

# Shifting the focus to the local tourist market

Traditionally, the tourism industry has focused on attracting international guests and charging in foreign currency, but Covid-19 has changed all that. The pandemic cutting a swathe through the industry, and statisticians estimating declines of up to 80% in the international tourism economy for 2020, domestic tourists will be key.



Despite the difficulty of striking that fine balance between international appeal and local taste, getting it right is critical - now more than ever. There was a time when providing a room and breakfast was enough, that approach certainly won't cut it now.

The key to bridging this gap in expectations lies in carefully curated and unforgettable travel experiences that appeal to local expectations, says Mark Havercroft, regional director for Africa for Minor Hotels.

Competitiveness lies in the ability to create and integrate value-added products or experiences which, in the current scenario, have to appeal across the traveller spectrum, while taking advantage of what makes a particular destination unique and distinguishable for tourists.

"These include features that set the destination apart, and include things such as culture, architecture, gastronomy, infrastructure landscape, events and shopping," not something a local guest feels can be had at home, says Havercroft.

## Fine dining with a local twist

A menu offering local ingredients prepared with international flair will always be a drawcard for international and domestic travellers alike. Of course, impeccable service from well-trained team members is an essential part of this dining experience, he says.

## A wine list to celebrate

Start with innovative cocktails that showcase authentic African flavours. Then move your guests on to a well selected choice of excellent local and imported wines that pair perfectly with their meal.

## A view to remember

Locals looking for the ideal spot to entertain important clients or celebrate special occasions appreciate an exceptional venue just as much as domestic and international travellers. Offer comfortable and luxurious surroundings, locally inspired decor that creates a true sense of place, and if you can add breathtaking views that showcase the surrounding natural beauty, you have a winning combination for every type of guest.

## **Events that educate and entertain**

Include some local culture and give your guests even more to boast about to their friends back home. From local music playing softly in the background of the lobby through to bespoke day trips that take guests out of the hotel, there are plenty of ways to get this right. It's also critical to take note of, for example, Generation Z travellers' appetite for more risk and adventure, which marks a significant shift away from traditional sun, sea and sand, and attraction-based tourism. This requires an out-of-the-box response that provides diverse and distinct experiences, while supporting the socio-cultural and economic development of local communities.

## **Getting the balance right**

Today's travellers are seeking familiar comforts they can rely on, a dash of indigenous adventure and a sense of luxury that reminds them they've earned this holiday - or a blend of all three. Whether they're local or have crossed an ocean to reach your establishment, says Havercroft, ensure that what you're offering will entice them to return - and become the kind of word-of-mouth ambassadors that may just be your saving grace during these unparalleled challenges for tourism.

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