

IN-STORE

Private jet travel soars via brand expansions, strong markets

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By JOE MCCARTHY

Luxury private jet travel has soared in recent months due to an intersection of strong markets, shrewd partnerships and expansions by several brands.

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For both business and leisure purposes, brands have responded to private jet demand with an increasing array of bespoke options. Offers geared toward introducing consumers who may be foreign to private jet travel have also become common as a way to break down barriers.

"This perhaps reflects several factors," said Ron Kurtz, president of the [American Affluence Research Center](#), Atlanta. "First, the affluent have substantially increased their wealth in recent years with the stock market reaching new highs and the recovery of real estate values.

"Second, the stigma of using private jets that started early in the recession has disappeared," he said.

"Third, the truly affluent are in a relatively good mood and not reluctant to spend on the good life."

Winged business

The expansion among luxury jet brands indicates a strong market. Conversely, simple offers entice a broad range of consumers.

Bombardier owned Flexjet, provider of whole and fractional jet ownership, has seen a spike in business.

The brand reports 96 percent growth of new fractional and jet card sales January-June 2013 compared to the year-ago period. Within the first six months of this year, sales of new fractional shares increased a notable 112 percent, while new jet card sales grew a solid 68 percent.



Flexjet Challenger 300

As a testament to this sustained, market-wide growth, a number of partnerships among luxury hotels have emerged.

For instance, Magellan Jets partnered with Langham Place to offer guests weekend-day trips to any Magellan destination.

Buffering the transition from summer to fall with a package will likely appeal to luxury consumers who are looking to squeeze in a few final trips before the season ends ([see story](#)).



Magellan Jet

Similarly, TCS & Starquest teamed up with Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts to curate two 2014 “Around the World by Private Jet” tours.

The itineraries include the 18-day “Rediscover the Americas” and 23-day “Around the World” packages. Four Seasons has offered three previous Around the World by Private Jet tours that sold out ([see story](#)).

As more brands enter the market, competition will galvanize the services offered.

"It's been interesting watching the private jet charter business over the past few years," said [Damon M. Banks](#), director of [DMB Public Relations](#), New York.

"We've seen several of the giants continue to prosper with their various programs - debit card, lease, partnerships, etc. - while an increasing number of budget charter companies offering last minute and empty leg travel options have continued to emerge," he said.

"With the competition among the companies, overall value and client support is becoming increasingly more important to gain and maintain clients."

Puff up that cloud

Revving up bespoke services with fine-tuned details has become the norm across luxury industries. Although it may be challenging to offer a long list of bespoke services while flying, high prices and luxury travelers call for an elevated effort.

Several private jet brands have adapted to the desire for extensive bespoke services.

For example, recently established private jet operator Intrav is targeting ultra-affluent travelers with a bespoke planning service to personalize around-the-world tours. Intrav's inaugural tour is scheduled for April 7-May 1, 2014 and priced at \$99,950 per person

The jet has first-class, flat-bed seats with more than six feet of personal space, in-seat massage systems, four-way adjustable headrests, privacy screens and personal lounge space. Also included is Wi-Fi connectivity and a personal chef on board.

Guests can also choose their level of interaction with the travel group by being able to arrange private cars, private meals, secluded hotel rooms and singular activities ([see story](#)).



Intrav seats

Other brands have established on-board environments that transform according to consumer needs.

For instance, The A319 Emirates Executive aircraft's bespoke capacities allow travelers to shape several aspects of the flight including the content of dining areas and private suites.

A wide dining and executive lounge designed to seat up to 12 passengers combines a work area and a rest zone with two large sofas surrounding four mechanically-activated tables and two 42-inch high-definition television screens.

The second distinct area comprises 10 private suites, each featuring a fully lie-flat seat and a 32-inch high-definition TV screen. These suites include a shower spa featuring floor-heating and skincare products ([see story](#)).



Emirates Executive

Furthermore, Flexjet has revamped its business model to tailor each customer journey and has added a new position to the company's roster to address the need for personalization.

Flexjet's owner experience officer was appointed to drive growth and business performance by developing personalized, end-to-end experiences for its owners, according to the private aviation company ([see story](#)).

Appointing or consulting specialists to oversee expansionary projects will help brands maintain credibility.

"The private jet demand will increase in the next few years and owners and operators of private jets should seek out trusted advisors to ensure safe and effective operations for their aircraft just as they do for other personal or corporate assets," said Dave Weil, CEO and founder of [Flight Dept Solutions](#), LLC.

Buckle up, then WiFi

As brands invest resources into enhancing bespoke options, safety and privacy standards, which are major driving forces behind industry growth, will continue to improve.

"The luxury jet business has expanded because private jet travel provides the highest degree of safety and privacy for individuals and their families," John Cosenza, managing director of [BizJet Security](#), LLC and senior advisor of Flight Dept Solutions, LLC.

"Safety and privacy don't just happen," he said. "It requires planning and execution management by reputable and experienced professionals.

"We can expect that private jet travel will continue to expand over the next several years. Travel in and to Asia will increase as people realize the benefits of private aircraft and travel to all domestic and international locations will expand to address continuing business and personal travel requirements."

Final Take

Joe McCarthy, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

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1. [private jet](#) says:

[February 9, 2014 at 5:13 pm](#)

With the competition among the companies, overall value and client support is becoming increasingly more important to gain and maintain clients.

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