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1
DAY

TRAVTALK

THE NEWSPAPER OF THE TRAVEL INDUSTRY Published from : ★ India ★ Middle East

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With a focus on strengthening inbound and outbound markets, the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2017 is back at the Dubai World Trade Centre from April 24-27. With more than 2,500 exhibiting companies participating, the event promises to improve connections, ensuring a steady growth in business opportunities.

SHEHARA RIZLY

“At the Arabian Travel Market this year, we are pleased to be able to showcase yet another layer of Sharjah's diverse tourism portfolio. For many years we have focused on positioning Sharjah as a perfect family destination for discovering heritage and culture supported by a broad edutainment opportunity. This year we are delighted to offer Sharjah's outdoor tourism as a product to the market, packaged as an 'incredible experience,' the diversity available in the Emirate from mountains to mangroves, desert to coast and wadis to wetlands is breathtaking; large areas are under protection to ensure they remain unspoiled.

The investment and development in interpretation centres across the emirate ensures that all visitors can gain maximum enjoyment from their time outdoors. Inbound tourism to Sharjah is buoyant and we are seeing the accommodation sector rising to the challenges faced by high occupancy as we continue to implement our Marhabtain programme ensuring that visitors throughout the emirate receive the very best service and feel welcome while they are here.”



H.E. Khalid Jasim Al Midfa
Chairman, Sharjah Commerce and Tourism
Development Authority (SCTDA)

“Inbound tourism to Dubai grew at 12 per cent Year-on-Year. ATM serves as a platform to highlight the factors behind Dubai's appeal to a diverse range of travellers. We are looking forward to showcasing Dubai's ever-evolving destination proposition to the international travel trade community. On the stand at ATM this year we'll also be highlighting several new initiatives of our own including Dubai Sustainable Tourism updates and our new industry training 'Dubai Expert' which Dubai College of Tourism will showcase – and much more.”



Issam Abdul Rahim Kazim
CEO
Dubai Corporation for Tourism and
Commerce Marketing (DCTCM)

“This year, GTA will promote the preferred destinations from across Europe, Asia Pacific & the Americas. We will be relaunching the special Strategic Partnership Program (SPP) of Dubai, Japan, Thailand, Hong Kong & Singapore; showcasing the expansion of our loyalty programme g shop; and launching exclusive Geneva shop campaign from May 1 to July 31, 2017. GTA's key marketing strategy is to provide multiple contracting choices to travellers, while providing an effective support with immediate solutions that reflects our main focus, which is to employ technology to make it easy for travel agents to sell more.”



Rami Mashini
Vice President of Sales and
Marketing for Middle East, Africa,
Turkey & India, GTA

“Compared to global hot-spots like Hong Kong and Singapore, Dubai has emerged to be the 4th most visited city on the planet this year, and traffic rose by 10 per cent compared to last year. Further, in the GCC, there are difficulties in obtaining a visa, few internationally active intermediaries, such as professional congress organisers and destination management companies, and a limited market for congresses. But at the same time the success can largely be attributed to the excellent airlift into Dubai and Abu Dhabi which is home to Emirates and Etihad, respectively.”



Freddy Farid
Area General Manager
Gloria Hotels and Resorts

Contd. on page 3 ▶

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Manchester to Muscat

Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
WY 106	20:45	07:20	Daily

Muscat to Dubai

Flight No.	Departure	Arrival	Frequency
WY 603	08:35	09:50	Daily

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ATM means business

► Contd. from page 1

“The Arabian Travel Market is one of the most important events in the travel exhibition calendar and an ideal platform to highlight the business developments and product innovations of the airline to the travel and tourism industry. This event also brings together key stakeholders within the travel space for productive meetings, seminars, panels and much more and we look forward to networking and cultivating stronger relationships with our trade partners, which in turn creates highly targeted business and growth opportunities for the airline.”



Sheikh Majid Al Mualla
Divisional Senior Vice President
- Commercial Operations
Centre, Emirates Airline



Nia Niscaya
Director, International
Promotions ME & Europe,
Ministry of Tourism, Indonesia

“We hope that we can have significant results this year by having double digit growth of the Middle East arrivals. This is supported by the replenishment of direct flights from the Middle East to Indonesia's main destinations. Likewise, Banyuwangi, a regency located in East Java, is considering to create 'halal beach', where there is area separation between women and men. In 2016, Indonesia welcomed 240,989 ME tourists. This number increased by 32.31 per cent compared to 2015 with 182,143 arrivals. Although the proportion is still small, the growth of ME region market is always magnificent and the spending rate of ME tourists doubled the rate spending of all our markets.”

“We are releasing series of packages and special promotional deals for the upcoming season for the Middle East and Indian markets. The inbound tourism industry plays a vital role in the countries' economy. Our marketing strategy is a mix of branding, printed ads and marketing materials and social networking. Relationship and word of mouth are still the best strategy for B2B. Consumer attitudes are changing; people want to experience deeper emotional and personal connection when they travel – more people are focused on 'experiencing' a destination by connecting to its history, people, culture & food.”



Kulwant Singh
Founder & MD
Lama Group

TRYP set for summer opening

A new joint executive committee will manage Wyndham Hotel Group's Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by Wyndham Dubai and their 1,100 guest rooms.



TRYP by Wyndham Dubai is set to open this summer with 650 hotel rooms including 25 of the brand's signature fitness rooms. The hotel will also offer an inviting, social

Wyndham Dubai participate in Wyndham Rewards, the loyalty programme from Wyndham Hotel Group, offering members generous points earning structure along with a flat, free-night redemption rate in 75 countries across the world.

Swissôtel, in leadership and management roles including Managing Director and General Manager. Last year, he joined Wyndham Dubai Marina, the first Wyndham Hotels and Resorts location in the UAE, as general manager.



Cluster team for Wyndham Dubai Marina & TRYP by Wyndham Dubai

lobby known as Plaza Central. Other facilities include a swimming pool, fitness centre, and meeting space.

Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by Wyndham Dubai are owned by subsidiaries of leading Dubai-based property developers The First Group and are managed by Wyndham Hotel Group. Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by

Spearheading the joint executive team is industry veteran **Rogier M. Hurkmans** as Cluster General Manager, responsible for leading daily operations and overseeing more than 350 hotel associates. Hurkmans has more than 20 years of experience serving global hotel chains, including InterContinental Hotels Group, Hilton, Steigenberger and

“Wyndham Hotel Group's expansion throughout the UAE has brought the first Wyndham and TRYP by Wyndham hotels to Dubai, offering the utmost in quality accommodations and hospitable service for travelers,” said Hurkmans. “We have a team of dedicated, service-oriented leaders who will ensure the hotels' success while delivering great experiences to all guests at both locations.”



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TRAVTALK

EDITORIAL

Bridging the world

In its 24th year, the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) opens its doors to 2,500 exhibiting companies spread across 12 halls at the Dubai World Trade Centre, making it the largest ATM in its history. Last year the event attracted almost 40,000 industry professionals, settling on deals worth \$2.5 billion over the four days.

Opening on April 24, the exhibition this year will host a diverse international diaspora on one platform for four days to network and tap into the most potential travel markets in the world. The focus of this edition of Arabian Travel Market is on the trends which have taken the world by storm.

Many tourism boards around the globe are looking into creating local experiences as part of the tourism itinerary which enables the tourist to be more aware of the importance of culture and heritage. More focus is on cultural and heritage tourism in this part of the world as it is very rich in its unique culture and tradition.

Technology, on the other hand, continues to play a pivotal role in today's travel, tourism and hospitality sector. Traditional travel agents are gearing up to be more versatile and they are fast becoming consultants who sell experiences beyond what is offered on a website. In this manner, influencers are the new breed which has bloomed, sharing their thoughts, recommendations and guiding travellers around the globe.

AHIC opens from April 25-27 at Madinat Jumeirah with the theme 'Catalysts of Change', an apt theme for recent times. Among the topics of interest would be the way in which technology will shape the future of hotels and the global major trends that impact hospitality in the ME region.

At ATM last year the introduction of mid-scale brands witnessed a major share in the tourism market ensuring more numbers to the region. The Middle East is considered to be the most lucrative region to do business by most operators because of its connectivity options, swift terms of business and continued growth trajectories.

Meeting mid-scale needs

The hospitality market in Saudi Arabia offers tremendous potential for investors to lay out money on mid-scale hotels. This can in turn help a large demand segment looking for quality and affordable accommodations.

The Saudi market has been conventionally dominated by upscale and luxury hotels without real focus on the change in hotel guests' needs and decrease in their purchasing power. As a result, Ghina Real Estate has identified a gap in the market that it can fill through the development of mid-scale internationally branded hotels, targeting the corporate segment and to a lesser extent, the leisure segment.

We have seen over recent years that average room rates in the Kingdom were relatively high compared to the rest of the region, despite a lack of good and acceptable quality offerings. This was coupled with an increase in the supply of economy hotels that are mainly unbranded and of low quality. Based on all of this, we believe that the mid-scale market in the Kingdom can still cater to a large demand segment looking for quality hotels at an acceptable budget.

In addition, the partnership with international hotel operators will help the developer build good quality,

calculated budget hotels that can cater to a large segment of guests that are looking for an accommodation that takes into consideration their income – without a sacrifice on quality.

Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam have been identified as the prime focus areas for the development of these hotels with the potential of expansion to other

hard to ignore in the current economic climate.

On the other hand, the management of these hotels by an international hotel operator will provide guests with confidence in the quality of service and reassurance that the rates will satisfy their needs, not to mention the support received from the operator distribution and marketing channels.

At Ghina Real Estate, we believe that the 2030 vision of the Kingdom will be a booster to the hospitality sector in the country, with a continuous focus from the government on infrastructure projects adding to it the relaxation of visas requirements for visitors and the expansion of the entertainment sector. The hospitality sector still offers a lot of development opportunities for investors, associating good returns with an acceptable level of risk.

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



Samer Sabra*
Vice President, Investment & Development, Ghina Real Estate

* Ghina Real Estate is a newly established real estate development firm in KSA and Gold Sponsor at the upcoming Arabian Hotel Investment Conference 2017 (AHIC) – which is being held from April 25-27 at Madinat Jumeirah in Dubai.

Riyadh, Jeddah and Dammam have been identified as the prime focus areas for the development of these hotels with the potential of expansion to other Tier-II cities

Tier-II cities. The advantages that the mid-scale hotels offer to the investor are mainly the reduced development budget, the choice of small to medium plot size and a GOP percentage of around 45 per cent that can be achieved from operations. Our feasibility studies show that these factors will help the developer achieve an IRR exceeding 15 per cent for each hotel development – an opportunity that is

The corporate sector and budget-oriented leisure segment provide the strongest target audience for these types of hotels. Tier-II cities will also offer a potential geographical diversification plan, where the supply of these kind of hotels is still limited. As a developer, our priority will be on the efficient design of the mid-scale hotels, the good quality of finishes and providing good service to the guest.

UK top origin for travel to UAE

The UK continues to hold the position of top origin for travel to the UAE this summer followed by the United States and Germany. Pakistan has risen six places to 6th position and India drops two places to 8th position.

Top 10 Origins

Rank	2016	2017	YoY Rank Change	Rank	2016	2017	YoY Rank Change
1	United Kingdom	United Kingdom	0	6	India	Pakistan	6
2	United States	United States	0	7	France	France	0
3	Germany	Germany	0	8	Ireland	India	-2
4	Australia	Italy	1	9	Spain	Ireland	-1
5	Italy	Australia	-1	10	Russia	Spain	-1

2016 = Searching or Booking October '15 - January '16, to depart in June - August '16.

2017 = Searching or Booking October '16 - January '17, to depart in June - August '17.

(*Data is based on searches and bookings made between October 2016 and January 2017 to depart in June-August 2017.)

Source: Sojern's Summer Travel Trends for 2017



DURGA DAS PUBLICATIONS PRIVATE LIMITED
074889011988PTC03820

Publisher : Sanjeet
Director : Sumera Bahl
Managing Editor : Peden Doma Bhutia
Assistant Editor : Shehara Rizvi
Desk Editor : Ruchi J Singh
Assistant Desk Editor : Shivani Kaul
Design : Nityanand Misra
Business Development Manager : Crisna De Guzman
Sales & Admin Assistant : Angelito Villeza
Asst. Manager - Advertising : Gagandeep Kaur
Manager Production : Anil Kharbada
Circulation Manager : Ashok Rana

is published by Sanjeet on behalf of
Durga Das Publications Private Limited
Printed at
Citrus Graphics Private Limited
B-61, Sector-67
Noida, (U.P.) 201 301

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Largest ATM ever turns 'experiential'

Keeping up with the current travel trends, the Arabian Travel Market this year will focus on three key areas – experiential, halal and luxury travel and how the tourism business is responding to the demands of the digital world, reveals Senior Exhibition Director **Simon Press**.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

Q Could you explain the theme in focus for this year's ATM?

Travellers are increasingly looking beyond conventional leisure programmes and itineraries to actively seek typical experiences that deliver a true taste of local culture. Experiential travel encompasses adventure, culture, heritage, wellness & spa, and cruise tourism segments, which are currently trending globally.

Today we see brands and tourism industry stakeholders offering their guests intangible and emotional experiences, immersing them in local culture, traditional and ways of life. It's an appeal that can be successfully transferred to backpackers and billionaires alike. This growing trend is now on the radar of the region's tourism chiefs.

The Middle East has an abundance of authentic local experiences to offer from overnight stays in a

stone house in remote Omani villages to Old Dubai walking tours that search out the best street food. Elsewhere, the meteoric rise in the popularity of Airbnb and volunteer tourism are just some of the ways the industry has evolved to capitalise on the growing trend, while bringing new players into the market. At ATM 2017, there will be a focus on converting these concepts into viable commercial realities to broaden the appeal of Middle East destinations and increase their visitor numbers and revenues, which can support sustainable economic development.

Q What will be different at ATM this year?

We have three major new additions for the 2017 show: the Digital Transformation Summit, the Halal Tourism Summit, and ILTM Arabia. The Digital Transformation Summit takes place in the Travel Tech Theatre and will explore how the travel businesses is responding to the demands of the digital world. Sessions in the Travel Tech Theatre will



Simon Press
Senior Exhibition Director
Arabian Travel Market

include 'The New Age Travel Agent,' which will assess how smart travel agents are evolving to meet the needs of today's travellers.

The Halal Travel Summit takes place on the Global Stage and will showcase leading Muslim travel industry experts including, Rafi-uddin Shikoh, CEO of DinarStandard and Faez Fadhilillah, CEO of Salam Standard and Tripfez, who will discuss the big picture, halal destination strategies and how to sell halal

travel. The Chief Information Officer Summit will take place in Abu Dhabi room B alongside the main exhibition and will be held exclusively for CIOs to share best practice, knowledge and strategy.

In response to the Middle East's growing international luxury travel market, ILTM Arabia will showcase the buoyant market for luxury products and experiences that define the region's outbound travel market. Co-located with ATM 2017, ILTM Arabia will target high net-worth travellers from throughout the GCC and wider Middle East region, with buyers from the UAE, Saudi Arabia and Qatar expected to have a particularly strong presence. Targeting the region's highest net worth travellers, this is an invitation only event. Buyers will be fully hosted by ILTM Arabia and attend one-to-one, pre-scheduled appointments with up to 25 international luxury travel brands – a first for ATM and the proven successful ILTM Arabia portfolio format.

Q Could you share the growth since last year?

The show has experienced phenomenal growth of over 70 per cent since 2012 and this year already looks like it's going to break all previous records. We have more than 100 new exhibitors and 65 country pavilions, while we expect representation from 140 countries over the course of the event. This year we have over 400 mainstand holders and expect more than 2,800 exhibiting companies. We will also have our hugely successful country pavilions. In terms of visitors, we expect to welcome more than 30,000 people over the course of the show. Almost \$2.5 billion of business was negotiated at ATM last year and similar levels are anticipated for 2017.

New Participants

Atout France; Cambodia, Ministry of Tourism; China National Tourist Office in Singapore; Destination Zanzibar; and Uganda Tourist Board

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Ethiopian's A350 to Mumbai

Apart from bringing its new generation Airbus 350-900 to Mumbai, India, the airline also initiated the code-share agreement with South African Airways.

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Ethiopian Airlines launched Africa's first Ethiopian Airbus A350-900 XWB on the Addis Ababa-Mumbai route on April 7, 2017. Passengers on Ethiopian's twice daily non-stop services between Mumbai to Addis Ababa will be able to enjoy the extra features of this latest flying machine: new cabin interior features with the latest high-definition touchscreen, personal monitors with a higher selection of movies, wider seats and windows, the lowest twin engine noise level, advanced air conditioning technology, full LED mood lighting.

Tadesse Tilahun, Regional Director, Indian Sub-continent, remarked, "The A350 is a game-changing fleet that has proven exceptional levels of luxury and reliability for a totally unique passenger experience. We are glad to be the first airline



Tadesse Tilahun
Regional Director
Indian Sub-continent

to serve our Indian customers with this latest aircraft from Mumbai."

He added, "Currently, we are operating 28 weekly passenger flights to India's major cities, Mumbai and Delhi. Moreover, to further strengthen the growing trade and commercial ties between the booming economies of India and Africa at large, we have started weekly freighter operation to Ahmedabad, our fifth cargo destination in India, since March 28."

In another development, Ethiopian Airlines and South African Airways, both members of Star Alliance, have entered into an expanded codeshare agreement, inked on October 01, 2016 and projected to be effective as of 2017 summer season. The revamped code-share agreement is anticipated to further enhance the cooperation among the two carriers and avail a range of additional destinations for customers to travel to.

Girma Shiferaw, AVice President Strategic Planning and Alliances, Ethiopian, remarked, "The expanded code share between the two carriers enables our customers enjoy the best possible connectivity options and also plays a significant role in enabling greater people-to-people, investment, trade and tourism ties within Africa as well as with the rest of the World."

Cathay's four decades in Dubai

The year 2017 marks 40 years since Cathay Pacific began operations on its Dubai route from its hub in Hong Kong in 1977, marking its 20th destination.

TT BUREAU

Cathay Pacific Country Manager UAE & Oman, **Ashish Kapur**, says, "Since launching the Dubai route four decades ago, we have played an important part in bringing visitors from different parts of the world to this fast growing country. We, as an airline, have come a long way in developing our products and services for our customers in this region and will continue our commitment in providing a high standard of service and connecting travellers from Dubai to Hong Kong and beyond."

The twice-weekly service marked the Asian airline's second destination in the region. The first flight, serviced by a Boeing 707, launched within a year of Cathay Pacific adding its first Middle East route to Bahrain. Leaving Hong Kong on Wednesdays and Sundays, CX741



Ashish Kapur
Country Manager UAE & Oman
Cathay Pacific

We will continue to provide a high standard of service and connecting travellers from Dubai to Hong Kong and beyond

and CX740, initially flew via Bangkok and Bahrain. A direct Hong Kong-Dubai service was introduced just 24 years late in 1993, complimenting Cathay Pacific's existing service to the United Arab Emir-

ates via Bangkok and Mumbai. During the last 40 years, the route has seen a number of enhancements, including the introduction of the Super Tristar L1011 – Cathay Pacific's first wide-body jet – on the Dubai route in 1982. The new aircraft supported the launch of a twice weekly Hong Kong to Mumbai service that operated via Bangkok and on to Dubai (CX751/750).

By the end of 1989, the Hong Kong-Bangkok-Mumbai-Dubai service increased to four times a week. Throughout the last four decades, the route has been serviced by the airline's Boeing 747-300, Boeing 777, and Airbus A330-300. By 2008, Dubai had expanded to 18 flights a week, 14 being direct operating twice a day, and one operating via Mumbai. The remainder were routed through Bangkok and on to Bahrain.

19m flew Cebu in 2016

The Philippines' Cebu Pacific flew 19.1 million passengers in 2016, an increase of four per cent from the 18.4 million passengers flown in 2015.



TT BUREAU

Last December 27, 2016, the Cebu Pacific Air Group carried a total of 64,684 passengers — the highest number of travellers we have ever flown in one day. This surpasses our prior record of 62,947 passengers flown last January 3, 2016, translating to 1,737 additional passengers, said **Atty. JR Mantaring**, Vice President for Corporate Affairs, Cebu Pacific.

Growth in passenger volume was largely driven by the airline's low-cost short-haul services, and increased

frequencies in key domestic markets. Specifically, the former recorded a 9.3 per cent growth compared to 2015, while the latter reflected a 2.6 per cent increase.

"This significant increase in number only shows our firm commitment in trafficking trade and tourism in all the destinations we operate in, while at the same time enabling everyone to connect with their families and friends all around the world," added Mantaring.

CEB posted notable passenger growth in international destinations such as Beijing


Shanghai and Xiamen in China, Taiwan and Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. In the Philippines, domestic traffic increased in Cauayan, Siargao and Ozamiz. CEB currently offers flights to a total of 37 domestic and 29 international destinations, operating an extensive network across Asia, Australia, the Middle East, and USA. Its 58-strong fleet comprises four Airbus A319, 36 Airbus A320, seven Airbus A330, eight ATR 72-500, and three ATR 72-600 aircraft. Between 2017 and 2021, CEB expects delivery of one more brand-new Airbus A330, 32 Airbus A321neo, and 13 ATR 72-600s.

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Disruption Management by Amadeus

Disruptions reduce airline profitability and impose considerable delays across the network. While airline disruptions might start with one flight delay, it can then spread 'virally' throughout the whole travel ecosystem, Vincent Lacroix, Airline IT solutions–Head of Reservations, Flight and Disruption, Amadeus, tells **TRAVTALK**.

TT BUREAU

What are the notable costs for delays and cancellations?

In the whitepaper 'Shaping the future of Airline Disruption Management (IROPS),' published by Amadeus, we defined airline disruption as "dealing with the consequences of cancelled or delayed flights". As a consequence of planes and crew not arriving as planned, further networks will face cancellations and delays, even from a relatively minor initial problem.

T2RL's report stated that "the consensus estimate of the cost of disruption to airlines is about 5 per cent of airline revenue, or about \$35 billion worldwide." This figure was reached by taking an average of the studies to date which quantify the cost of airline delays to airlines. T2RL then added its own estimate on

top of that to place a value on the costs of passenger delays and the supporting industry.

When calculating the total combined costs of expenses such as hotel accommodation, meals, rebooking, etc. the costs add up to a significant amount: between 43-55 per hour per passenger. The estimate of the total value, including the cost of the loss of productivity and down time, is \$60 billion annually. Beyond costs, airlines' direct and future revenue is at stake. Airlines now tend to factor in this element in their evaluation, which means that the evolution of solutions to disruption is being further prioritised.

What is the industry's point of view on disruption, and what is being done to tackle it?

We are now seeing an increased focus on disruption,

due to a number of factors. The air transport network now handles even more passengers, numbers are expected to reach 7.3 billion by 2034, as a result airlines and airports are now turning to innovations that can help provide a more efficient operation, limiting disruption. With the rise of social media there is an increased incentive for the industry to tackle issues that are found to be consistently frustrating for consumers, among other factors.

It is also key for industry players to increasingly work together to tackle the issue of disruption. With the arrival of new technologies, such as centralised data servers bringing data together from multiple sources, the industry is taking a more collaborative approach to tackle disruption, and we expect to see breakthroughs in this area soon.



Vincent Lacroix
Airline IT solutions–Head of Reservations, Flight and Disruption, Amadeus

With the arrival of new technologies, such as centralised data servers bringing data together from multiple sources, the industry is taking a more collaborative approach to tackle disruption, and we expect to see breakthroughs in this area soon

What are the industry specialists doing to minimise the issues?

Historically, airlines have empowered their Operations' department to manage disruption recovery. However, in the last several years, the industry has shifted towards working collaboratively to tackle the issue and has begun investing significant amounts into disruption mitigation systems.

Today, operational managers and developers are working towards overcoming the difficulties that have slowed progress down in the past.

Do explain the identified causes and solutions by Amadeus?

Amadeus offers an end-to-end solution, which capitalises on Amadeus' wealth of traveller data across the passenger's journey. Amadeus' disruption management portfolio includes:

- Amadeus Schedule Recovery: optimised flight re-scheduling (e.g. Qantas)
- Amadeus Passenger Recovery: multi-flight optimised re-accommodation (eg SWISS)

- Over 80 other solutions address disruption issues in addition to their initial purpose, including Departure Control System (DCS) (with Disruption Transfer at individual passenger or flight level, and Self Service Disruption)
- Amadeus Altéa Inventory: includes single flight re-accommodation, allows TAs to support any disruption thanks to full visibility & can decrease ADMs (Airline Debit Memos) that would minimise cost on both sides. Re-accommodation in Altéa Inventory (at flight level)
- Amadeus Ticket Changer offers travellers a self-servicing tool to change their ticket online any time
- Amadeus Baggage Reconciliation System (BRS) provides real-time information to ensure baggage accuracy whilst enhancing a fast turn-around of aircrafts, on-time departure and accurate and secure passenger/baggage reconciliation. (Icelandair)
- Amadeus Airport Common Use Service enables check-in anytime, anywhere with an internet connection. Operations can be easily be moved elsewhere so it mitigates business continuity risk from unplanned disruption.

What are the other roles to be played by Amadeus in this regard?

Amadeus' solutions work to mitigate and reschedule disruption across the traveller journey. Solutions focus on four key areas, and below we include a case example of how these tools work together in the case of disruption:

- Operation control centre–provides end-to-end visibility of all airline operations
- Schedule & crew recovery–the solution has the bandwidth to manage: customer service, operational costs, schedule integrity, crew connections, keeping to recovery

time, revenue, rebooking costs, overnight costs, merchandising, passenger revenue, passenger value and loyalty ensuring all systems run as smoothly as possible during the disruption.

- Passenger recovery–re-schedule, rebook, re-issue, re-route bags, re-accept on DCS (Departure Control System) based on each passenger profile
- Re-accommodated passenger notified–via digital channels, airport agents and self-service stations resulting in a full recovery.

What are the main causes for flight delays and cancellations?

There are a number of key causes that lead to airline disruption. The most common are bad weather, air traffic control constraints, airport congestions, strike action (e.g. airline, airport, 3rd party), third-party issues (e.g. rail connections to airports, ground handler), crew logistics, Natural disaster, Terrorism/ war/ political instability, Local anomalies (e.g. sand storm, snow storm), mechanical faults and IT issues.

As you can see, airlines are not usually the cause of disruptions, though they have to manage them in order to minimise their consequences, in order to get back to smooth operations as quickly as possible.

In your opinion, what would the future of airline disruption management be?

Recent investment into this area is a positive indicator that we are headed towards a breakthrough, thanks to technology innovation and increased collaboration. This technology breakthrough will not happen overnight, however: the growing enthusiasm for tackling disruption is necessary to maintain momentum and staying on track. Making small and gradual changes towards a more collaborative and integrated approach will lead to substantial results. 🚀

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PAL expands footprint in the GCC

Philippine Airlines (PAL), the flag carrier of the Republic of the Philippines, has started operating non-stop from Doha, Jeddah and Kuwait to Manila, capital of the Philippines. PAL now flies non-stop to Manila from Dubai daily and Riyadh daily.

TT BUREAU

The Philippine Airlines also flies from Manila to Dammam five times weekly; Doha four times weekly; Kuwait four times weekly; Jeddah three times weekly; and Abu Dhabi three times a week. The realignment of routes is an enhancement of PAL's product offering for its primary market in the Gulf region – the overseas Filipino workers. Beginning March 26, 2017, PAL dropped its Dubai and Abu Dhabi stop-over on the Doha-Manila, Jeddah-Manila, and Kuwait-Manila routes, all PAL flights to Manila from seven points in the Middle East have become non-stop.

"The non-stop service across these routes will give us a better product to offer our primary market, the nearly 800,000 Filipino contract workers. Aside from con-

venience, Filipinos will feel right at home upon boarding a PAL aircraft. We offer our passengers warm and caring service that comes from the Heart of the Filipino. 'Buong pusong alaga' (wholehearted care) is what makes Philippine Airlines a cut above the rest," said **Jaime J. Bautista**, President and COO, PAL.

The devolved service – non-stop point-to-point service – translates to an increase in capacity by 47 per cent. PAL is also reconfiguring the aircraft being used on these routes. PAL is taking away more than a hundred seats on the mono-class, 414-seat Airbus A330 aircraft that has premium and regular economy sections. The reconfigured A330s will have 264 seats, set in two classes – Business Class (with lie-flat seats) and Economy (Premium and Regular), making the

whole cabin more spacious and comfortable.

"The shift to bi-class service gives our passengers the flexibility to choose between regular economy and business class service. Regardless of which class of service you choose, PAL will deliver its distinct brand of Filipino service," Bautista added.

PAL will start deploying the reconfigured A330 to Dubai on June 15; to Doha on July 15; to Abu Dhabi and Riyadh on August 15; to Dammam on September 15; and to Jeddah and Kuwait on October 15.

Passengers can also enjoy wireless inflight entertainment by downloading the myPAL Player app for free in order to stream a wide selection of movies, TV shows and music from their personal de-

The non-stop service across these routes will give us a better product to offer our primary market, the nearly 800,000 Filipino contract workers

vices. The aircraft's myPALWi-fi allows one to surf, browse and keep in touch with loved ones and friends while on board the flight. An added treat is 30 minutes of free Wi-fi. iPads will also be offered for use during the whole flight.

Full-service inflight offerings include a selection of Asian, Continental and Halal meals plus a wide selection of beverages. Each passenger is entitled to free baggage allowance of two pieces, up to 23 kilos each.

Passengers may also earn mileage points that they can exchange for free tickets

under PAL's frequent flyer mileage program, the Mabuhay Miles. With non-stop operations to Manila, travellers from the Middle East will now have a direct link to the Philippines and other destinations in the PAL network. Upon arrival in Manila, passengers may conveniently connect to 43 international and 30 Philippine destinations.

Domestic flights to Caticlan will enable passengers to visit Boracay, one of the world's best beaches. Basco (Batanes) in the northernmost tip of the country will give visitors an unforgettable experience of rugged terrain and



Jaime J. Bautista
President and COO
PAL

friendly locals. Puerto Prince-sa (Palawan) offers the underground river cruise at the subterranean river national park.

PAL's Busuanga flights will bring passengers to Coron (Palawan) for exciting water sports – snorkeling and scuba diving – while enjoying lagoons and hotspots. They can also discover Pearl Farm or Samal Island in Davao or experience the resorts and beaches of Cebu in central Philippines. 🌴

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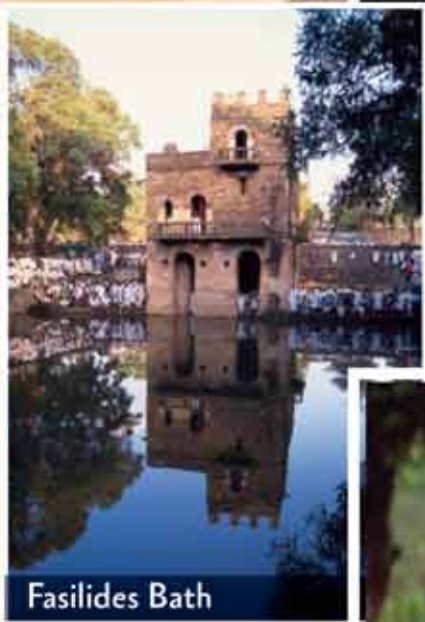
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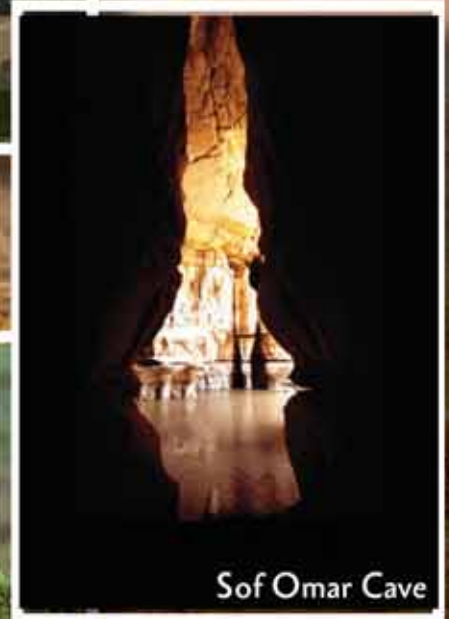
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Ramada Hotel & Suites gets a facelift

Ramada Hotel & Suites Sharjah, managed by global hotel giant Wyndham Hotel Group, unveiled the completion of more than AED 25 million in extensive renovations and upgrades, creating an elevated 4-star guest experience across all 343 of its guest rooms and suites.

TT BUREAU

Formerly the Ramada Sharjah, the hotel began renovations in June 2016 and now offers deluxe rooms and executive deluxe rooms, as well as one and two bedroom suites. Additional facilities, which were also upgraded as part of the renovations, include an executive lounge, six meeting and event venues with state-of-the-art audio visual capabilities, two restaurants, a gym and spa area, as well as an indoor pool and sun terrace.

All newly renovated rooms offer an array of contemporary accommodation, including king and twin bedded deluxe rooms of 50 square metres with modern design and decor and a comfortable seating area with a flat-screen TV. One

and two bedroom suites feature a well-appointed kitchen, which includes a refrigerator, oven and washing machine. All rooms and suites feature amenities of the highest quality to ensure a comfortable and memorable stay and are as spacious as 100sqm.

Dining options at the hotel include Zaafaran, which offers an international menu with a variety of dishes designed to cover all tastes; and the newly added Sunshine Café, which offers casual dining and serves hot and cold dishes in an easy light fare menu for visitors and guests to enjoy in a cosy seating area.

"At Ramada, we're focused on helping our guests sample the world and these renovations have enabled us to completely re-imagine the



experiences we offer," said Cluster General Manager **Alper Can Bulcum**. "Our new twin bedded rooms are a wonderful example. Ideal for short-stay, budget-minded travellers, these smaller rooms help guests to keep their costs affordable by easily sharing with a colleague or friend. And for our longer-term guests, our spacious suites offer a private

respite from the world outside. Whatever a traveller's reasons for visiting Sharjah, our intent is to be their go-to-hotel of choice."

Hotel guests seeking recreational activities have access to both an indoor pool and children's pool, sauna, fitness centre and spa, which offers a variety of treatments.

The hotel also offers an on-site tour desk with information on local attractions such as Burj Khalifa (a 15 minute drive away), Mall of the Emirates (a 20 minute drive) and Dubai Parks and Resorts (a 40 minute drive away). Sahara Centre, Sharjah's largest shopping mall, is conveniently located just across the street. 🌟



Alper Can Bulcum
Cluster General Manager
Ramada Hotel & Suites Sharjah

At Ramada, we're focused on helping our guests sample the world and these renovations have enabled us to completely re-imagine the experiences we offer. Our intent is to be their go-to-hotel of choice

Team building through CSR

Ibis Styles Jumeira's continued programmes on team building through CSR activities have given them an edge over others in the market, says Hotel Manager **Muhammad Haider**.

TT BUREAU

As a young property in the market, Ibis Styles Jumeira is on a steady growth trajectory having been able to maintain 79 per cent occupancy level throughout the past year. Locals and Emirati clientele top their list, followed by India, KSA, the UK, France and Turkey. Recently they have been penetrating new markets such as Spain, Brazil, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Czech Republic, Latin America, etc.

Every market has its own requirements and the past year has worked out very well for the property ensuring guests around the year. Haider states, "Long-term relationships play an important role in the travel, tourism and hospitality sector. We need to work very closely with DMCs, OLTA's, Tour Operators, travel agents, corporate companies and other partners to ensure the continuity of the business

at the property. At the end of the day, it is good relationship that would secure us the business we require."

Guest experience plays a pivotal role and at Ibis Styles Jumeira, under the leadership of Haider, new plans have been made to ensure that guests stay are made memorable. A hotel manager today is expected to interact both with guests and staff members to ensure continued output and productivity. Among the many steps taken by Haider, the first and most important is the appointment of a quality assurance team which consists of team members from various different departments such as talent & culture, housekeeping, engineering, sales, etc. Their role is to interact with the guests every morning at breakfast/afternoon and evening times to obtain information /feedback from them about their stay and if there are any requirements to ensure they



Muhammad Haider
Hotel Manager
Ibis Styles Jumeira

Skills can be transferred to other teams. Sometimes even HODs can be educated on various aspects unknown such as the plantation project we carried out. The junior staff provided the information and important details for the seniors to carry out the Programme



are rectified faster or forward to the relevant departments and ensure prompt action is taken. This team is special as it has become the heart and soul of the property responsible in researching CSR programs and ensuring that skills are shared among every staff member of the property. Relationships are very important either internally or externally.

Haider's second Programme along with his departmental is to identify hidden skill set in associates and to capitalise it by giving them incentive on multi-tasking in each department.

Haider states, "Skills can be transferred to other teams. Sometimes even HODs can be educated on various as-

pects unknown such as the plantation project we carried out. The junior staff provided the information and important details for the seniors to carry out the Programme. We make sure 80 per cent of junior staff and 20 per cent of HODs attend the CSR initiatives to ensure the opportunity for everyone to be a part of the Programme." 🌟

Game plan for Dubai hospitality industry

As Dubai marked 100,000 rooms a few months ago, the industry is on a rapid adaptive game plan tapping different market segments. Industry experts share their views with **TRAVTALK**.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

“Despite the many challenges of the last few years, the MEA region has proven its resilience. The region remains dynamic with many opportunities for growth. The evolving budgets of both leisure and business guests, together with an improved mid-scale and budget hotel offering, have created a lot of opportunity in the region. The increased number of people travelling to the MEA region (due to cheaper airfares and better connectivity of budget airlines to this region) means that, although we are still seeing healthy growth within the luxury market, the real opportunity lies in midscale and budget developments.”



Ignace Bauwens
Regional Vice President
Middle East and Africa
Wyndham Hotel Group

“Central Hotels will continue to grow in Dubai from 2020 and beyond with eight operating properties and a total room count of 2,750. Central Hotels will effectively utilise the best tools available in the market in terms of market intelligence, revenue management, digital communications, and social media while at the same time, investing heavily on our products and our people. Included within Central Hotels' five-year plan is our expansion outside the UAE targeting Levant, North Africa, and the GCC. By being present in different markets, we will be able to maintain our growth for the next 10 years.”



Ammar Kanaan
General Manager
Central Hotels

“Dubai hotels are extremely fortunate as we are led by Dubai Tourism that really does a lot of the thinking and marketing for Dubai as a destination. The retail sector including the hospitality sector benefits tremendously from these results. Dubai has created supply to meet the forecasted demands. Year-on-year hotel rooms are filling up with the many events and exhibitions being hosted in this city. We take our direction and brand marketing from Dubai Tourism.”



Sanjeev Gohlan
General Manager
Four Points by Sheraton
Bur Dubai

“We are no doubt witnessing a significant increase in room supply as well as other forms of competition like Airbnb. This, coupled with weaker market conditions, creates an extremely competitive landscape. In addition there are new source markets emerging especially from Asia, with China and India at the top. We at HMH unlock and leverage global opportunities, creating value for our owners and associates with unique revenue generation and optimization tools, reinforced central business development and sales team, strategic alliance with travel trade and intermediaries, and compelling value proposition for guests.”



Ferghal Purcell
COO, Hospitality
Management Holding



Mamoun Hmedan
Managing Director
Wego Middle East
North Africa and India

“The industry is always looking for new ways to fill rooms as it's not always possible for a 100 per cent occupancy for multiple reasons. The region will open to new markets and actively pursue destination marketing activities targeting locations that continue to open thanks to new and expanding airline services. Connectivity plays a big role in drawing visitors, and stopovers are very helpful in attracting repeat visitation. New offerings such as the new Theme Parks in Dubai will keep a renewed interest in the city, and Expo 2020, which will target 20 million visitors, will showcase the region to visitors from all around the world.”



Stefan Leser
Group Chief Executive
Officer, Jumeirah Group

“We are exceptionally proud of the contribution Jumeirah Group makes to the development of Dubai as a world-class hospitality and tourism destination. In December, Jumeirah Al Naseem will open with 430 rooms adding to our existing portfolio of luxury properties at Madinat Jumeirah, that includes Jumeirah Al Qasr, Jumeirah Mina A'Salam, Jumeirah Dar Al Masyaf. We current operate 9 properties in Dubai with an inventory of 3208 hotel rooms, suites and villas. Our efforts are focused on bringing new visitors to Dubai and delivering experiences aligned with Jumeirah's brand promise of 'stay different'.”



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Ibis Styles Dubai Jumeira is operated by R Hotels (a member of R Holding) under a franchise agreement with Accor Hotel.

Personality of the month

Taking Oman Air to greater heights

Shahzad Naqvi, Country Manager, Oman Air, has been a remarkable leader in the airline industry ensuring smooth operations between their head office in Muscat and government institutions, consulates, travel agents, corporates and all stakeholders/travel partners based in Dubai.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

With his unique career spanning a decade in the travel and tourism industry, **Shahzad Naqvi** has become a prominent figure due to his commitment, leadership, hard work and determination to turn the tide in his favour.

As the country manager for Oman Air, he has been actively implementing the vision of the airline through all the programmes carried out under his leadership in Dubai. Naqvi was instru-

that the flag of Oman Air will soar higher than the rest.

In 2001 after completion of his Masters of Business Administration from the University of Lincoln UK, he started his career as a Travel Consultant at dnata and was promoted as an executive in 2011 and then moved to

East and the West takes place in these areas. It takes an exemplary leader to grab all opportunities available to ensure that the business is turned towards his establishment taking one step further than others.

As a Country Manager, Naqvi has proved himself to

Naqvi states that at Oman Air they strive to always be conscious about the changing trends of the travel, tourism and hospitality sectors as the airline has a team of extensive researchers who have dedicated themselves to ensure that the latest industry additions are just a click away. Oman Air ensures that they are regularly updated with the latest technological know-how to ensure that their clientele will receive the best service as they have one of the best cabin brands on offer. The timely promotions aimed at increasing

with a renewed focus on on-board services and developments will be a priority for Oman Air in 2017; ensuring the airline of the Sultanate of Oman contin-

Having been born and brought up in the UAE, Naqvi is well versed not only in travel, hospitality and tourism but also the changes that occurred during the past two decades

Some of the leading figures in the industry shared their thoughts about Naqvi

“Shahzad Naqvi comes across as a very capable airline executive. Courteous, well-mannered and more importantly supportive and dependable. He responds even at odd hours and has excellent PR skills which makes him a very likeable person in the industry.”



Asim Arshad
Group CEO
Orient Travel and Tourism

“Shahzad Naqvi is a truly committed person with great values and respect. It was truly a facelift for Oman Air ever since he joined as Country manager for the UAE.”



Rafeeq Mohammed
Chief Operating Officer
IFL World

mental in implementing short haul holiday getaways between Oman and Dubai conducting many road shows in conjunction with the tourism board of Oman as well. There were several instances where promotions were held with various other tourism boards ensuring

Etihad Airways as Sales Manager Dubai. Thereafter, Naqvi moved to Oman Air as Country Manager for the UAE in 2014. Having been born and brought up in the UAE, Naqvi is well versed not only in travel, hospitality and tourism but also the changes that occurred during the past two decades. Middle East region has always been considered the fastest growing region in terms of travel, tourism and hospitality hence all the businesses from the

be a leader guiding his team towards sustainable growth which is a valuable asset to the company. His motivation, determination and proactive nature has enable Oman Air to be a visible airline network throughout the emirates. Technology plays a vital part in the industry today, when Naqvi first started working in the trade it was still the time of paper tickets then and eventually now it has become electronic tickets enabling smooth travel for all passengers.

the number of flyers onboard the airline are smart moves to keep up with the competition and secure a good place all the time.

Oman Air is providing a range of educational, cultural and sporting initiatives which not only help to improve the lives of individuals, but make an important contribution to the economic and social well-being of the Sultanate. Continued fleet and network expansion, together

ues to drive up revenues, increases its growing contribution to the national economy and delivers against its 10-year development plan. The inaugural flight from Muscat to Manchester, UK, takes off on May 1. 🇦🇪

Scaling New Heights

- Shahzad Naqvi started his career in 2001 as a Travel Consultant at dnata and was promoted as an executive in 2011
- He moved to Oman Air as Country Manager for the UAE in 2014



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Sharjah is the third largest of the seven emirates that make up the United Arab Emirates (UAE). It has carved itself a unique niche in terms of its culture and heritage, setting itself far from the bright lights and skyscrapers found in its neighbouring emirates.

Sharjah highlights another layer of tourism in its rich tapestry

 TT BUREAU

Sharjah has an active tourism industry and receives approximately two million guests directly into its accommodation sector each year. Sharjah offers a complete range of accommodation from apartments to hotels, across a diverse

portfolio of international brands and local boutiques. There are currently 10,000 keys available within the emirate with a further 7000 rooms due to come on line before 2020.

Sharjah is the only emirate to have coastlines on both the east and west coast and over the last few years

the Sharjah Commerce and Tourism Development Authority (SCTDA) has looked towards the east coast to launch a new layer in its tourism portfolio: 'outdoor tourism'. Through this new proposition the emirate brings to all visitors and guests what can only be described as "a remarkable experience" as they are encouraged to en-

joy the outdoors through the diverse environment that can be discovered in Sharjah.

The east coast has a rich tourism potential offering a coast filled with exotic sea life and corals, mangroves, wadis, and mountains. The infrastructure is becoming more developed, the new road construction

from Khorfakan to Sharjah has already been called the "road of tunnels" and will reduce the additional 60 km distance to 16 km and the driving time should now be just 45 minutes.

Kalba has long been reputed for its peace, tranquility and areas of natural beauty and the newly proposed





The newly-opened Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre and protected area is another highlight for visitors to this area. The 12-km two wildlife conservation centre borders the Hajjar mountains and offers visitors a chance to see the critically endangered Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*) and other endangered species including the Arabian wolf and the Arabian Tahr, and the striped hyena

ecotourism project will create a sustainable platform for tourism development, keeping a careful balance on putting conservation ahead of development. This said there will also be a development of retail and coffee shops on the edge of a manmade lagoon. The most exciting of these developments are the new eco-lodges, which are a 'safari styled' luxury tent with private swimming pools and five star facilities adding more bed spaces to the tourism growth in the region. The walkways into the mangroves will make it possible to observe the flora and fauna with minimal invasion and impact on the rare species found in this area.

The newly-opened Hefaiyah Mountain Conservation Centre and protected area is another highlight for

visitors to this area. The 12-km two wildlife conservation centre borders the Hajjar mountains and offers visitors a chance to see the critically endangered Arabian leopard (*Panthera pardus nimr*) and other endangered species including the Arabian wolf (*Canis lupus arabs*) and the Arabian Tahr (*Arabitragus jayakari*), which are both classified by the IUCN as 'Threatened'; and the striped hyena (*Hyaena hyaena*), which is classified as 'Near Threatened'. Recently, the centre has enjoyed particular success in breeding endangered Damani gazelles from breeding stock introduced in 2012. The mountain conservation centre has tourist facilities and employs full-time trained guides to show visitors the reserve and answer questions about Arabian wildlife.

Also keeping the theme, the Kalba Birds of Prey centre can be found in the outskirts of Kalba town, which accommodates a variety of resident and migratory raptors. Visitors to the centre can see birds of prey such as the barn owl, short-toed snake eagle, greater spotted eagle, and lappet-faced vulture. Live demonstrations and bird of prey displays are held daily for visitors during the winter months.

Tourism in Sharjah has certainly seen growth and investment in new markets which has meant increased room nights throughout the year. The authority will continue with its promotion of Sharjah as a remarkable experience as it continues to develop new packages encompassing outdoor tourism, culture and heritage.



Increasing need for travel insurance

With the growing importance of opting for an insurance while travelling abroad, the travel insurance market is showing positive growth, riding on the upward swing within the global tourism industry.



Industry experts forecast a strong growth for the travel insurance industry. According to a report published by Allied Market Research, titled, 'Travel Insurance Market by Insurance Cover, Distribution Channel, Users, Geography - Global Opportunity Analysis and Industry Forecast, 2014-2022,' the travel insurance sector is expected to generate \$28,264 million by 2022, growing at

nies, online platforms as well as airlines are catering to the needs of their clients. **Arijit Munshi**, General Manager, Tune Protect, EMEA, online facilitator of travel insurance in collaboration with various local insurance companies in the region, says, "Travel management companies and airlines including cruise liners and destination management companies want to ensure that their clients travel with peace of mind and are covered for any unforeseen

which are mandating for all visitors to have a valid travel medical insurance, other countries which require a valid travel medical cover are Cuba, Turkey, Georgia and even Antarctica. And now more countries are evaluating the need for a medical travel cover."

Munshi adds that travel insurance has become one of the key value offerings particularly for travel management companies, B2C online booking platforms or enablers and airlines to ensure travellers are better aware and can facilitate the additional cover, be it for leisure, adventure or business travel.

Customised solutions

Travel insurance products are constantly evolving to meet needs of different kinds of travellers. "Nothing is more disconcerting than learning that a client encountered medical or logistical mishaps while traveling, or that they had to cancel a trip due to an emergency," says **Lucian Ale**, Head of Products and Operations, Sabre Travel Network, Middle East.

"The travel protection industry is evolving, allowing us to offer innovative and creative solutions to meet customers' needs, more product features and guarantees for both travel facilitators or enablers and

travellers. Looking towards the future, the leisure sector holds tremendous opportunities. We believe travel protection to be one of those considerable revenue opportunities for both, us as well as travel management companies. Travel insurance is in its infancy stage in the Middle East, but holds great promise," he suggests.

Ale adds that in an evolving industry, it's all about service and product differentiation. "Sabre Travel Network is dedicated to providing travel agents with the tools needed to succeed and stand out among the rest. And travel protection is not any different. We stress upon the 3 Ps of Travel Protection to agents; show your Professionalism, Protection for customers' financial investments and vacation plans, and Profitability maximization of every booking. Our Travel Protection tool is fully integrated within the Sabre Red Workspace with an enhanced graphical travel insurance booking tool featuring preferred suppliers," Ale adds.

A diversified portfolio

Online Travel insurance facilitator, Tune Protect, EMEA, have customised their portfolio to serve a wide range of travellers. Munshi says, "We have done extensive research based on travellers' feedback as well as feedback given by travel management companies, online B2C platforms, enablers and airlines to come up with a host of coverage for various types of travellers. Apart from the standard EU Travel Insurance requirements, we have come up with a variety of plans such as Lifestyle Assurance -covering a host of specific activities such as shopping or for winter or ski destination lovers, golf enthusiast as well as adventure junkies. In January 2017, for a trek organised by lloveadventuretravel.com to Kilimanjaro, all the trekkers had travel and medical coverage



Arijit Munshi
General Manager
Tune Protect, EMEA



Lucian Ale
Head of Products and Operations,
Sabre Travel Network, Middle East

facilitated by Tune Protect, EMEA.

"Within the Middle East region, approx. 46 per cent of the population are expats. And this leads to inbound tourism both for leisure, holiday makers as well as visitors visiting family or friends. Such as health insurance has become mandatory for visitors

EU or a non-EU country, to ensure various types of travellers can travel with peace of mind, Munshi observes.

Above all technology has become a key driver for all travel insurance providers and have continued to improve their technology to provide better ease of purchase as well as customer service

The travel protection industry is evolving, allowing us to offer innovative and creative solutions to meet customers' needs, more product features and guarantees for both travel facilitators or enablers and travellers. We believe travel protection to be one of those considerable revenue opportunities. Travel insurance is in its infancy in the Middle East, but holds great promise

Lucian Ale

a CAGR of 8.5 per cent during 2016-2022. European nations and countries in the Asia Pacific region have shown most growth for this sector due to factors such as rise in the number of senior citizen travellers, and an increase in business travel expenditure.

However, the prime factor driving this growth is an increase in tourism. According to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer, demand for international tourism remained robust in 2016 despite challenges. International tourist arrivals grew by 3.9 per cent to reach a total of 1,235 million. Some 46 million more tourists (overnight visitors) travelled internationally last year compared to 2015, and this was despite issues linked to safety and security. UNWTO also projects international tourist arrivals worldwide to grow at a rate of 3 to 4 per cent in 2017. These numbers bode well for the travel insurance sector.

Demand on the rise

As people travel more, the relevance of travel protection is steadily gaining ground, with more travel management compa-

sition, particularly when it comes to health, and want to offer additional benefits through the travel insurance program such as flight delays, flight cancellation, baggage delays, etc.

"Expatriate hubs around the world are beginning to require mandatory health insurance before issuing a visa, and more and more countries are deciding to refuse entry without it. Many travellers don't realize that without the correct insurance, they could be turned away from the destination they are visiting before they make it past airport arrivals. Apart from the EU countries



entering the UAE (Dubai, Abu Dhabi, etc.) and everyone applying for a visit or tourist visa needs to have proof of coverage, regardless of the nationality, age or gender. For this segment, Tune Protect, EMEA in collaboration with local insurance companies has devised the Visit Assurance Program.

"Leisure or corporate travellers often pay for non-refundable hotel, airline or even cruise packages. A dedicated plan, Travel Cancellation, was also launched to cover last minute travel cancellation due to cancellations for insurable reasons to cover the non-refundable portion of the various travel components," he adds

Corporate or business travellers can benefit from the Travel Easy product, which cover travel delays, baggage delay and baggage loss or damage. All the of the above products can be combined for a traveller, be it travelling to a

such as efficient customer responses and user-friendly websites, supporting online enablers such as Sabre Travel Network and Distribution platforms or online enablers. Factors such as these have already started pushing the importance and growth of the sector in 2017 and beyond.

Good to Know

- Travel Protection focuses on 3Ps – Professionalism, Protection for customers' financial investments and vacation plans, and Profitability maximization of every booking
- Travel Protection tool is fully integrated within the Sabre Red Workspace with graphical travel insurance booking tool
- Travel Cancellation was launched to cover last minute travel cancellation due to insurable reasons

Al Shaab Village aims for 250,000 visitors

The only permanent exhibition centre in the UAE, Al Shaab Village, is aiming at hosting more tourists through their special platform with travel agents and tour operators to reach their target of 250,000 visitors a month.



In the past few years Al Shaab Village has welcomed over 180,000 visitors a month which consists of residents from Sharjah, visitors from the GCC and other emirates. Participating at international trade exhibitions with Sharjah Tourism Authority they are looking at sharing the experience with new feeder markets such as China whilst being a prominent destination in the agenda of tourism promoters of Sharjah from all over the globe.

According to the new plans for 2017, they have introduced a special discount booklet for all travel agents, tours operators, hoteliers and other partners to be utilised in the state of the art exhibition and convention centre.

The term 'village' has been used to ensure Sharjah's cultural identity is maintained. Housing the first and larg-

est ice rink in the emirate of Sharjah with over 240 stands, 52 products on food, textile, cosmetics, uniforms, accessories, perfumes etc. for the entire family, Al Shaab Village has an edge over all the malls in the emirate. Both indoor and outdoor amusement parks is just a tip of the many other offerings they have presented to the visitors. The state of the art seven screen multiplex cinemas provide entertainment for the visitors with a mix of Arabic, English and Hindi movies. From the seven, there are five standard screens, one VVIP and one 7D screen.

Billiards, snooker, play station and computer games provide entertainment for all the tech-savvy youngsters who wish to spend time with their friends away from home but in a safer environment. In terms of the younger kids (in the age group of four) "Fun House" is the activity area



where they are provided special care service until their parents shop at the venue, which is very well received. Al Shaab Village has been established as a family destination with products from Arabic countries such as Jordan, Turkey, the UAE, with additional products from India, China, among others. Food wise the delectable offerings include Arabic, Indian, Italian, etc.

Abdulla Al Dah, CEO, Al Shaab Village, says, "We have designed this fully-integrated

state-of-the-art facility as a permanent exhibition centre to be enjoyed by residents and tourists right throughout the year. From outside, the building displays traditional architecture and once you enter it is an amazing feeling of a state-of-the-art modern ambience. We are the first to have an ice rink in the emirate of Sharjah which can be enjoyed by the whole family. We want the tourists and residents of Sharjah to be amazed by the offerings in store and ensure that they return for more in their next visit.

"We participate at ITB Berlin, WTM, and ATM and even go for roadshows with Sharjah Tourism to Europe, Asia, China, and Singapore and soon to Bosnia. Currently there are shuttle buses from leading hotels in Sharjah where guests are given the opportunity to visit and experience Al Shaab Village. My team is in regular contact with travel agents at these international exhibitions so that Al Shaab Village will be on the itinerary of the tour operators, as we believe that we can pro-



Abdulla Al Dah
Chief Executive Officer
Al Shaab Village

We have designed this fully-integrated state-of-the-art facility as a permanent exhibition center to be enjoyed by residents and tourists

vide tourists with a mixture of Arab culture amidst modern environs. Very soon we will be starting our second branch and we will share that information by Q4 this year."



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Centara's rapid expansion to the Gulf

The Gulf region is an important part of Centara's growth plan. Hence, two new properties are scheduled to come up this year in Muscat and Doha respectively with one recently announced in partnership with Nakheel in Dubai, set to open in 2020. **Paul Wilson**, Vice President of Sales, Centara Hotels & Resorts speaks to **TRAVTALK**.

UPEDEN DOMA BHUTIA

Q Can you give us an overview of the Centara property in Dubai?

Centara in Dubai is a very exciting prospect for us, it will have over 500 rooms in an upscale beachfront property with water park, dining facilities, business centre, kids' club, spa and fitness centre. What will become Centara Deira Islands Beach Resort Dubai is going to be very family oriented and is located on Deira Island, Nakheel's latest prime real-estate development project. As this will be the first Centara establishment in the UAE, we are targeting a mixed audience, with vacationers from Saudi Arabia and throughout the Middle East, as well as Europe and Asia. We'll stay true to what Centara does very well, which is the family market.

Q What about the MICE facilities at the hotel?

The hotel has an excellent conference facility, which can handle 400-500 persons. The main conference hall will have no pillars and plenty of natural daylight, thanks to the group's ability to brief that very early on, so it will be very unique and very technology focussed. There are so many hotels in Dubai with conference facilities lacking in natural daylight and broken up with pillars, we see our spacious and light facility as a key differentiator.

Q A hotel that unique would be having a lot of USPs, can you enlist some of the biggest attractions of the property?

The four star market is something that's definitely needed in this region and that's the big USP for Cen-

tara's new property in Dubai. Then of course, Thai hospitality is the best in the world and is exemplified by the eminent Centara brand. We reflect our "Thainess" in the details of service we provide; authentic Thai cuisine, traditional Thai spa treatment, the Thai service mind vested in our operations staff, as well as our luxurious room amenities with the Thai touch. In addition to this, the size and the magnitude of the Dubai property is something that hasn't been seen before in the four star category, to the level of the water park, the varied F&B outlets, the club lounge and the children's recreational club. Service and experience are amongst the main keywords for us.

Q What are the feeder markets that you are planning to tap for this property?

Centara is blessed with a number of active global

“We would like to tap the local expat crowd within the GCC and very soon we are opening our very first hotels in the region, in Muscat and Doha respectively, so we will be sharing our client portfolios there. The UK market is vital in Dubai and the minimum length of stay in Dubai is increasing.”

Paul Wilson
Vice President of Sales
Centara Hotels & Resorts



sales offices and Dubai is the second most visited city in the world after Bangkok. We would like to tap the local expat crowd within the GCC and very soon we are opening our very first hotels in the region, in Muscat and Doha respectively, so we will be sharing our client portfolios there. The UK market is vital in Dubai and the minimum length of stay in Dubai is increasing. Earlier, Virgin Holidays used to achieve an average of only a 2-3 night stay in Dubai, now this has risen to 5-6 nights. Dubai is definitely good as a drop-in destination for our long-haul market. We'll be focusing on the UK, Germany, Scandinavia, and of course India. In short, every main market is a feeder market for us and we are very specific on the strategies we follow.

Q Could you tell us more about Centara's foray into Doha?

The Doha property is a five-star property, set in the new business and shopping district West Bay. The property will have 261 rooms and suites plus an attached suite hotel with 96 apartments that vary from one to three bedroom units. Centara Grand Hotel Doha will have Centara's own signature Thai restaurant, Suan Bua along with four other F&B outlets. The rooftop will feature a unique restaurant and a rooftop bar with stunning city views along with a swimming pool and relaxation zone. Other facilities include the award

winning SPA Cenvaree with 16 treatment rooms over the entire floor, with male and female facilities and private hammams, Club level business rooms and Centara Club Lounge, ballroom and meeting facilities. We are bringing something unique and authentic to the market. As one of the biggest hospitality players based in Asia, Centara is a very well-known brand and now it's arriving in the Middle East.

Q So, being a super luxury property will your target crowd change?

For the Doha property, the target crowd is FIT and leisure and of course the corporate crowd. We have a lot of corporate business from Saudi Arabia, and will focus on that market. To complement this, we have state-of-the-art custom meeting facilities, a ballroom, breakout rooms, and rooms equipped with high technology.

Q Technology today plays a pivotal role in hospitality. How important is technology for your properties?

Technology for Centara boils down to the fact that it needs to work. If you are in the room you need to be connected, your laptop, phones etc., need to be connected. Connection speed, I think, is very important and we focus on that. Conference and technology facilities are massive for us.

Q What are the trends that you have witnessed in the hospitality industry in the Middle East

For hospitality in the Middle East, the volume is just astronomical. When dealing with such large volumes you need to have the best revenue strategy tools and the best energy management tools. Increased focus on data management and analysis technology is the biggest change I've seen. Now, it's all about how fast you get access and at what time.

Q How do you plan to work with travel agents?

Thailand is a big tour operator destination; we have fantastic relationship with our agents and we reward our key clients. We offer incentives, and it's about working on the 80/20 rule, 80 per cent of your revenues from 20 per cent of your clients. We focus on the ones who continue to support Centara.

Q What's your strategy for the Arabian Travel Mart taking place in Dubai from April 24-27?

For us, the trend is to keep it simple. We'll be there on the stand with all our marketing collateral to make sure that people know that we've arrived. We have also set up meetings with larger corporations and travel partners. We have a very good representation team, and we are taking up lots of appointments, table top sessions etc. 📞



Suan Bua, Centara Grand WQ doha



Premium Lounge, Centara Muscat Oman

Drive to personalisation in Middle East

With the travel and tourism investment in the Middle East rising and digital consumption in the UAE and Saudi Arabia expected to reach high levels of personalisation by 2021, innovation in travel tech is supporting the industry's growth through exposing travellers to more travel choices.

TT BUREAU

Leading travel commerce platform, Travelport is participating at the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) from April 24-27, 2017, and will throw light on how travel tech is allowing airlines and travel agents to meet Middle East travellers' demands, and grow their businesses, by providing a more personalised travel experience with more relevant travel choices to all the region's travellers. With today's youngest working segment—the millennial generation—estimated to become the largest workforce segment by 2030, travel industry players in the Middle East are leveraging technology to meet the needs of millennials who tend to be higher spenders than their global peers with regards to travel.

In the GCC, millennials account for a quarter of the population and they have

grown up surrounded by and adapting to technology. The region's travel industry is feeling the clout of their spending power already and it is estimated that millennials in the UAE will generate \$40,000 average annual gross income by 2019 with almost half of them book travel through mobile devices. Travel apps have become the millennials preferred method of interacting with brands, almost 1/3 more than past generations. Mobile applications are great platforms to create personalised offers. For airlines, the key can be the travel behaviour already known to the airline through past purchases tied to the user's booking account.

In the Middle East, leading airlines such as Etihad have launched successful travel

apps which deliver innovative digital travel solutions for their travellers, improving the travel experience. Low cost carriers strengthening expansions in

have recently launched new routes in the UAE and have been key adaptors of innovative technology to reach new travellers in the region.

etration in the Middle East is astronomical, across the GCC almost 80 per cent of the population are mobile subscribers. Smart travel brands will continue to look at how mobile can help bridge the gap between generic experiences and ones where the end-traveller feels truly engaged and supported. Brands will thrive or decline depending on the experiences delivered to travellers and how relevant and personalised these experiences are. Travelport's technologies and unique Travel Commerce Platform is

leading the industry in providing technology solutions to ensure our airline and travel agency partners flourish in this pivotal point in time for our industry."

ATM visitors can experience Travelport's Travel

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Redefining travel commerce

the Gulf such as India's largest airline, IndiGo, also provide strong mobile retailing examples. Research indicates low cost carriers have high growth opportunities in the Middle East. With rising business and tourism stemming from the Gulf, carriers such as IndiGo

Speaking ahead of ATM, **Rabih Saab**, Travelport's President and Managing Director for Europe, Middle East, Africa and South Asia, commented, "Travel tech is an exciting place to be right now. We are increasingly living in an experiential world. Mobile pen-



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

Travel tech is an exciting place to be right now. Mobile penetration in the ME is astronomical, across the GCC almost 80% of the population are mobile subscribers

Commerce Platform in action at Sheikh Saeed Hall 1 – Stand TT1520. 

dcs plus brings latest product to ATM

dcs plus, an enterprise technology solutions provider, returns to ATM for the fifth consecutive year, showcasing the latest version of its flagship product, TINA.

TT BUREAU

TINA is the travel ERP used by many members of global Travel Management Companies (TMCs) including Lufthansa City Center, BCD Travel, Egencia, GlobalStar, HRG, FCM Travel Solutions, Radius Travel, American Express and Uniglobe.

Cristian Dinca, Founder & CEO, dcs plus, said, "The Middle East is one of our focus areas for 2017. We have been working with some key TMCs in the region for more than 5 years and look forward to strengthening our relationships with them as well as attract and collaborate with new companies."


The revenues from MENA customers increased by 101 per cent in 2016 vs 2015. Today, 23 per cent of the total revenues of dcs plus come from MENA customers. dcs plus is planning to set up an office in Dubai to support its MENA business. Since 2016, dcs plus technology has

been providing access to Emirates Direct Connect. Through this platform, more than 350,000 travel professionals in over 45 markets can benefit from flexible and transparent access to Emirate's full content, including schedules, fares, availability, special offers and ancillary services.

Besides ATM Dubai show, dcs plus is planning several roadshows with its business partners across the region. dcs plus has important partners worldwide, including: Amadeus, Sabre, Travelport, Emirates and Lufthansa City Center. The dcs plus team will be present at Stand number



Cristian Dinca
Founder & CEO
dcs plus

TT1655, Sheikh Saeed Hall 1 from 24-27 April 2017 during ATM and can be followed on social media at #dcsatATM. 



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Tapping new markets and trends

Travel, tourism and hospitality professionals share their expectations from this year's Arabian Travel Market as they venture into new areas seeking opportunities to enhance and expose their products on offer to the world on this stage.



“We will be showing our leadership in mobile and the ways Travelport is leading the digital transformation by connecting all the people in travel with all the people who travel. Travelport powers over \$79 billion of travel spending. We will be at Sheikh Saeed Hall 1 – Stand TT1520. The stand will feature an array of interactive features including demo pods for visitors to experience the technologies for themselves and learn more about latest developments including the partnership with IndiGo, India's largest airline.”



Matthew Powell
Regional Director ME and South Asia, Travelport

“The year 2017 is a busy year for R Hotels with the launch of our two new properties. The Retreat Palm Dubai, MGallery by Sofitel will cater to the growing global demand for spa and wellness tourism, which is also one of the highlights of this year's ATM. Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche is set to accommodate the rising number of visitors in the emirate, and to boost our presence in the Northern Emirates with the largest room inventory in Ajman. On top of the new openings, the group continuously seeks to strengthen its presence in the GCC region, and look out for new and emerging markets. Our properties are all in strategic business and leisure locations in Ajman and Dubai, and we are always on the lookout to acquire and develop new hotels to strengthen our portfolio.”



Sumair Tariq
Managing Director
R Hotels

“We showcase Tilal Liwa Hotel as a unique desert hideaway destination in Western Region of Abu Dhabi and target travellers who are looking for ultimate desert experience. Tilal Liwa Hotel is one of the best desert destination offering a high-quality stay catering to convenience and budget minded guests. Combining our world-class facilities, personalised services, action packed desert activities and more, we have come up with the most affordable packages suitable for individual travelers, families and couples around the UAE and abroad. We're hoping a lot of visitors and exhibitors this coming ATM compared to last year and hope to get more leads where the business opportunities are for 2017 and 2018.”



Khaled Sharabassy
General Manager
Tilal Liwa Hotel



Angela Christodouloupoulou
Cluster DOSM, Ramada Plaza
Jumeirah Beach and Ramada Hotel
& Suites Sharjah

“Ramada Plaza Jumeirah Beach and Ramada Hotel & Suites Sharjah is excited to be at the 2017 Arabian Travel Market. One of our main aims during the show is to develop relations with existing partners and create new ones. It's also a great opportunity for us to keep up to date with the latest market trends so we are hoping to identify areas that we can implement in our current operations. Both hotels will be represented at the Wyndham Hotel Group stand, number HC0605, where you can find out more.”



Pieter Callebaut
Account Manager Leisure
Visit Brussels

Halal options. Brussels is known for its gastronomical and culturally immersive experiences. We are also known for our amazing chocolates! A truly unique experience is our “Tram experience” where Belgian chefs take you for a gastronomy tour while being driven around Brussels' major attractions.”

“The Middle East is an emerging growth market for Brussels. To this end we are participating at ATM 2017 where we will launch two packages that have been crafted especially for visitors from the Middle East. Titled ‘Brusselious & ME’, the packages will focus on Brussels' excellent gourmet and cultural experiences for families and couples. Naturally the experiences will also include



Yasser El Sayed
Hotel Manager
Ramada Hotel & Suites Sharjah

can enjoy upgraded food and beverage options and provide access to the new executive lounge, while continuing to attract leisure guests from CIS markets, Far East and some of the African countries.”

“Our highlight this year is the recent completion of Ramada Hotel & Suites Sharjah's renovation. The hotel has earned a 4-star status and now offers new room categories, as well as six meeting and event venues and the executive lounge. We are now in the position to welcome more corporate business with the addition of diverse event and meeting venues which

“Infinia Services & Solutions introduces a progressive approach to tourism—a mobile app namely Dubuy. It presents tourists visiting Dubai with discounts, offers and deals all year, underscoring Dubai's tourist appeal. We look forward to partnering with leading travel professionals who recognise the synergy between experience and technology for today's traveller and to bring Dubuy to the forefront of Dubai's tourism since ATM is the biggest travel trade show in the Middle East.”



Prashant Khattar
MD and Founder
Infinia

“The Arabian Travel Market is an inspiring event for travel industry that will fabricate new opportunities and brings to reality the scope of the travel market growth. It is a platform to forecast the future growth and analyse the key steps to achieve it. We strongly believe that ATM 2017 will provide business networking opportunities, feature insightful seminar sessions, debates and workshops to accomplish topical and forward thinking. Our expectation is to build new relationships with travel and tourism partners, as well as strengthening existing ones, to gain the insight of current market scenario which plays a major role as we work toward to realising our tourism vision, and develop our targets for the upcoming years. We will also use this as an opportunity to highlight Holiday Inn Dubai-Al Barsha's strength within various segments of hospitality.”



Rouxshin Vajifdar
Director of Sales
Holiday Inn Dubai-Al Barsha



Thameem Razick
Hotel Manager
Rose Garden Hotel Apartments

“ATM is very important for us as this is the best platform where we meet with our trade partners, MICE operators, and online distributor channels to enhance our business relationships. During a period of four days we are able to meet new markets and partners from around the globe which makes it the best networking event for the region. It enables us to discover industry knowledge, global trends, innovations, research, and gain insight, to be up to date with the latest trends in the trade. By attending the regular sessions we are able to expand our horizons even further in the industry.”



Yousuf Malimar
Hotel Manager, Rose Garden Hotel
Apartments, Bur Dubai

“ATM is the best platform to exhibit due to its vast exhibitor base and participation from across the globe. GCC is our core market hence every year we witness an increase in the number of visitors, exhibitors and buyers as well. Interacting with over 60 countries within a period of four days within a limited space enables opportunities to all travel, tourism and hospitality partners to network well. We look forward to another successful year at ATM to ensure we obtain new markets and the knowledge on the latest trends in travel, tourism and hospitality in the region and around the globe.”



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Grand Millennium focuses on bleisure

Strategically located in a multicomplex connected to Al Wahda shopping mall and office tower, residences within walking distance to Al Wahda stadium, Grand Millennium Al Wahda is one of the few properties which enjoys both leisure and business clientele.

 SHEHARA RIZLY

The iconic Grand Millennium Al Wahda Abu Dhabi with 844 rooms and apartments, state-of-the-art meeting room facilities, a health club and spa, internationally-themed restaurants catering to the leisure and business guests is truly a unique property. For family and leisure travellers, the property's proximity to the mall with over 1000 high-quality branded shops makes it a complete shopper's paradise.

The iconic Qasr Al Hosn, Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque, Ferrari World Abu Dhabi, and Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre (ADNEC) are just about 20 minutes away from the hotel and apartments. For dining, they operate an All Day Dining – Al Wahda, Porter's English Pub, Level One Bar and Lounge and Sky Lounge offering stunning views of the Abu Dhabi city. Very soon they will add three more new restaurants including an Asian, Brazilian 'churrascaria,' and Tex-Mex.

Grand Millennium Al Wahda also holds Abu Dhabi's best kept secret – the Zayna Spa; the hidden gem that provides a sanctuary for those seeking relaxation through extensive and premium spa services featuring Elemis products. They claim to also have the city's finest health clubs with private fitness centre just for women that incorporates a state-of-the-art Technogym.

Clive Smith, General Manager, Grand Millennium Al Wahda Abu Dhabi, is an experienced hotelier who started off his career in the UK having worked in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow and made a foray abroad into Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where he set up refurbishments for InterContinental Hotels. Thereafter, Smith moved to Africa, Hong Kong, Iraq, and Turkey and also established a hotel in Iraq for the Turkish brand, Di-



Clive Smith
General Manager
Grand Millennium Al Wahda Abu Dhabi

van. Subsequently, he moved to Azerbaijan where he was the opening General Manager of Pik Palace Hotel and Park Chalet Hotel. In 2014, he became the Cluster General Manager for Boulevard Hotel and Intourist Hotel in the capital city of Baku.

"We have a strong and healthy mix of travellers from



Travel agents and tour operators work very closely with us and we have many interesting deals and packages to suit the needs of leisure and business travellers alike. We are continuously trying to build stronger relationships with travel agents and tour operators to get more groups into our hotel

Clive Smith

the GCC, Asia and Europe. Location is a key factor to attract the GCC travellers as it connects to one of the largest shopping malls in Abu Dhabi housing over 1000 shops. The connection to the

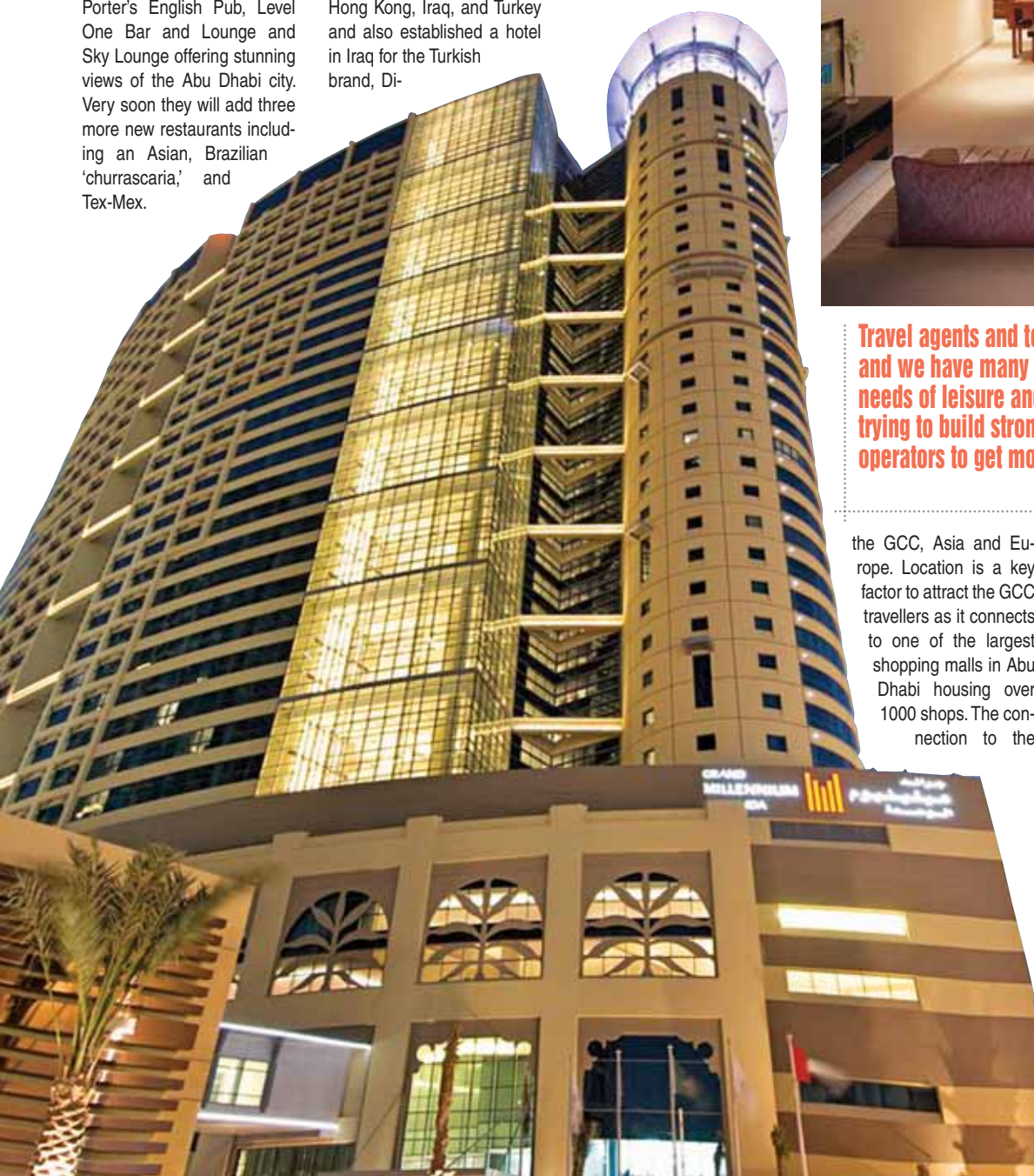
offices and being centrally located, close to the exhibition centre brings in many business guests to the property," Smith notes.

"Travel agents and tour operators work very closely with us and we have many interesting deals and packages to suit the needs of leisure and business travellers alike. We are continuously trying to build stronger relationships with travel agents and tour operators to get more groups into our hotel. We look at various platforms in promoting our property – print, radio or social media and via exhibitions and trade shows. However, we are looking at getting more active on the social

media front currently aiming at the millennials which is a new source market for us. We will be participating in a group level at ATM as it is beneficial for us to be visible and provides us a good platform to network, discuss business with our current clients and meet new potential businesses," Smith concludes.

At Grand Millennium

- Porter's English Pub, Level One Bar and Lounge and Sky Lounge are the dining options
- The Zayna Spa at the hotel offers premium spa services featuring Elemis products



UAE's 1st Wyndham Garden debuts at ATM

The first Wyndham Garden hotel in the UAE, Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche is slated to open in the last quarter of 2017, with 179 rooms and suites, says **Iftikhar Hamdani**, the Cluster General Manager for the properties, Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman, and Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman.

TT BUREAU

Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche will exhibit as part of R Hotels, alongside two Ramada properties in Ajman in its inaugural participation in this year's Arabian Travel Market.

Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche will be an upper mid-scale property open to various markets with a focus on catering to families, and will target sports and accessible tourism as well. UNWTO declared last year as the accessible travel year. According to reports, accessible tourism is a rapidly growing segment. The World Health Organisation states that 15 per cent of the total world population has at least one type of disability. It is also estimated that by 2050, 21.5 per cent of the world population will be 60

plus. If their specific accessibility needs can be met throughout the entire travel process, from searching and comparing to physically connecting between transport modes, there is great potential for growth. Even today, seniors represent a very lucrative segment in many markets, and the ageing population will probably become an increasingly important market segment for the travel industry. Visionary Cluster General Manager for three properties in Ajman, Iftikhar Hamdani will once again pioneer in catering to this market segment by providing more facilities and rooms to accommodate a larger segment of those seeking accessible tourism friendly properties.

This four-star property will feature a total of 179 rooms and suites, an execu-

tive lounge on the top floor with panoramic sea views, two restaurants, an outdoor swimming pool, gym and spa, separate health clubs for

men and women on two different levels to accommodate more individuals, and a kids' play area. The total number of rooms under Hamdani will go

up to 600 plus which makes it the largest room inventory in the emirate of Ajman.

"We are excited to introduce the new Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche. On top of the Middle East market, we are also eyeing Baltic, Balkans, East Europe, Germany, and Central Asia during the exhibition. Along with our two Ramada properties, the group is expected to accommodate the growing number of guests in Ajman, thus reinforcing our status as the leading group in terms of number of rooms and occupancy in the Northern Emirates," reveals Hamdani.

R Hotels stand will be at HC0425 of the hotel pavilion. Wyndham Garden Ajman Corniche will also be joining the Ajman Tourism Development Department (ATDD) stand.



Iftikhar Hamdani
Cluster General Manager, Ramada Hotel & Suites Ajman, and Ramada Beach Hotel Ajman

The group is expected to accommodate the growing number of guests in Ajman, thus reinforcing our status as the leading group in terms of number of rooms and occupancy in the Northern Emirates



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Perfect solitude at Hurawalhi Maldives

Located 40 minutes from Velana International Airport (Malé), Hurawalhi is a private island surrounded by a lagoon. It is ideal for the Middle East's elite clientele who prefers to indulge in an intimate setting on the pristine white sandy shore.



Hurawalhi is a private island surrounded by a beautiful lagoon with house reefs and long stretches of white sandy beaches. The only resort on the island, Hurawalhi is about 400 meters long by 165 meters wide, sprawling across 6.5 hectares (16 acres). There are 90 villas, including 60 over-the-water Ocean Villas and 30 Beach Villas, some are available with an infinity pool and/or sunset view. The villas offer privacy, spaciousness and comfort. All feature the same contemporary design, tropical chic with clean lines, earthy colours and natural building materials which harmonise perfectly with the surrounding lush, landscaped vegetation on this pristine island. It is a unique property with the world's largest all glass undersea restaurant.

With a focus on preserving the environment, Hurawalhi Island Resort gives back to the Maldives as much as it takes. Using solar panels, its own water bottling plant, energy saving solutions, hot water recovery and an in-house marine biologist, Hurawalhi Island Resort's eco credentials are the finest in the Maldives. In addition, Hurawalhi Island Resort is collaborating with WiseOceans, the marine conservation and education specialists.



The scene-stealer is the undersea restaurant, named '5.8 Undersea' and will send senses soaring in this unparalleled setting, located 5.8 meters beneath the sea. The food menu blends the best ingredients with innovation and style, resulting in a showcase of imaginative modern cuisine, combined with an incredible location, wine and service. Coming up for air, above the water, the aquarium restaurant offers staggering sea views by the day and a romantic flicker of candlelight by night.

Private beach dining al fresco under the stars is also encouraged, allowing guests to create once-in-a-lifetime memories in a romantic setting second to none, enjoying signature lobster and wagyu beef created by a personal chef. The seductively lit bar is directly on the beach with al fresco decking overlooking a glimmering pool and lagoon, and includes a comprehensive shisha selection.

Hurawalhi Island Resort's blissful Duniye Spa brings visitors closer to nature overlooking the vibrant turquoise water. Duniye means 'universe' and the name represents its philosophy: a universal approach to wellness, with treatments inspired by ancient and modern expertise from around the globe. Channeling wholeness, simplicity, purity and quality, the spa uses only the highest quality chemical free, organic compound products from 'Healing Earth,' free from petrochemicals, synthetics, colourants, DEA, preservatives and parabens.

Hurawalhi is part of the Crown and Champa Resorts with David Feinberg as CEO and Managing Partner Lars Petre.

Under David's leadership, all aspects of hospitality are polished to perfection, including the sought-after personalised service and attaining

guests' affinity to the resort. High degrees of customer satisfaction and enviable levels of loyalty, as demonstrated by the big volumes of repeat guests, are what reflects his dedication and hard work the most. What's more, Hurawalhi's General Manager is widely recognised as a person who nourishes positivity, team work and sensibility among team members that, in turn, makes properties that are under his management much more than holiday destinations to their guests.

Catering to the Russian, Middle East, USA, Asia and European markets, Hurawalhi is extending their outlook to emerging niche feeder markets in the upcoming season. Sales and marketing team under the leadership of Nina Fleischmann-Torosyan has successfully launched several luxury islands in the Maldives and is on the constant look out for new angles



to attract guests to Hurawalhi. With opening of Kudadoo Private Island which is only five minutes away by boat from Hurawalhi they offer their guests a choice of facilities for every taste from corporate

retreats, wedding ceremonies to a honeymoon tailor made by their team; their concept is that anything is possible. They provide seasonal offers to experience their island regularly to trade partners and this year they will be part of iLTM Arabia at ATM to appeal to discerning travellers from the ME region. 🌅



New summer announcements by Disney

Disney Destinations hosted an event in Dubai to celebrate new announcements for Walt Disney World, Disney Cruise Line and Disneyland Paris. The invitees got a glimpse of what's new and what's next across the three Disney Destinations.



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Sabre to reveal UAE market trends

Sabre is set to showcase the latest innovations and the Middle Eastern travellers' behavioural trends that travel stakeholders should watch out for at ATM.



The New Sabre Red Workspace, one of the key highlights for Sabre this year, will be demonstrated at their ATM stand #TT1550. Considered to be the next-generation travel agency platform, the system comes with new decision support tools, predictive data insights and merchandising capabilities that bring agents and suppliers together to create personalised experiences for travellers. It is developed to help customers meet the new, more empowered travellers who demand personalisation, choice and the ability to unbundle every component of a ticket and dynamically re-bundle it to match their needs.

Executive speakers from Sabre and guest customers



Daniel Naoumovitch
Sabre Travel Network
Middle East

to talk about what matters to their business and how Sabre can help.

"Travellers are willing to pay extra to get additional value and service that is customised specifically to meet their needs and requirements," said Daniel Naoumovitch, Sabre Travel Network, Middle East. "The travel industry in the Mid-

The Middle Eastern traveller is high adopter of latest technologies and expect travel providers to be up to date with their solutions and technology, therefore we are talking to our customers in ATM to reveal some of the trends and behaviours that can help them provide more personalised service, generate revenue and create a loyal customer

will also participate in the seminar programme highlighting insightful topics and discussions. A panel discussion by Sabre on 'Blurring lines in online and offline travel' will be held on April 25, 2017, from 12:50 hours to 13:50 hours at Technology Theatre. 'The Most Common Pitfalls of Hotel Websites' will be on April 26, 2017, from 15:15 hours to 15:45 hours at the Showcase Theatre. Another panel discussion 'Power up with Sabre' has been scheduled for between 14:00-15:00 hours where Sabre experts will offer in depth demonstration for the New Sabre Red Workspace, every day during ATM in addition to enhanced corporate technology solutions and business intelligent. Special power up sessions will be offered to customers to catch up with Sabre experts and leaders from different business units

dle East is unique and has its own specifications that should be looked at while designing travel solutions. The Middle Eastern traveller is high adopter of latest technologies and expect travel providers to be up to date with their solutions and technology, therefore we are talking to our customers in ATM to reveal some of the trends and behaviours that can help them provide more personalised service, generate revenue and create a loyal customer."

ATM brings together players from the travel and tourism industry from around the world. It is expecting more than 23,500 visitors and 2,700 exhibitors from technology companies, travel agencies, airlines, hotels, tourism authorities, and many other suppliers from the travel industry. 📍

La Verda Global Hotels Management LLC

Dubai

Siddharth Mehra has been appointed General Manager at La Verda Suites and Villas Dubai Marina & Managing Director La Verda Global Hotels Management. In his career spanning over 25 years, Mehra has worked for some legendary hospitality brands in India and South East Asia, like Four Seasons, Aman Resorts and Oberoi Hotels & Resorts. He has worked in competitive geographic markets in tough business environments and has developed strong sense of business by being revenue and topline driven.



Rula Khulaif has been appointed to the post of Head of Sales & Marketing for La Verda Global Hotels Management. With over two decades of experience in the region, Khulaif will implement strategic plans to enhance guest experience and increase revenue of the hotel. Meanwhile developing La Verda Brand in the Middle East first. She worked with International chains including IHG, Taj and Dusit. Khulaif's last position was Global Director of Sales for Rotana hotels handling hotels in GCC, ME, Africa and East Europe total of 24 hotels in 15 cities.



TRYP by Wyndham

Dubai

Jo-Ella Moore has been appointed hotel manager for Tryp by Wyndham. With 20 years of global hospitality expertise, Moore has worked in Australia, UK, Thailand, Maldives, Oman and the UAE. Prior to joining Wyndham Hotel Group, Moore worked for IHG, Armani Hotels and Six Senses including the pre-openings for the latter two. Moore takes on the hotel manager position at the 650-key TRYP by Wyndham after holding the same role at Wyndham Dubai Marina.



Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by Wyndham

Dubai

Rogier M. Hurkmans has been appointed as Cluster General Manager for overseeing more than 400 hotel associates for Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by Wyndham Dubai, both part of hospitality giant Wyndham Hotel Group. Hurkmans has more than 20 years of experience serving global hotel chains including InterContinental Hotels Group, Hilton, Steigenberger, Swissôtel and FRHI Hotels & Resorts in leadership and management roles including Managing Director and General Manager.



Wyndham Dubai Marina

Dubai

Tarek E. Shehata has been appointed hotel manager and brings 25 years of industry knowledge to the post at Wyndham Dubai Marina. Previously, Cluster Director of Sales & Marketing, Shehata brings a wealth of experience in the industry, having worked in the UAE, Qatar and USA. Prior to joining Wyndham Hotel Group, Shehata worked for Hyatt, Four Seasons and Fairmont Hotels including two pre-openings for Park Hyatt Abu Dhabi and Grand Regency Doha.



Jan Siddiqi has been promoted to Cluster Director of Sales for Wyndham Dubai Marina and TRYP by Wyndham Dubai. Siddiqi brings 25 years of hotel sales and marketing experience, with Hyatt, IHG and Marriott International, and six years with Wyndham Hotel Group. Prior to his new appointment Siddiqi was the Director of Sales & Marketing at Wyndham Dubai Marina. His new role will be to lead the hotels' sales strategies.



Travelport

EMEA

Jasmeen Kaur joins Travelport in the role of Head of Product and Solutions EMEA. Formerly Director of Regional Product & Strategy for Northern Europe, Kaur is now responsible for providing product support and technical solutions and consultancy to the commercial teams across EMEA. With over two decades of professional experience in the travel industry, Kaur has held several senior management positions and joined Travelport in 2012. Prior to joining Travelport, she was Director of Revenue Generation of EMEA at Pegasus.



Millennium Airport Hotel

Dubai

Sheryl Aquiatan has been appointed as the new Assistant Marketing Manager at Millennium Airport Hotel Dubai. She has over a decade of experience in the trade, having begun her career in the Philippines before moving to the UAE in 2007. She got her first hospitality experience at Ramada Hotel Bur Dubai then she joined the Millennium Plaza Hotel in 2011 as Sales and Marketing Executive and took the position of Cluster Assistant MarCom Manager for Ramada Plaza JBR and Ramada Sharjah in 2013 up to 2017. Aquiatan is a graduate from Batangas State University in Philippines holding a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science.





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