

OOH flies high in airports as passenger numbers increase

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Air travel is booming. The number of trips taken by plane somewhere in the world could increase to around 13 billion by 2030 and demand for air travel has doubled every 15 years this century, according to *Global Construction Review* magazine. The global industry is expected to grow by an average of 4.7% a year, which means a huge increase in passenger numbers. All this suggests that airports are changing in a way that works in the marketer's favour - who wouldn't want to reach a burgeoning market of largely affluent business and leisure travellers, some of whom are the SADC region's key decision-makers?



In addition, not everyone visiting an airport is a passenger. Airports are now destination brands in their own right, with food and retail outlets bolstering their non-flying revenues, and for every passenger in transit a further 2.5 people accompany them to airports.

Although Africa's aviation market accounts for only 3% of global passenger traffic, this still equates to millions of passengers every year. South Africa's OR Tambo International takes the prize for most passengers – 20 million passengers a year – while Cairo International Airport in Egypt has the second-highest number of passengers and services over 65 international airlines. Other countries in the African top 10 include Morocco, Nigeria and Kenya.

The latest figures from Airports Company South Africa indicate that there has been a year-on-year increase in the number of passenger numbers, with the exception of the 2013/14 fiscal year. According to 2016/17 figures, 39,877,142 passengers passed through ACSA's airports, up from 38,643,284 in 2015/16.

South Africa's busiest airport, OR Tambo, exceeded 20 million passengers in the 2015/16 period and is expected to improve upon that figure for the 2016/2017 period; meanwhile, Cape Town International Airport is to be commended on exceeding one million passengers for the first time in a single month in December last year. The airport clocked up an impressive 10,211,390 passengers from June 2016 to May 2017.

What this will mean for airports is an ever-increasing investment in infrastructure – many airports are expanding to accommodate a growing number of travellers. Lanseria is in the process of building a multi-storey parking facility – part of its proposed upgrade, which includes a renovated passenger terminal and improved road access to the airport itself. Cape Town International Airport is expected to upgrade its runway and taxiways to the tune of approximately R3.18bn and OR Tambo International Airport is set to construct 'remote apron stands' that will house larger aircraft and provide space for passengers who need to be bussed from the aircraft.

As already world-class airports expand to accommodate more passengers, so an increasing number of upper-LSM consumers will pass through their doors – many of whom stay for a number of hours (airports are known for their high dwell times). Advertisers could find their brands at the centre of these ‘aerotropolises’, which are known for their retail and entertainment services as much as their ability to get passengers from Point A to Point B.

A study conducted by the UK’s Civil Aviation Authority has shown that travellers are receptive to brand messaging in the airport environment – 85% of passengers claimed to enjoy airport advertising, while 85% were open to finding out about new products and services through these channels. In addition, 73% of air travellers said they took time to read advertisements.

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