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# Africa's Business Jet Market: 2023 Lowdown

How is the business jet market in Africa looking with the first quarter in the rear-view mirror? Jane Stanbury asks a variety of experts their opinions and observations. Here's the latest...



**Jane Stanbury**

Jane has over 30 years' professional experience working in the media, communications, Business...

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Jane Stanbury | 18th April 2023



*During 2022, at the peak of the global business jet transactions, the African business jet sector saw a net outflow of aircraft leaving the continent. As global inventories tightened to unprecedented levels international buyers looked beyond their local markets and seized opportunities to buy aircraft where they were available, including in Africa.*

How has the business jet landscape in Africa changed as a result? And what does the **business jet market** look like for 2023?

While the African fleet attracted international buyers, this didn't eliminate acquisition activity in Africa, and a total of 52 aircraft joined the contracted fleet. According to JETNET, 27 of these were jets with 12 being large jets.

This suggests the African market is still hungry for intercontinental flight capability, even though the majority of movements remain intra-continental. So what does the African market need, and who is optimizing the jets within the continent?

Tayo Aiyetan Head of FBO Operations at EAN Jet Centre in Lagos, Nigeria confirms the general slow-down in private jet ownership citing several different factors.

"The difficulty of access to US Dollars for purchase, and the awareness of high maintenance costs, as most airframes need to go to Europe, Dubai or the US for maintenance are affecting market activity," he says. "Financiers tend to prefer airframes that are younger than twenty years, and also that are higher value. And in some countries, legislation requires aircraft to be even younger to join their respective registers. Combined these factors are limiting fast market growth."



### **Value Buying More Pronounced**

The 'status-quo' suggests that 2023 is showing signs of a maturing business jet market, according to JP Fourie, Executive Director at National Airways Corporation and Vice Chair of the African Business Aviation Association.

"We are seeing quite a strong move to value buying as well as to aircraft that are more suitable for the actual role and mission. With it still being a seller's market, buyers are acutely aware of the value in acquiring good, clean used aircraft."

Jeffrey Emmenis, Founder of the Vertis Group (which incorporates charter broker Vertis Aviation and Vertis Aircraft Trading) notes, "We have seen several of our charter customers transition to aircraft ownership within the continent in the last few months.

Deals included activity in the fixed-wing and rotary segments."

As economies continue to strengthen, operating standards continue to rise, and the perception of Business Aviation and its benefits becomes more positive, the sector is experiencing more activity from local and international stakeholders.

***Inward investment across the continent and the rise of successful local entrepreneurs is also driving demand for mobility within a region where surface travel is limited. Business jet activity is filling the transportation gaps.***

"Our customers are becoming more and more aware of the advantages Business Aviation delivers," Emmenis adds. "They are beginning to distinguish between aircraft CAPEX costs versus OPEX costs as they identify the relative values and recognize that business jets are a great business tool either through ownership or charter."

## Which Jets are Popular Right Now?

Usage is favoured by captains of industry, Emmenis says. Heads-of-state and international executives need efficient internal transport to fulfill routes underserved by local airlines. The Large Jets remain a popular choice, and while long-range legs may not regularly feature on flight plans, airframes with long-range capabilities remain a firm favourite.

*David Coleman, President of ColemanJets which specializes in cross-border transactions agrees. "Recent trends suggest that pre-owned business jet buyers are favouring Dassault, and Bombardier products reflecting a shift away from Light and Mid-Size Jets."*

Sub-Saharan buyers are not typically flight departments or fleet operators, and Emmenis reckons that for many aircraft owners Bombardier and Dassault jets are well represented in terms of maintenance support, crewing and reliability, which makes them a popular choice." Nevertheless, Emmenis is careful to add that aircraft acquisition is still a very personal decision in Africa.

Vertis is seeing several requests for Super-Light to Mid-Size aircraft to interline with commercial airlines for journeys to more remote locations for site visits, safaris, etcetera. "These include the very popular Bombardier Learjet 45 within Southern Africa," he adds.

Coleman notes a current void in the Super Mid-Size Jet sector. "Africa-based buyers should seriously consider the efficiency and mission suitability of this class, with Cessna Citation Latitude/Longitude, Gulfstream G280, and Bombardier Challenger 300/350 types representing an excellent choice."

The Super Mid-Size Jet category certainly delivers the perfect balance of transcontinental capability and a good solution for intracontinental flights.

Fourie adds, "The Hawker 800 and Hawker 900 series represents exceptional value at the price point, and Pilatus with its PC-24 has redefined a segment of the jet market and is getting a lot of interest."



## Where are BizAv Users Flying in Africa?

The most common routes intercontinentally are between West Africa and Europe, from East and South Africa to the Middle East, and to Europe and the Middle East from North Africa, though this by no means reflects all activity.

As Fourie comments, "There are intercontinental flights, yet the records show that they are still in the vast minority. Most flights are well within the design capabilities of the machines purchased, and on average a much lower load factor is carried than what the machines were designed for."

## African BizJet Market Projections

Aiyetan sees market segmentation divided between business owners requiring range and ease of ownership and those seeking cost-effective

regional travel options.

Looking forward the signs are of a market that continues to evolve, driven by growing business needs, increased economic wealth and inward investment, combined with a need to traverse a vast continent with minimal land infrastructure and restricted commercial routes.

Value, practicality and access are the watchwords. Older airframes such as the Hawker 800s and Challenger airframes provide workhorse capabilities, yet long-range requirements are driving new purchases.

And small jet versatility is complementing the strong turboprop sector, while there is potential for improved use of Super Mid-Size Jet airframes. This all presents a continent ripe with opportunity for 2023.



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