly Opulent; and Independent Affluent.”



Patricia Simillon  
Senior Manager, Strategic Marketing  
& Planning, Airline IT Strategy  
Amadeus IT Group SA France



Marriam Mossalli  
Founder and Consultant  
Niche Arabia

Saudis is Berlin and India has emerged as a new favourite honeymoon destination with Kuwaitis.”

“The Khaleeji traveller is very discerning. They know what they want, and they know how to get it. Needless to say, whatever it is, it includes 5-star accommodation and service. In terms of travel, they prioritise quality over expense. Recently, we're seeing Khaleejis take fewer vacations, but for longer periods at a time. With social media, Arabs are seeing that there are cool, exclusive places to visit in Spain that aren't necessarily Marbella and Barcelona. A new favorite among



Nicolas Chemla  
International Brand Strategist  
Lumiere noire

And those are very unique, very upscale experiences that very few other brands can offer today.”

“There has been a constant overheating in the luxury market so brands have felt the need to constantly innovate, create new ideas for luxury. Also one of the main changes which has come as a little bit of a surprise is the rise of Airbnb. Airbnb is changing the type of experiences that you can get as a luxury traveller. With Airbnb you can stay in a tree house in Vermont, or you can stay in a boat-house in Amsterdam, or you can stay in a celebrity loft in Brooklyn or Manhattan.



Our simple approach to hospitality means that you can always expect to receive the warmest welcome straight from the heart and an uncomplicated yet professional service delivery. We currently have four different product brands represented across a growing portfolio of properties. To find out more about our present and future prime locations, visit [www.timehotels.ae](http://www.timehotels.ae)

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# GLOBAL AIRFARE MARKETPLACE



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## 70+

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Origin Destination  
Countries Ticketed In The  
Year 2015



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LCCs Covered



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## 2500+

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# Travel with peace of mind

Tune Protect offers diverse travel assurance plans through insurance partners in the region. Tune Protect Commercial Brokerage (Tune Protect), through its partnership with local Insurance companies, develops and customises smart travel insurance products specific to the needs of different markets.

TT BUREAU

Established in 2014, Tune Protect leverages the expertise of its parent company in Malaysia which spearheaded the concept of online travel insurance globally issuing an average of 8 million travel policies online every year. It strives to provide peace of mind to travellers who fly for both leisure and business purposes, before, during and after their trip, through its range of smart travel insurance products.

"The take-up of travel insurance among travellers in the region is still low and this is mainly due to the general lack of importance given to travel insurance and its benefits to travellers. We aim to change this and through our network of professional travel agents, we hope to play a key role in



Arijit Munshi  
General Manager  
Tune Protect

**Through our network of professional travel agents, we hope to play a key role in making adoption of travel insurance among travellers a habit when they travel**

making adoption of travel insurance among travellers a habit when they travel," says

Arijit Munshi, General Manager, Tune Protect. With a host of products, Tune Protect facilitates an array of different coverage plans for different travel needs. Its main product, Travel Assurance Before, During and After, is a Schengen-compliant travel insurance plan that offers 21 benefits which include medical, personal accident, evacuation and repatriation, travel inconvenience, and baggage and personal effects benefit among others.

Tune Protect also has products that are designed specifically in safeguarding travellers while they are enjoying their pastimes, offered under its Lifestyle Assurance range. With products such as ShopCare, GolfCare, WinterCare and AdventureCare, this suite of insurance are niche plans catered to the different types of traveller profiles. Visit

Assurance is another unique product offering catered to travellers visiting countries in the region, assuring them peace-of-mind while they are on their travel. Since its inception, Tune Protect has rapidly extended its footprint across eight key markets in the region namely to Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and United Arab Emirates.

"Our strategic partnership with leading insurance underwriters allows us to accurately tailor-made insurance products to cater to the diverse needs of travellers in each individual markets. We are actively looking for new partners to grow our presence in the region so that we can," says Munshi. For more information about Tune Protect innovative suite of travel insurance products, visit [www.tuneprotect.com/emeia](http://www.tuneprotect.com/emeia).

## Starwood sells two Florence properties

Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide has closed on the sale of The St. Regis Florence and The Westin Excelsior Florence to Nozul Hotels & Resorts, the owner of The Gritti Palace, Venice and W Doha Hotel, and a wholly

strategy to create value for Starwood's shareholders. Asset dispositions remain a key part of that strategy and, following a year where we exceeded our target, we have already disposed of nearly \$500mn of assets this year, including this sale, the



Dr. Mazen Jaidah, the Executive Chairman, Jaidah Holdings and Thomas Mangas, Chief Executive Officer of Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide

owned subsidiary of "Jaidah Holdings" for €190 million (approximately \$213 million). Starwood will continue to operate the hotels under the St. Regis and Westin brand flags under new long-term management agreements.

Thomas Mangas, CEO, Starwood Hotels & Resorts Worldwide, said, "As we work to prepare for the close of our merger with Marriott International, we continue to vigorously compete in the market, grow our brands, and execute against our

sale of Hotel Imperial, and the transfer of five properties as part of Vistana Signature Experiences' separation from Starwood."

Dr. Mazen Jaidah, Executive Chairman, Jaidah Holdings, stated, "Based on our long-term value creation strategy, we continue to invest in high quality assets that are resilient to market fluctuations. As with our previous acquisition in Venice, the Florence properties are destinations for their cultural and historical values."

## First Avani to open in Deira in July

Minor Hotels, a hotel owner, operator and investor, currently with a portfolio of 146 hotels and resorts in 22 countries across Asia Pacific, the Middle East, Europe, South America, Africa and the Indian Ocean, has announced that effective July 1, 2016, it will be taking over the operation of the 216-room Mövenpick Hotel Deira in Dubai.

The property will operate under the group's dynamic AVANI Hotels & Resorts brand as the AVANI Deira Dubai Hotel. This represents a milestone for Minor Hotels as the first AVANI hotel in the Middle East. The change comes after the hotel's parent company, Bin Sulayem Investments, signed a management agreement with Minor Hotels.

Located in one of the most diverse and culturally rich parts of the city, the property is ideally situated just four kilometres from Dubai International Airport and the world-famous Gold and Spice Souks. This upscale hotel offers 216 guest rooms and two unique dining concepts, meeting rooms, an outdoor pool and a fully equipped gym.



Robert Kunkler  
Chief Operating Officer  
Minor Hotels

**This acquisition to our portfolio allows Minor Hotels to take a foothold in the Middle East for our AVANI Hotels & Resorts brand**

Robert Kunkler, Chief Operating Officer, Minor Hotels, said, "This key acquisition to our portfolio allows Minor Hotels to take a strategic foothold in the Middle East for our fast expanding AVANI Hotels & Resorts brand in what is a vitally important market. We are thrilled to continue our excellent relationship with Bin Sulayem Investments."

## Fleet expansion on the cards

Emre Ismailoglu, General Manager for Dubai and the Northern Emirates, Turkish Airlines, reveals that the airline plans to target new destinations, both short and long haul, to boost its global connect.

SHEHARA RIZLY

**What strategies do you employ to attract more tourists to fly with you?**

Our singularity lies in our service, our distinct personality and our culture of Turkish hospitality. Furthermore, we have a very strong network, which has made us the airline with the largest number of international destinations in the world. Turkish Airlines flies to more countries than any other airline today – 115 to be precise. Istanbul is Europe's most eastern and southern point and our strategic geographic location also tends to work in our favour making us a natural choice for those flying from East to West and vice-versa.

If we want to grow and be more profitable we also need to expand our fleet so we are looking to add more aircraft and start targeting



Emre Ismailoglu  
General Manager-Dubai  
and the Northern Emirates  
Turkish Airlines

**If we want to be more profitable we need to expand our fleet, so we are looking to add more aircraft and target new destinations, both short and long haul for we want to connect every corner of the globe to Istanbul**

new destinations, both short and long haul, for we want to connect every corner of the globe to our hub in Istanbul.

**Why should UAE/GCC nationals fly with Turkish Airlines to summer destinations of their choice?**

We fly to more countries in the world than any other airline, and this in itself, often makes us a natural choice for tourists looking to visit destinations from Berlin to Atlanta. Today, Turkish Airlines is also committed to connecting the world to fast-growing regions like Africa, where we also fly to the most number of destinations of any international airline. So should you wish to go on a safari in Africa, should you wish to go to a great historic city like Rome, or should you wish to explore exciting cities in the US like Miami, and New York, we can be the

natural choice. Our service is excellent, our network is large and our prices are always competitive.

**How is the response to your loyalty programme? Do you see an increase in numbers and what are the general expectations?**

Turkish Airlines' loyalty programme, Miles & Smiles, has been doing well and the number of travellers who are part of the programme is growing. We like to maintain a competitive advantage over other airlines by being a customer-oriented airline committed to the highest standard of services; whether through the comfort of our aircraft seats or the excellence of our catering, and those who fly with us regularly are aware of this and already belong to our loyalty programme.

## TRAVTALK

## EDITORIAL

## New era of luxury

The GCC today has evolved quite a lot compared to what it was about a decade ago. The volatility of the region and decreasing oil prices bring about new changes which includes budgetary cuts from the government bodies in order to sustain the levels of the market. The rise of the new upper middle class changed a lot and made luxury a possibility to a new group of professionals. In the GCC it gave rise to a generation shift or change as the older generation entrusted the younger generation with the business. The region has the youngest CEOs making it more challenging to the world of luxury as their needs are totally new to the ones that have been coming down. Because they grew up with luxury all the way, the question becomes how can the travel, hospitality and retail industry cater to this new luxury class of individuals?

Luxury travel is subjective as each traveller will define luxury differently, however the bottom line would always be unique, individualistic, bespoke experiences. A report by Amadeus titled 'Shaping the Future of Luxury Travel' gives a good insight into the new traveller tribes to watch out for in 2030. Serving this new luxury traveller of tomorrow will require a great strategy and game plan. All stakeholders such as hotels, airlines, technology and travel providers, tour operators will need to work together to enhance a more holistic luxury experience to their visitors.

Influencers play a major role in luxury travel with social media. Hence, the need to make sure that the traveller is totally satisfied with the whole experience is quite challenging as the traveller will be both knowledgeable and demanding. The new era luxury traveller needs to be understood as individuals and provided an efficient service from the beginning to the end. Some of the leading hotel chains are taking a keen interest to explore the different aspects needed to capture and sustain these new luxury trends and travellers.

## Ultimate family experience

As a leading accommodation provider, both within and outside of Thailand, Centara is renowned for paying attention to and delivering the smallest but important needs of their guests.

In the ITB Travel Trends Report for 2015-2016, Middle East outbound travellers were found to be growing with a 9 per cent increase in outbound trips. This is definitely a trend that we hope we will continue to see over 2016 and into 2017. The UAE customers seek superior room categories and have a preference for our family residences, which are offered at the majority of our properties. We at Centara realize that the UAE nationals seek superior quality and distinguished products and services. In addition to Halal food, Arabic newspapers and TV channels, we also offer Ramadan sunrise and sunset services and importantly, adaptation and respect to the culture. Our accommodations are designed to host large families that allow a fun stay as a family. The water theme parks are a huge favourite among our UAE guests. The visitors from the UAE show a keen interest in Thailand - Bangkok and Phuket are the first choice destinations, while we are also seeing a gradual interest in destinations such as Chiang Mai, Krabi, Rayon, and Kao Lak. There is also growing interest in Bentota, Sri Lanka.

Centara has been very effective and proactive in their approach to developing the ultimate family experi-

ence. Properties have all of the necessary facilities to cater to every member of the family. With the luxury spa, it provides a great place for relaxation for parents and grandparents while the kids enjoy all of the wonders of the fully equipped and supervised Kid's Club. While

health and fitness, tennis, and of course the luxury and privacy afforded to all our guests.

With two properties scheduled to open in Q4 2016, Doha and Muscat will welcome Centara's first properties in the Middle East. In

offer travellers a comfortable and centrally located property with all the classic Centara facilities, which includes SPA Cenvaree, a fitness centre, ample meeting and event space along with a premium lounge and roof deck available for private events. The roof deck with also have a swimming pool.

There will be further expansion in Doha with two additional properties. Centara West Bay Residence & Suites will open in Q2 2017 in the West Bay area close to the Centara Grand. Slightly further down the pipeline in 2018, there will be a third luxury property to open that will have 514 keys in the West Bay area as well.

*(The views expressed are solely of the author. The publication may or may not subscribe to the same.)*



Paul Wilson  
Vice President Sales  
Centara Hotels & Resorts



families are a very important part of Centara's focus, couples equally have the services and facilities that make for a special holiday. With adult-only pools and areas for quiet and uninterrupted relaxation, along with a diverse selection of dining options, couples can enjoy quality time together. Families seek activities and comfort for the children so our family residences, kids' clubs and themed water parks are a big attraction. The 'kids stay free' programme also appeals, of course. For adults and couples they enjoy the diverse facilities and entertainment on offer; private pool accommodations, pampering at our famed SPA Cenvaree,

Doha, the Centara Grand West Bay Hotel is located in the new business and shopping district West Bay, in the heart of the city. The property will have 261 rooms and suites plus 96 apartments that vary from one to three bedroom units. The rooftop will have a unique restaurant with stunning city views along with the swimming pool and relaxation zone. Other facilities include award winning SPA Cenvaree, with male and female facilities and private hammams, Club level business rooms and Centara Club Lounge and ballroom and meeting facilities.

The Centara Muscat Hotel, with 152 rooms, will

## Roda Metha Suites opens in Dubai

As a continuation of their growth and expansion plans in the UAE, Roda Hotels & Resorts, has added another new property to its Dubai portfolio this year.

Nestled in one of the most desirable areas of Dubai, Roda Metha Suites offers 122 newly furnished serviced suites ideal for long and short-term lease. The property is fit

to accommodate individuals, couples and families with children, providing studios and one-bedroom suites, with a total internal space of between 45 to 80 sq metres. Set in one seven-storey tower, the property sits on the doorstep of The Lamcy Plaza



which bustles with numerous cafes, restaurants, shops, boutiques and bank offices. The property is within walking distance from Dubai Healthcare City and is conveniently located to first class shopping

centres such as Wafi and Lancy Plaza Malls.

"Roda Hotels & Resorts is extending our hospitality offering in term of quantity and quality for the visitors of Dubai. Roda Metha Suites will offer various first-class options to clients searching for the best experience in town, be it for leisure or business," says Imad Elias, CEO, Roda.



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## Conrad debuts in Saudi Arabia

Conrad Hotels & Resorts opened its first hotel in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with 438 rooms in the heart of the Holy City, especially designed for today's smart luxury traveller.

TT BUREAU

Conrad Makkah connects guests to a world of style in 438 elegant rooms, including 62 suites in two towers. For an exquisite stay, the luxurious suites - ranging from 56 square meters



to 247 square meters for the Royal Suite - have a separate living area, a comfortable dining space with a kitchen, access to a private butler service, and direct views of Al Haram and the

Holy Kaabah. The hotel features interior décor inspired by both modern and traditional Islamic design and complemented by contemporary art works. Conrad Makkah delights guests to a wide array of onsite dining options, from the elegant

12 elevators that go directly to Al Haram, providing quick direct access during peak prayer times.

**John T.A. Vanderslice**, Global Head, Conrad Hotels & Resorts, said, "Conrad creates inspired experiences for our guests in some of the world's most sought-after destinations. We are delighted to open our first luxury hotel in the Holy City and begin welcoming pilgrims and guests."

**Rudi Jagersbacher**, Area President, Middle East & Africa, Hilton Worldwide, said, "The arrival of Conrad Hotels & Resorts to Makkah marks the addition of our second brand into the city and our 11th hotel into the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With another 28 Hilton Worldwide properties in development, we are extremely proud to offer incredible variety and choice for travellers to the region."

steak restaurant, Prime, to all-day dining at the Al Mearaj restaurant. Conrad Makkah offers an on-site Masjid for up to 1,000 guests with audio connection to Al-Haram. The hotel also has

## Luxury hotel at Meydan Beach

Corinthia has collaborated with the Meydan Group to support design development and operate an iconic resort property being built on the site of the former Meydan Beach Club.

TT BUREAU

The luxury hotel and residences is the latest in a series of mega developments being undertaken by Meydan Group, which include large scale mixed-use urban and leisure developments across various prime locations in Dubai. The Corinthia at Meydan Beach, as the hotel and residences will be known, will comprise 300 bedrooms and 60 high-end serviced apartments when it opens for business in 2019. Its grand architecture features a stepped podium wrapping around lavish, landscaped pools and gardens cascading onto the beach, and offers extensive indoor and outdoor leisure and dining facilities, a luxury Spa, a club and banqueting amenities. A 55-storey tower comprising residential apartments, bedrooms, suites and entertainment zones will sit atop one side

of the podium, commanding views of some of the most spectacular sights in Dubai, including the Palm Island and the Dubai Eye under development across the waters. Meydan Board of Director **Mohammed Al Shehhi** said, "We are very happy to have appointed Corinthia to operate our new luxury hotel under construction at Meydan Beach. Our core business is the global management of horse racing, as well as large scale mixed use real estate developments in Dubai. With Corinthia as our hospitality partner, we continue to complement our array of capabilities in ensuring world class delivery of products and

services, with our flagship beachside development as a starting point."

Corinthia Chairman **Alfred Pisani**, said, "The energy, vision and quality of resources assembled for this



project by Meydan, and now including Corinthia, will ensure this will be another landmark milestone for us, and for Dubai."

## Raffles eyes new markets

Iran, Azerbaijan, India and South East Asia can be counted among the new focuses along with the conventional markets for Raffles Istanbul, says **Christian Hirt**, GM, Raffles Istanbul.

SHEHARA RIZLY

**Q** Could you share your plans for 2016?

Our property level sales force organises regular sales visits specifically to the Middle East to be in touch with our contacts in the region on a regular basis and also attend related travel shows which are held in GCC countries. We also have a Global Sales Office located in Dubai supporting our sales team closely.

On top of this, we recently opened our Arabic website in an effort to enable our guests from the region to have in depth information about our rooms, culinary, spa and concierge offerings in their native language. In the meantime, along with our plans for GCC, we will continue to strongly invest in Europe and the US in terms of sales & marketing efforts.



Christian Hirt  
General Manager  
Raffles Istanbul

**Q** Are there any new markets you are focusing on?

We are always in favor of new and emerging markets for a balanced market mix, discover new potential markets and take the Raffles service to further guests. Iran, Azerbaijan, India and South East Asia can be counted among the new focuses along the conventional markets of the US, UK and Europe.

**Q** How is technology impacting your business?

Technology is an indispensable part of our business both in terms of the online bookings, PMS and reporting systems and also smooth operation. So we can say, pre, during and post stays can only be seamless and perfect with the correct use of technology wherever possible. Of course this should never interfere with the human touch and the legendary Raffles service and promise of 'emotional luxury.'

**Q** Is business more offline or online?

Although there is a huge growth in the online business, offline is still leading including agencies, corporate bookings, some of the leisure, as well. Still, we continue to invest in online due to its continuously growing share in our business.

## TIME & Al Fahd join hands

UAE's independent hospitality brand TIME has signed an agreement with Saudi Arabia-based Al Fahd Investments to form a joint venture hospitality company.

TT BUREAU

Under the terms of the agreement, TIME will manage two properties in Riyadh and Al Qurayyat. TIME will also provide consultancy services on behalf of the new hospitality entity.

"Al Fahd Hospitality has a budget of over \$600 million, to fund its present and future pipeline of properties which currently consists of seven mainly mid-market hotels, which are all due to open within the next two years," said **Mohamed Awadalla**, CEO, TIME Hotels.

"Al Fahd Investments decided to form a joint venture with TIME Hotels because we were very impressed with the way they have managed and grown their own branded hotels. They have exceptional regional experience and recognise the international

standards we must achieve for our hotels and apartments to succeed in the Saudi market," said **Ahmed Al Fahd**, Vice Chairman, Al Fahd.

members over production quotas, and short term economic outlook, this trend is set to continue," said Awadalla.



The 26-storey, three-star King Fahd Road project in Riyadh has 96 rooms and suites, an all-day restaurant, indoor/outdoor café, three meeting rooms and a health club. The hotel is expected to open in June 2017.

"Given the current stalemate between OPEC

The second hotel TIME is opening in Saudi Arabia is in Al Qurayyat, in Al Jawf Province, situated 15 kilometres from the Jordanian border, a major and historic market place. The four-star hotel, which is due to open later this year, consists of 137 rooms and suites, an all-day restaurant, café, health club and two meeting rooms.

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Partners





## Dubai's new landmark Marasi Business Bay

■ Dubai Holding, through its real estate arm Dubai Properties Group, unveiled Marasi Business Bay, a new waterfront destination and its largest development

Business Bay features the region's first purpose-built yachting destination with floating restaurants and cafes, alongside onshore boutique shopping and



along the creek within Business Bay destination. The development embraces the longest promenade in the Emirates, spanning 12 kilometers, water homes, floating restaurants, retail options and five palm tree-lined marinas.

Located on the Dubai Canal Project, Marasi Business Bay is set to become a major future landmark in Dubai – an unprecedented unique waterside destination concept in the UAE and the Middle East. Marasi

a range of leisure and entertainment facilities.

Commenting on the new project, H.E. Mohammad Abdulla AlGergawi, Chairman, Dubai Holding, said, "Our objective is to create innovative developments, that accentuates the essence of Dubai's culture and heritage, and presents what the future Dubai looks like; a city that enriches the lives of its residents and visitors alike through unparalleled lifestyle experiences, adding value for investors and Dubai's economic diversification."

## Real-time information for agents

Amadeus' latest communication tool for travel agencies known as Amadeus Voice will provide a bundle of important updates, news, etc., which will allow them access to information 24/7, says **Graham Nichols**, MD, Amadeus Gulf.



SHEHARA RIZLY

### Q What are the latest offerings from Amadeus with regard to travel and tourism sector?

Amadeus is proud to announce its new communication tool Amadeus Voice for travel agencies. It resides in the computer desktop of the agent and first thing every morning, Amadeus Voice will bring not only the latest travel industry and other news, but also a calendar of important events, photo gallery, resources such as products updates, marketing promotions, useful downloads, technical topics and help-desk announcements. This tool uses push technology in a modern way where data is updated real-time and when needed. It also has a mobile version which will allow agents to access the information from anywhere 24/7.

### Q Could you explain the benefits for the travel agents/tour operators?

Amadeus Voice is a gateway of information to travel agents/tour operators. With a single click user has access to wide range of information.

#### Benefits include:

- ❖ Real-time information
- ❖ Access to resources from agent's own desktop
- ❖ Calendar to track major events
- ❖ Receive critical notifications instantly
- ❖ Mobile version for on the go travel agents

### Q How do you plan to meet the travel agents' expectations with these latest offerings?

Today's travel agent is very dynamic and re-



Graham Nichols  
Managing Director  
Amadeus Gulf

**This tool uses push technology in a modern way where data is updated real-time. It also has a mobile version which will allow access to information from anywhere 24/7**

quires resources instantly to be more productive and

stay with the competition. Amadeus Gulf anticipates the needs of travel agents and has been constantly investing in R&D (research & development).

With such initiatives like Amadeus Voice, agents will be able to stay connected to rich content anytime anywhere which will help agents equip themselves with the right knowledge of the travel industry and latest Amadeus updates.

### Q Do share some of the upcoming plans for 2016 and how it will further benefit the sector.

Amadeus Gulf has list of offerings in 2016 such as release of Dynamic Travel Documents, Enhanced Business Intelligence reporting and much more that will shape the future of travel. 📱



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DINE IN & CATERING



# Corporate travel: big buck earner

Hotel booking is big business and according to Euromonitor International, hotel booking value is projected to grow from \$480 billion in 2013 to \$600 billion in 2017. **Niklas Andreen**, SVP Hospitality, Travelport, shares an insight.



With the growth in corporate travel industry, 2016 is set to see an even greater increase in spending on business travel. This is partly because business travellers now expect the same booking experience and choice they have witnessed in the leisure travel space. The business traveller wants a fast, seamless booking and payment process including the ability to not only book chain hotels but independents too. They want to review and choose between prepaid and pay on departure rates, rates including ancillary options and they want to see where on a map is their choice of hotel.

## Greater Choice

To meet the demands of the corporate traveller, corporate agencies need to focus on expanding their hotel content in order to stay ahead of their competitors and really add value. For Travelport, this has meant us building a hotel portfolio of 650,000 properties and offering that to our travel agency community.

## Seamless Bookings

In such an increasingly competitive industry, it's more important than ever for corporate agencies to streamline their booking process and provide a seamless experience

at the point of sale and beyond. This includes items like TripAdvisor ratings, comparable rates and maps in the booking process so that the traveller doesn't have to 'go surfing' or wait while their agent does the same to find the information. Interestingly, a customer is four times more likely to buy from a competitor if the problem is service related versus price or product related. Offering the best customer service and the 'personal touch' should continue to be a key focus, especially as 76 per cent of consumers say they view customer service as the true test of how much a company values them.

## New Payment Methods

We see a big opportunity in the area of alternative virtual payment methods due to the key benefit of mitigating against fraud associated with card payments, which a total of 62 per cent of organisations have experienced. Virtual payment meth-

ods are also simpler and more efficient, which also helps achieve a seamless booking process.

## Maximise Opportunities

By working with Travelport, corporate agencies can offer their cus-

tomers more choice to drive those bookings as we provide a greater volume and diversity of hotel content than any of our competitors. We have around 650,000 properties, a number of the world's major hotel chains connected to us and we also integrate content from over 20 hotel aggregators. Additionally, with corporate travellers booking more independent hotels than ever before, we have partnered with HRS, to bring more than 60,000 independent hotels onto our platform.

For customers that don't have complex air travel needs but still book hotels, for example national businesses which have sales consultants visiting customers, we have also invested in a cost efficient hotel only Corporate Booking Tool, Travelport Hotelzon. For corporate booking tool providers and online travel agencies, our Universal API allows them to pull together content delivered from multiple sources into a cohesive display. This allows for more effective search, comparison, reservation and payments. This product is used by some of the world's largest online travel agents to offer a similar choice and breadth in a world where travellers are doing an increasing amount of travel booking themselves.

As well as offering the right hotel content, to offer a seamless booking process we also need to effectively solve the need for quick, simple and secure payment methods. Travelport has, therefore, invested in this area to meet these

needs and our corporate agency customers can take advantage of highly beneficial alternative payment options for airfares, hotels and cars. These include Conferma hotel bill back and eNett Virtual Account Numbers (VANs), allowing end-customers to pay for airfares or hotels without using their personal or business credit cards. These payment methods simplify payments, reconciliation and commissions compared to traditional cards, while facilitating safer and more cost effective payments to travel providers.



Niklas Andreen  
SVP Hospitality  
Travelport

**We have around 650,000 properties, a number of the world's major hotel chains connected to us and we also integrate content from over 20 hotel aggregators. Additionally, we have partnered with HRS to bring more than 60,000 independent hotels onto our platform**

## Technology News

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# Trade bonds over cricket with RezLive

Abu Dhabi-based Omeir Travel Agency trounced Sharjah Airport Travel Agency (SATA) in a thrilling finale to win the RezLive.com-Travelwebme 2016 Cricket Tournament. While SATA dominated the first innings, Omeir Travel bounced back in the second innings to emerge victorious, clinching the second edition of the cricket tournament. The tournament, which was held for travel agencies in the UAE, was a friendly platform to showcase the sporting skills of travel agents, and acknowledge the spirit of healthy competition. Held on May 19, the one-day tournament saw seven teams participate: Omeir Travel Agency, SATA, Al Hind Travel, Al Rostamani Travel, Ocean Air, Al Naboodah Travel and Musafir.com, at United Pro Sports, the popular indoor multi-sport arena in Al Quoz.



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## VFS Global

## Dubai

VFS Global has appointed **Peter Brun** as its Chief Communications Officer. In this role, Brun will be responsible for Corporate Communications, Marketing and Branding, and Corporate Social Responsibility of VFS Global, and will be based at the company's head office in Dubai, UAE. He will also join the Extended Executive Board of VFS Global. Brun, a Swiss national with an experience of 28 years, joins VFS Global from Kuoni Group. He has completed various journalism and media management programs in Switzerland and the US.



## Rotana Hotels

## Dubai &amp; Northern Emirates

**David Prince** has taken up the role of Vice President for Dubai and Northern Emirates at the Rotana Hotels. Previously Area General Manager for Rotana in Dubai & Northern Emirates, Prince joined the company in April last year after spending more than two decades at the Hilton Hotels. He held a variety of senior positions in diverse geographic markets including the United Kingdom, India, Malaysia, China, and Thailand at the Hilton Hotels. As the Area Vice President, Prince will oversee operations of 17 Rotana Hotels in Dubai and the Northern Emirates.



**Christian Baudat** has been appointed as the new Area General Manager for Abu Dhabi, Al Ain & Salalah. Baudat joins Rotana with an extensive background in hotel operations, development and management, having spent nearly 20 years with Hilton Hotels, mainly in Japan and Switzerland. In his new role, Baudat will drive Rotana's strategic agenda for the Abu Dhabi, Al Ain and Salalah markets. He will be responsible for creating an operating environment that assures consistent guest satisfaction across all hotels.



## Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights

## Dubai

Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights, located in Dubai Healthcare City, has appointed **Vipin Khattar** as General Manager. Khattar has joined Hyatt Regency Dubai Creek Heights from his recently held position as General Manager of Hyatt Regency Sharm El Sheikh Resort. As General Manager, Khattar will oversee the strategic and financial performance of the property and he is committed to provide the highest quality of hospitality to each and every guest. He will ensure that the basic principles of Hyatt Regency brand are imbibed at every level.



## Shangri-La Hotel

## Dubai

Shangri-La Hotel appointed **Dharmendra Sharma** as its new Director of Sales and Marketing. Sharma has worked extensively throughout the Middle East with several five-star hotels. He has held leadership roles in Sales and Marketing spanning over 11 years including his most recent appointment as Head of Sales and Marketing with The Oberoi. In his new role, Sharma will lead the hotel's Sales and Marketing efforts and commercial strategies, while reinforcing Shangri-La Hotel, Dubai as the hotel of choice for travellers. He will also be in charge of penetrating new markets, and meeting both short and long-term goals of the hotel.



## Le Meridien Dubai Hotel &amp; Conference Centre

## Dubai

**Deveekaa Nijhawan** has been appointed as the Public Relations and Communications Manager at Le Meridien Dubai Hotel & Conference Centre. Her role entails building the company brand, collaborating with media houses to develop new ways and strategies for attracting customers, other media audiences. During this period she championed the launch campaign for Le Royal Club Wing.



# Four decades of soaring into the UAE

Singapore Airlines recently celebrated 40 years of operations in the UAE. Singapore Airlines' Country Manager **Erwin Wldjaja** and his team hosted a gala dinner at the Emirates ballroom at JW Marriott Marquis Business Bay for all the partners, travel agents, tour operators, Dubai Airport Authority officials, etc. The event was graced by **His Excellency Umej Bhatia**, Singapore Ambassador to the UAE, and Regional Vice President West Asia and Africa, **Joey Seow**.





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