



Cruise ship MS Nautica docks at the Port of Mombasa in 2015: The KPA says the number of cruise tourists set to rise to 10,000 from 7,638 who came in last year. FILE

At least 5 luxury ships to dock before end of cruise season

BY MATTHIAS RINGA

At least five luxury ships are expected to cruise to Mombasa in the coming two months with international tourists giving cruise tourism a much needed boost.

According to the Kenya Ports Authority, two cruise ships are due in November while three others are expected to arrive in Mombasa in December.

The KPA principal communications officer Haji Masemo said more ships are expected to cruise to Mombasa between December and March next year.

Traditionally, cruise tourism season begins in November and ends in March.

"We expect the number of cruise tourists this season to increase to 10,000 up from 7,638 last year as more ships bring in holidaymakers to the country," he said.

Mr Masemo said following cruise tourism promotions in Florida, USA, in March, more luxury ships are expected to visit Mombasa.

"We participated in a cruise tourism convention in Fort Lauderdale, USA, where we marketed Mombasa so that we could attract many cruise holidaymakers," he said.

Through the Cruise Indian Ocean Association, he added, Kenya, in collaboration with other member states including South Africa, Seychelles, Mauritius, Tanzania and Mozambique have been promoting cruise tourism across the world.

Majority of the cruise tourists who come to Mombasa are from the US, United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, France, Australia, Spain, Belgium, The

Netherlands and South Africa. The tourists visit Tsavo East and West National parks, Amboseli National Park, Shimba Hills Game Reserve and Mwalughanje Elephant Sanctuary.

Others enjoy touring Mombasa town, Haller Park in Bamburi, Fort Jesus while bird lovers visit Arabuko Sokoke Forest in Kilifi County.

Cruise tourism sprang back to life last year after five ships brought in more than 3,000 visitors compared with 900 tourists in 2014.

The sector took a dive between 2012 and 2014 due to rise in pirate attacks off the Somalia coast.

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But naval operations intensified by the international community had by February 2012 led to a drop in successful pirate attacks in the Indian Ocean with pirates movements in the region at large scale also significantly constrained.

The deployment of Kenya Defence Forces soldiers to Somalia and patrols by the local and international community naval forces led to the decline in pirate activity in 2013.

The number of visitors arriving in Mombasa by cruise ships declined from 11,000 in 2009 to just 500 in 2010.

Tourism is a major foreign exchange earner that employs many people in the travel industry, and other sub-sectors, meaning Kenya feels the pinch when international tourists change course.

Arrivals have stagnated near one million, a figure that the Ministry of Tourism is working hard to improve to three million to grow earnings from last year's Sh84.7 billion, a drop from Sh100 billion in 2013.

Online shops brace for brisk

► **FESTIVITY** Savo Store and VituMob prepare for busy season as Kenyans order products from the US and UK

BY ANNIE NJANIA

As retailers prepare for Christmas festivities in about 10 weeks, local e-commerce platforms like Savo Store and VituMob are bracing themselves for a busy season as more orders from Kenyans buying products from American retailers begin to trickle in.

Unlike the usual e-commerce sites, the two platforms offer shipping services where goods are delivered to a customer's doorstep within three weeks after the order is made.

Savo Store and VituMob in their quest to ease trade barriers between Kenya and America opened platforms that allow locals to buy products from US retailers like Forever21, Apple Store, Amazon, eBay and Clarks.

The platforms have now marked the beginning of a busy three-month period, they say, and expect the number of orders to overshoot those recorded in other months of the year. "The growing number of orders is set to come from discounted sale usually associated with holidays and deals from days like Black Friday.

Traditionally, people are known to spend more during festive seasons as they buy gifts for loved ones in preparation for Christmas. "The last three months of the year tend to be the busiest because of the holiday shopping season. Most American retailers will offer extensive discounts and deals on products

during this period," said Sidney Karanja, co-founder Savo Store.

"Shopping holidays such as Black Friday on November 25, tend to drive increased shopping activity by our customers due to the remarkable online discounts offered by US retailers. This leads to a major influx of customers during this period," he added.

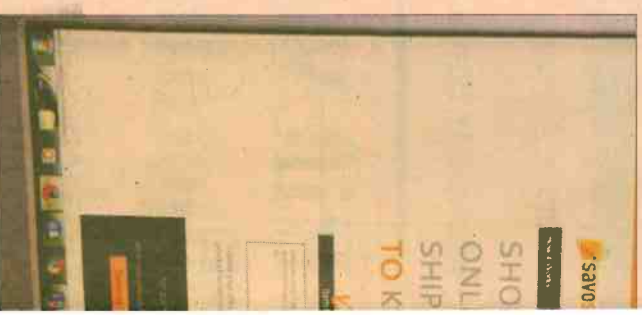
The two are the only local stores that bridge the gap between local shoppers and American online stores. Locals are able to buy goods by visiting VituMob and Savo Store's sites, where they are linked to various online shops.

SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES SUCH AS INSTAGRAM AND FACEBOOK INFLUENCE CUSTOMER PURCHASE DECISIONS MORE THAN EVER BEFORE

Shoppers identify products they want to buy from the online shops then using the two platforms' automated quote requests get the full cost of the items, including shipping cost and taxes. Buyers have the option of making payments through their cards or mobile money.

The sites have shopping guides that outline various categories to ease the experience of their customer base which has since grown to include corporate clients.

"One category of our shoppers is made up of those who have lived abroad and have settled back. This category comes to us looking for their favourite brands of consumer goods not available in Kenya, they are generally looking to shop from stores they are familiar with back in the US & UK and we act



The Savo Store website. DIANA NEMA

as a means to get these items," says Leah Kirungumi Ms Kirungumi other category is Kenyans who die to upper class with a "wish list" they are interested in goods that and which are not available locally.

Abig win

Both Savo Store and VituMob a limit on the amount of goods shipped to the country, a factor a big win with their corporate clients. The growth of cross border has been such a success that says Savo Store is planning to sea freight service before the end in an effort "to accommodate our growing container loads of goods and industrial machinery that cannot

Focus turns to Karigithu for enforcer

BY SANDRA CHAO-BLASTO

Focus is set to shift to the State Department for Maritime and Shipping Affairs following the signing and adoption of the African Union (AU) Charter on Maritime Security, Safety and Development in Africa on October 15.

Kenya was among African countries that endorsed the charter during the Extraordinary Summit of the African Union on Maritime Security, Safety and Development held in Togo recently.

The docket, headed by Ms Nancy Karigithu, now has the task of transforming the document into legislation that can be adapted to the Kenyan context and aligned with the Constitution ready for implementation. The charter, which was signed by 30 heads of state including President Uhuru Kenyatta,



Nancy Karigithu, Maritime and Shipping Affairs principal secretary. FILE

provides a framework for addressing challenges facing the continent's maritime sector. Among the issues covered in the charter are ways to tackle maritime piracy, which has

been on the rise in the Gulf of Aden and the Somali Sea, and the decline in the number of operations by the international