AFRICAN BUSINESS TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

INTENTIONAL TRAVELLER BEHAVIOUR WEBINAR

AUGUST 2026

AI NOTES

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Meeting notes:

- **Traveler Intentional Behaviour Program Progress:** Monique described how the initiative grew from supplier conversations about wasteful travel practices into a global traveler-behavior survey launched in May; she reported 220 responses, nine companies distributing it, and participation concentrated in Africa with responses also coming from North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.
    - **Project Origins:** The project began after a conversation with a South African banking company about sustainability and travelers' role in it. Monique then informally consulted hotels, airlines, travel buyers, and TMCs. Buyers and TMCs had limited visibility into travelers' on-the-ground behavior, while hotels and airlines reported examples including air conditioning left running or overridden, water and linen waste, long hot showers, food waste, and single-use plastics.
    - **Survey Development:** The team developed a baseline survey to understand traveler habits and behavior gaps, initially considering a South Africa-only scope before broadening the project globally. The survey launched in May after careful planning to keep it focused, manageable in length, and nonjudgmental. Responses are intended to reveal behaviors that may be unintentional but create cumulative waste.
    - **Participation:** Monique reported 215 responses as of the previous day and five more arriving within 24 hours, bringing the total to 220. Nine companies were actively distributing the survey. Most responses came from Africa, with others from North America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia; the team wants to grow participation in underrepresented regions.
    - **Industry Support:** EPSA joined as an industry partner soon after the project was announced. Claudette Venter of the South African Reserve Bank said the survey supports practical, responsible choices and encouraged honest participation; Monique noted that nearly 80 of the bank's staff had responded. Dorine Reinstein of Big Ambitions offered media support and emphasized the value of collecting nonjudgmental data on traveler behavior, particularly for Africa. Other participating organizations included SARAO, which had more than 20 responses, and Destiny Travel Management, which had recently begun distributing the survey.

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- Scale And Early Survey Findings: Monique connected the scale of business travel and hotel resource use to early survey results, which indicate limited awareness of cumulative impacts but substantial openness to practical changes and a need for clearer infrastructure and guidance.
    - Travel Scale: Monique cited GBTA research estimating 1.84 billion business trips annually, or about 5.1 million per day. If wasteful behavior occurred on only 5% of trips, that would represent approximately 252,000 trips each day and 92 million annually, where small behavior changes could have a large combined effect.
    - Hotel Resource Costs: For South Africa, Monique estimated 62,000–65,000 larger hotel rooms, with average daily operating electricity costs of about R35 per room. At 50% occupancy, that implies approximately R1.1 million per day in room-running costs; she also cited Jan–July 2026 occupancy of 54%. If 5% of electricity use were wasteful, the estimated cost would be R55,000 per day, or R20 million per year. Monique noted that travelers and clients ultimately bear operational costs, including water and electricity use.
    - Food Waste: Monique cited one medium-sized property's annual food waste of 2,215 kilograms and estimated that 230 hotels across three South African chains could waste more than 640 tons annually if each averaged roughly 2,000 kilograms. Hotels may be unable to donate surplus food externally because of liability concerns, though some have staff programs. Monique said ABTA and its event partners are discussing ways to avoid excess event food, including requiring clarity on whether leftovers will be used or distributed.
    - Awareness And Readiness: Survey responses showed that 54% had given little or no thought to the cumulative impact of small travel behaviors, while 6% actively sought more sustainable options during travel. The questions concerned actions such as avoiding food waste, recycling, managing room air conditioning, and limiting water use—not policy-controlled choices like hotel or airline selection. A further 67% did not know or had not considered that untouched airline food may sometimes be donated. After reflecting on their habits, 89% said they were somewhat or very open to small practical changes, and 59% identified travelers as among those most responsible for reducing trip impacts.
    - Behavioral Drivers: Respondents identified practical conditions as important: 64% said refill stations could make plastic reduction easier and 60% cited clearer recycling signs, while 13% selected company guidance. Personal values prompted environmental consideration for 55%, compared with 28% citing company travel policy and 17% supplier prompts. Visual evidence of waste influenced 40%. For overpacking, 56% cited "just in case" thinking and 41% cited multiple dress codes; Monique explained that extra luggage weight increases aircraft fuel use and described one company's trip-length packing lists as a practical intervention.
    - Specific Travel Habits: Monique reported that 56% said they never leave room air conditioning or heating on when away, but 47% at least sometimes override hotel settings, including about 20% who do so often or always. Only 11% never charge devices overnight. Also, 38% sometimes, often, or always use single-use toiletries without finishing them, and 45% at least sometimes take unused toiletries home. More than 60% said they would consider hybrid or electric rental cars if prices matched and company policy allowed, though Monique noted these vehicles were currently more expensive in South Africa.

- ESG Measurement And Behavior Change: Monique explained that the program's planned baseline, engagement, behavior-change resources, and follow-up measurement align with ESG measurement cycles, while EPSA's Pascalle said the research can help organizations understand and influence the decisions behind travel behavior.

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    - **Measurement Cycle:** Monique mapped the project to four ESG steps: establish a baseline, engage people with the findings, introduce tools and resources to improve behavior, and measure again after 12–18 months. The project's initial survey provides a baseline, with later resources intended to support behavior change and a repeat survey to track shifts.
    - **Corporate ESG Use:** Monique said companies could use their participation and results in ESG reporting, particularly where organizations need to show what they measure and how they work to improve it. Company-specific results can be compared with wider results to help travel and sustainability teams identify areas for action.
    - **EPSA Rationale:** Pascalle said sustainability and understanding the factors that influence decisions are important to EPSA's business approach. The project's behavioral data may help EPSA understand travel choices, support its own employees in making more intentional decisions, and contribute to broader changes in business travel.

- **Behavioral Factors Behind Waste:** Monique outlined psychological and contextual factors that may shape wasteful travel habits, including automatic behavior, convenience, reduced ownership, social norms, decision fatigue, upbringing, and the shift from household member to hotel guest.
    - **Automatic Habits:** Monique described business travel as hectic and often involving tight deadlines and unfamiliar settings, which can lead people to act automatically rather than consider resource use. She also noted an "already paid for" mindset, in which travelers may feel that prepaid accommodation or services can be used without restraint.
    - **Convenience And Responsibility:** Travelers may find sustainable options difficult to identify or use, particularly when time is limited; hotels and airlines can help by making the responsible option straightforward. Monique also described a "travel bubble," in which travelers may not see how their individual actions add up across many guests or take ownership of consequences.
    - **Social And Cultural Norms:** Social norms can influence behaviors such as taking extra food. Monique noted that abundance, oversized portions, full buffets, or replacing items early can signal generosity and good hospitality in some contexts, even when these practices contribute to waste. She cited a 2026 review of 81 hospitality food-waste studies that identified cultural norms, portion size, buffet design, and perceived control as relevant factors.
    - **Values And Context:** Monique described a value-action gap: people may care about sustainability without that belief consistently outweighing comfort, convenience, or habits. Learned behavior and upbringing can affect how people treat food, water, and electricity; hotel research cited by Monique linked everyday eco-friendly behavior with intentions during hotel stays. She also noted that travelers' roles shift from household members who pay bills and buy groceries to temporary guests, changing what feels personally consequential.

- **Project Next Steps And Participation:** Monique outlined an ongoing research and engagement plan, including keeping the traveler survey open, creating anonymous company-specific links, surveying hotels and potentially airlines, developing resources and a white paper, and repeating measurement after 12–18 months.
    - **Company Survey Links:** The traveler survey will remain open, potentially indefinitely. Companies can request a unique collector link that identifies responses with the organization while keeping individual responses anonymous; the organization's travel contact can receive aggregate company results and compare them with broader results. Monique offered to provide a ready-to-send email with the link, and confirmed there is no participation cost.

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    - **Supplier Measurement:** The team plans to complete a hotel survey within roughly the next month, asking hotel operations managers and general managers about relevant behaviors as well as figures such as annual food waste and monthly electricity bills. Monique said an airline survey is also under consideration. After 12–18 months, the team intends to ask suppliers again whether they have observed changes, using anecdotal feedback or measured data where available.
    - **Resources And White Paper:** Monique said the project white paper would be developed with Dorine and the Big Ambitions team, with an initial release targeted for late 2026 or early 2027. The team also plans behavior-change materials and a resource repository explaining what behaviors contribute to waste and what practical alternatives travelers can use without giving up comfort.
    - **Ongoing Engagement:** After the initial intervention, the team plans to repeat the traveler survey and consult hotels again after 12–18 months. Monique said the project is intended to continue through industry engagement, webinars, event sessions, focus groups, and outreach to travel associations in other countries, with the aim of expanding awareness and participation internationally.
    - **Ways To Participate:** Monique invited attendees to complete and distribute the survey to business travelers, request company-specific links, promote the survey internationally—especially in Asia and South America—and join future working groups to develop and distribute resources. Companies can also champion the project, incorporate materials into ESG work, connect sustainability teams, or provide funding to extend the research.

- **Corporate And Industry Engagement:** Carole said Ericsson is interested in participating and will consult colleagues across regions, while Rene offered association connections and hospitality examples; Monique proposed following up on security requirements and involving Rene in supplier research and resource development.
    - **Ericsson Interest:** Carole said Ericsson's sustainability agenda and travel targets were being revisited, making the initiative timely. Carole planned to share the survey with colleagues in the United States, South America, APAC, and Europe before considering broader distribution. Carole asked how survey information is stored and evaluated because external links require IT security approval. Monique acknowledged that some organizations restrict SurveyMonkey links or allow them only on personal devices and agreed to discuss the issue offline.
    - **Association Outreach:** When Rene asked about association involvement, Monique said few associations had joined so far and that the planned approach was to begin with South African travel associations and industry bodies, then expand internationally. Monique noted that participating champions and brands could receive recognition in the white paper and logo exposure.
    - **Supplier Examples:** Rene described CHPA's work collecting property information such as electricity use to calculate carbon footprints, noting that such efforts depend on properties submitting data. Rene also cited Hotel Verde in Cape Town as an example of engaging travelers through actions such as earning points for taking stairs rather than using the lift. Rene offered to connect the team with associations and help champion the project; Monique said Rene could assist with reaching hotel managers for the planned survey and that Hotel Verde could inform future hotel resources.

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Follow-up tasks:

- **Survey Security Review:** Confirm with Ericsson's IT security team whether the external survey link and its data handling meet company requirements, then follow up with Monique about participation. (Carole)
- **Survey Distribution:** Share the survey with her global colleagues to review, then decide how Ericsson will distribute it to travelers. (Carole)
- **Industry Association Connections:** Connect Monique with relevant travel associations that could support the project. (Rene Stegmann \)

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