

ASATA launches new consumer confidence campaign, slogan

BY SARAH CORNWELL

THE Association of Southern African Travel Agents launched the next phase of its consumer awareness and confidence drive, with a new slogan and resource for members, at the association's annual conference, held in Durban last month.

The campaign, Demystifying Travel, and slogan, Travel With Peace Of Mind, are aimed at elevating the profile of ASATA members and the role of the travel agent.

The association has added new resources to the members' marketing toolkit and will work on travel tips for consumers, which clarify booking processes and ele-

ments such as change fees and surcharges.

ASATA Chief Executive Officer, Otto de Vries, said the message reinforced the association's primary strategy of Compliance, Consensus and Confidence. "We operate in a very complex environment... you can't go in and hard sell ASATA. As a customer, I am not thinking in that space. [Rather] I need some good advice".

Mr. De Vries also revealed ASATA's plans to initiate talks with the airlines regarding fuel surcharges and their lack of transparency.

ASATA has received the findings of its latest study into demands facing 21st century travel agents and the evolution of the TMC and

retail agency business.

The research and recommendations on adapting to shifts in revenue streams and how consortia can work to build stronger, sustainable relationships and business models will be made available to ASATA members shortly, Mr. De Vries confirmed.

A large group of Durban tourism suppliers attended to promote more business, particularly from the MICE sector. Several major projects are underway to grow traffic into Durban and its surrounds, including a new Cancun-style resort at the city's old airport, as well as a new waterfront development.

KwaZulu-Natal MEC for Economic Development, Tourism and Environmental Affairs, Michael Mbuyakhulu, said the province was working to grow air lift, particularly charter flights. From December 17, Qatar Airways will operate non-stop, direct flights into Durban.

In her opening address, ASATA President, Sure Travel Chief Executive Officer, Vanya Lessing, called on members to "do much, much more to support the 21st century traveller and sell local to those who like the finer things in life and who can afford it". Ms. Lessing also appealed to members to keep developing the in-



Pictured (back, l to r): Johann Strydom, World Leisure Holidays MD; Peter Schoeman, City Lodge Divisional Director, Sales and Marketing; Mary Reynolds, MD of SA Reynolds Travel Centre with (front) Hannie Erasmus, ASATA Operations Manager and Robyn Christie, Travelport GM South Africa, on the closing day of ASATA's 2015 conference.