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KOREAN AIR IS MARKING ITS 40TH ANNIVERSARY WITH LUXURIOUS NEW SEATS AND IFE ACROSS BOTH ITS MID- AND LONG-HAUL FLEETS





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contracted Lufthansa Technik to retrofit the B/E Aerospace-manufactured suites in another nine A340s this year.

INNOVATION IMPERATIVE Jacques Pierrejean's Paris-based Pierrejean Design Studio has worked on many of the Gulf carriers' accommodation initiatives, starting with the mini-suites that Emirates introduced in 1998 and including new interiors for Qatar and Etihad. The firm was not responsible for the new Oman interior, but was involved indirectly through its work for seat manufacturers, and Pierrejean says that with a business-class pitch greater than most airlines use in first class and a dedicated area for socialising complementing the mini-suites in first, it will be impossible to improve on this standard because of the impact on seat numbers: "It's actually for me the maximum level that we can reach."

The market, Pierrejean says, has changed completely over the last 15 years, "and we have pushed these new airlines to do something a bit different from what we have in Europe or America. With Emirates, for example, we started the idea of giving passengers VIP comfort in first class but also in business class".

Qatar's approach was different, with CEO Akbar Al Baker looking for a more restrained feel – a German car rather than an over-the-top Italian model is Pierrejean's analogy – and the result is a less complex approach with less reliance on electrical functions. "For Etihad, on the other hand," he adds, "we said, okay, now we have to push the idea a little bit further and maybe imagine what could

“ BOTH AIRBUS AND BOEING HAD TO BE PUSHED TO MODIFY THEIR CABIN ENGINEERING ”

happen in the future for this young airline coming on the market after so many others. So we thought, why not imagine business class as a little bit different, offering each passenger direct access from the aisle? So we created the pod seat, which has been the best business-class seat of the year for the last three years now."

ART OF PERSUASION The big orders placed by Gulf carriers earn them a degree of special treatment from the manufacturers, Pierrejean adds. When Emirates wanted to replicate the mood lighting it had introduced on its A340-500s on the 777-300ER, for example, Boeing was initially resistant, but was persuaded to do it using new LED technology, instead of the fluorescent tubes used by the European manufacturer. Both Airbus and Boeing had to be pushed to modify their cabin engineering to accommodate oxygen provision for Etihad's business-class pod seat. And the Emirates 52-aircraft A380 order meant Airbus was receptive when asked to modify the forward area of the

- 03. Emirates' A380s include a lounge for socialising
- 04. Emirates is currently the only carrier to offer onboard showers





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purchasing power

Boeing attributes the unprecedented rates of growth in Middle East air travel seen in recent years to the region's unique combination of economic expansion, modern air transport infrastructure and favourable geographic location. Its Current Market Outlook sees annual economic growth in the region of 3.8% driving revenue passenger kilometre growth of 6.6% over the next 20 years, with the fleet more than doubling in size as a result, from 840 aircraft in 2008 to 1,860 by 2028. New deliveries of 1,710 aircraft are expected to include 130 large, 850 twin-aisle, 680 single-aisle and 50 regional jets: the region was due to take 45 twin-aisle aircraft last year (around 20% of global twin-aisle deliveries) and another 50 in 2010.

Airbus anticipates that Dubai will be the world's fourth-biggest airport by 2028, behind only Hong Kong, London Heathrow and Beijing. Its forecast, based on a projected 5.9% annual increase in RPK over the next 20 years, calculates that the region will take 189 very large, 668 twin-aisle and 561 single-aisle aircraft, resulting in a fleet of 1,790 passenger aircraft with 100-plus seats. It is the region's handful of global airlines that Airbus predicts will take the lion's share of new aircraft, accounting for more than 50% of the total and more than 70% of the twin-aisle and very large deliveries.

upper deck with the water supply and drainage to support the shower-spa installation.

For Pierrejean, the Emirates A380 is the best innovation of this aircraft: "You have a real lounge, real mini-suites, a real shower spa, a good approach with the forward staircase, and a good business-class seat." For the future, he is pushing the lavatory manufacturers to incorporate changing rooms so that premium passengers have somewhere to change into pyjamas. "If you want to use a standard lavatory to change your suit for pyjamas, it's a gym exercise," he says.

GLOBAL APPEAL For the future onboard brand and product experience on Etihad's fleet of new A380 aircraft, the first of which is due to be delivered in 2012, the airline selected a consortium of UK-based agencies – Acumen, Factorydesign, Promise and Honour – to provide expertise in customer insight, as well as product and aircraft interior design.

Its thinking on the Etihad project must remain under wraps for the time being, but consultant director Michael Crump from Honour, whose role is to lead the design strategy and management of the consortium's deliverables, sees some common cultural and historical threads in the approaches of the Gulf states and their airlines. "They're all relatively young nations," he says. "They're all rapidly

building an infrastructure to create modern global business centres of excellence and also high-end, luxury leisure destinations. This is attracting and growing the business market and a high-yielding premium leisure market."

Abu Dhabi, Dubai, Qatar, Bahrain and, to a lesser extent so far, Oman, are all developing an infrastructure and a society that is built around growth in tourism and business, Crump says: "There is a large proportion of nationals in the region who are high net-worth individuals, so there's always a market for the premium products on those carriers, and consequently they position their products and brands at the premium end. They've all got suites or beds in first and business."

Many of their offerings are positioned to embrace the service styles of hotels, Crump says. "Qatar positions itself as 'the world's 5-star airline' and Etihad has hotel style

- 05. Etihad's new Diamond (first class) suite on its new A330-300s
- 06. Qatar Airways' A340-600s include a first-class lounge



IF YOU WANT TO USE A STANDARD LAVATORY TO CHANGE YOUR SUIT FOR PYJAMAS, IT'S A GYM EXERCISE

