

THINC Africa 2017: Exciting future for African hotel market

According to the United Nations World Travel Organisation (UNWTO), the African continent experienced an increase of 8.1%, while Western European destinations showed little to no tourism growth in 2016. Visitor totals in Sub-Saharan Africa grew more than 10% year-over-year - the most of any world region or sub-region.



©industryandtravel via [123RF](#) - View over the northern part of the business district of Nairobi, Kenya, with the Hilton Hotel to the right

Managing Partner of HVS in South Africa, Tim Smith believes there is ongoing demand for local knowledge and expertise from prospective investors, which prompted HVS to hold their Tourism, Hotel Investment and Networking Conference, [THINC Africa](#) for the first time last year. Following the success of the inaugural conference, the second conference will take place on 30- 31 August 2017 at the FNB Portside Building, situated in Cape Town's iconic V&A Waterfront precinct.

"The conference is run by hotel consultants with a deep passion for the industry, for the benefit of the industry," said Smith. The THINC conferences are held in various regions around the globe and are aimed at hotel investors, hotel brands, and management companies, real estate developers, investment bankers and lenders, fund representatives as well as public and private hotel, tourism and convention agencies.

Evolution of the African hotel market

According to the latest [HVS African Hotel Market Update](#), 2016 was a positive year for the African hotel market, tempered by external factors such as UK voters opting for Brexit and the US voting for Donald Trump as their president, both of which will have far-reaching ramifications for global markets, including those on the African continent.

“The evolution of the hotel market across Africa continues with some of the largest international brands announcing they were opening hotels in new countries. For example, Marriott and Rezidor launched large hotels in Kigali, Rwanda. Rezidor also opened a Radisson hotel and convention centre in Togo and announced it was developing five Park Inn hotels in Angola,” Smith points out. “Meanwhile, after the merger with Starwood, Marriott will be opening their first hotel in West Africa, the Sheraton Grand in Conakry Guinea.

The more established markets continue to be popular with Hilton announcing a new Hilton in Upper Hill, Nairobi - the 255-room hotel is set to be the tallest in Nairobi. Hilton also reported it would build the first modular construction hotel in Africa, the 280-room Hilton Garden Inn in Accra, and said it planned a 350-room Hilton at Lagos International airport.

Meanwhile, Accor is progressing with their impressive partnership for 50 hotels in Angola and have just announced three new hotels in Ethiopia” he said.

Positive trends present an exciting future

Smith says 2017 is sure to see more exciting announcements and if commodity prices continue to recover, some of the larger and more influential countries may enjoy economic growth, which in turn should further promote hotel development. “There will be ‘bumps in the road’ but positive trends present an exciting future for operators and investors,” he said.

The tremendous potential for growth in South Africa and the Southern African region is attracting regional and global investors, lenders, developers and operators from the hotel and tourism industries.

THINC Africa going from strength to strength

“Last year’s conference speakers included 30 MDs, CEOs and equivalent senior executives as well as Wesgro CEO Tim Harris and James Vos, MP Shadow Minister of Tourism. The feedback from attendees was extremely positive. 80% thought our speakers were excellent and 93% said it offered excellent networking opportunities,” said Smith.

Smith says the conference is going from strength to strength and is expecting 200 delegates, up from last year’s 160. The focus will remain on hotel investment with sessions on issues affecting owners and operators. Speakers will be senior people in the industry with experience in Africa generally. A new addition to the programme will be sessions focused exclusively on particular countries and one-on-one interviews with business leaders and entrepreneurs.

“We want to ensure that all delegates leave having been challenged and learned something. We have already secured a stellar line-up of speakers and sponsors” Smith said. “We will be encouraging audience participation so individuals can have their questions and issues addressed. The instructions to speakers will be ‘don’t be boring or say something that can be Googled - people want opinions’.”

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