

# A pioneering approach to the hospitality industry

By [Shaun Lamont](#)

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The world is on the move and people are travelling more than ever. It is estimated that by 2030, a global population of 8.5 billion people will take approximately 2 billion international trips, according to a [report](#) by the World Tourism Organisation.



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## Constant transformation

While travel has progressed in leaps and bounds, so have travellers, which means we need to be constantly transforming and enhancing ourselves. This is key to delivering the right mix of services to cater to guests from existing and new emerging market segments.

Over the years the traditional hospitality model has developed into a more multi-faceted approach from the basic amenities such as swimming pools, gyms, tennis courts and possibly a golf course, to state-of-the-art business and conference centres and health spas that encompass so much more than just a vacation destination. These developments have had a substantial influence on the economic growth of the hospitality industry.

Looking at the industry over the next five years, there are a growing number of new hotels planned for the South African market, according to the [PWC Hotels outlook: 2017-2021](#). The report also indicates that the overall number of available rooms is expected to increase at a 0.9% compound annual rate, thereby adding 2,700 rooms over this period. Continuous investment to unlock the substantial potential of our industry is fundamental to staying at the forefront. It's about looking to the future with innovation in our minds and our guests' best interests in our hearts.

## Riding the wave of travel trends

Let's face it, what kept customers happy 10 years ago no longer works today and unless you embrace the ever-changing travel trends of consumers you will find yourself left in the dust.

Technology is top of the list for the way in which it has forever changed the way we travel. The internet, smartphones, electronic payments and the power of social media have given consumers a voice directly to venues and with each other. While this can be challenging in some instances, it also brings an opportunity to embrace low-cost, wide-reaching platforms that allow instant communication with our market and a potent means of quality control. We need to bear in mind that as consumers use technology they become more knowledgeable about hospitality on a global scale and with that, their expectations become greater.

Another topical travel trend is eco-friendly tourism, especially with the impact of Cape Town's water crisis. 'Going Green' is no longer just a buzz phrase and it's only a matter of time before green practices in the hospitality industry become a baseline requirement. Our industry can influence change, and there needs to be a progressive step in that direction. We want guests to be part of the sustainable tourism experience when visiting our properties in the hope that this will lead to them adopting some of these measures when they return home.

Health and wellness is a global awareness drive that has become a travel trend influencer as well. Healthier lifestyles now dictate the type of hotels or resorts where these travellers want to stay, and their decisions are based on the amenities and even the menu offered. For many, it could be the 'deal breaker' when planning a vacation or business trip, and it's not limited to health spas or a golf course. An array of activities such as mountain biking, hiking trails and horse-riding that cater to an outdoor healthier entertainment programme are sought after.

Thanks to a 'mobile-job' era, business travellers are now taking the opportunity of a few extra days of relaxation while attending to business, making the bleisure trend an emerging global phenomenon. Considering our tight economy, this offers an affordable way of rejuvenation which will grow this category of travel in 2018 and beyond.

## **Promoting local tourism**

There's so much available in our own backyard. South Africa is widely known as one of the most sought-after destinations in the world, thanks to an abundance of natural beauty, pristine coastlines, exciting wildlife and berg experiences, great weather and our unique rainbow nation of diverse cultures that is steeped in history.

Whether it's for brand-new discoveries, or returning to old favourites, hospitality players are perfectly positioned to encourage holidaymakers to learn more about our country's beauty and heritage, which includes the promotion and support of local economies and communities as well.

Ensure that your staff are kept up to date with the local tourist hub so that they can encourage guests to explore nearby attractions, taste local cuisine and support local artists and entrepreneurs. This approach will play a pivotal role in making a far-reaching impact in the local tourism value chain.

## **Service must be at the heart of the industry**

Here's the thing: we are constantly working on multiple channels to improve our operations and service levels. And why?

Because we know that there is nothing more important in the hospitality industry.

The direct spin-off to great service is skills training and development. So, if you are not investing in staff training you are bound to face challenges in service delivery and will ultimately struggle to stay afloat in the current economy. Training needs to encompass all aspects of your business, as each person impacts customer service in one way or another. Furthermore, an investment in skills training is the best way to reduce employee turnover, which is one of the biggest drains on the hospitality industry.

Bear in mind that while all customers are not the same, there is one thing that makes them all happy – superior service. Because when you think about it, the agenda of our industry is to make people happy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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