

Antarctic Peninsula

Pole-to-pole coverage

Cruise passengers and crew are enjoying new levels of connectivity as HTS services become more widespread writes **Mark Rasmussen**, vp and gm, mobility, Intelsat.



2017 saw the promise of high-throughput satellites (HTS) experienced widely throughout the maritime sector.

Passengers on cruise ships enjoyed more access to the throughput that provided additional entertainment options and full social media engagement.

Ship operators incorporated more advanced, high-bandwidth applications into their operations, while crews used the connectivity to access educational and entertainment activities as well as keep in touch with home.

In 2018, ship operators will continue to push the boundaries of what can be accomplished.

The Intelsat EpicNG satellites have helped ship operators stop thinking of satellite connectivity as a necessary expense and instead view it as a means of more fully integrating their global fleets with on-shore operations. The mindset created by years of having only minimal satellite bandwidth from L-band services is now opening up to the possibilities of using fleets, such as Intelsat EpicNG, to gather valuable data for the analysis that can make ship operations more efficient and increasingly be managed from shore-based operations centers.

In the cruise sector, an ideal example of this is how Intelsat and partner Marlink delivered enhanced data, voice and connectivity to MSC Cruises' newest vessels, MSC Meraviglia and MSC Seaside. Launched in June and December 2017, respectively, record breaking maritime broadband service was provided to the vessels by Marlink's Sealink service powered by Intelsat EpicNG, along with the latest iDirect's 9350 modems.

In June, Marlink delivered a then record-breaking 300 Mbps service for the maiden voyage of MSC Meraviglia, and in December, delivered more than half a gigabit per second of throughput to MSC Seaside. The predicted spike in demand for the maiden voyage was met as guests shared their first-hand experiences and memories on social media.

The throughput reached during these tests is expected to become de rigueur for cruise ships in the future. The typical family walks onto a cruise ship with up to seven connected devices, which they use to surf the web, send and receive emails, provide social media updates and also access gaming and video entertainment applications. The same connectivity is also being used by crews, enabling them to stay in touch with relatives at home while keeping up with events of the world.

and taking them to new destinations around the globe. With some large cruise ships welcoming over 5,000 passengers, delivering connectivity requires a robust communications platform that can provide the speeds and reliability expected by passengers.

Intelsat's global fleet, including Intelsat EpicNG HTS services, is ideal to support this growth and changes in traffic patterns, especially a shift to users uploading photos and video content.

Intelsat closed 2017 with five Intelsat EpicNG satellites in orbit. With Intelsat 29e and Intelsat 33e, the Intelsat EpicNG footprint spans from the Americas, the Caribbean and the North Atlantic to the Middle East, Europe, Africa and the Asia-Pacific region. Intelsat 32e, Intelsat 35e and Intelsat 37 were added to the fleet, increasing the throughput available in highly-trafficked routes.

In 2018, Horizons 3e, will be launched to extend Intelsat EpicNG coverage to the Pacific Ocean region and complete the network's global coverage. The scalability, power and flexibility of Intelsat EpicNG will provide unprecedented seamless, contiguous broadband coverage over the most widely trafficked routes from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

With these demands growing globally, the ability to deliver a consistent, high-quality broadband experience to vessels, regardless of location, is becoming increasingly important, as the cruise industry is attracting more passengers than ever

Cruise ship operators need a robust, yet flexible platform that enables an always-on connectivity, whether on the busiest routes or in remote areas, at a lower cost. The interoperability of the Intelsat and OneWeb networks will give cruise ship operators and all maritime service providers the flexibility and scalability they need, as well as the assurance of an always-on connectivity. And with OneWeb, Intelsat will be the only HTS network to have pole-to-pole coverage.

