

Slowly but surely up for tourism: Seewer

The growth experienced in tourist numbers from emerging markets and the sheer potential for further growth is an indication that SA tourism is on its way back up, according to Nick Seewer, CEO of Pepper Club Luxury Hotel & Spa.

By [Reginald Tachie-Menson](#) 14 Oct 2011

Recent reports have revealed an increase in emerging market tourism in SA, led by South America and Asia, with both regions recording double-digit growth in the first quarter of 2011. Latest foreign visitor statistics recorded by Pepper Club Luxury Hotel & Spa supports this growth in emerging market tourism with guest figures from India, China and Japan showing a marked increase year on year.

Pepper club said that visitors from China had increased from 8% in August 2010 to 10% in August this year. During the same period, visitors from India increased from 2% to 15% and visitors from Japan had increased from 2% to 7%. The hotel's African visitor figures also showed a marked increase from 3% in August 2010 to 6% in August.

"Tourism's not as bad as people make it out to be. It will take two to three years to get back to levels of before, but things are better this year than in 2010, if you leave out the World Cup."

"We really cannot depend on the traditional European markets. They are currently struggling and not producing much business in terms of tourism, therefore there is a need to look at emerging markets."

Seewer said however, that it did not mean that European markets would not be focussed on anymore, but stressed the need to exploit the new emerging market tourist trend.

"I don't want to harp on about the World Cup, but it did do us proud and will eventually be beneficial. There are concerns about supply, however it happens to most cities that host global events. It happened in Sydney."

Seewer added: "The opportunities are still there, we just need to be a little more creative in our marketing."

The emerging market territories simply had better economies at this time according to Seewer. They have not been hit as hard by the economic downturn and as a result have access to larger amounts of disposable income.

He said that this was evident particularly in the case of the Chinese, who were now travelling increasingly more than they used to.

"The Chinese market is one to look towards as these tourists become more sophisticated in their travelling. There is a lot of wealth in China, with about 5% of over a billion people at the top end of earnings. That points to huge potential for further growth, not just for SA but for all tourist destinations."

Seewer stressed the amount of work that needed to be done however to ensure the potential for emerging market tourists did not go untapped. He said that the South African tourism industry had to become flexible and friendly to all types of cultures moving forward. He also said there was a need to focus on greater

communication facilities especially with Asian tourists, which consisted of a high percentage of non-english speakers.

"You can't just sit on your backside and expect the business to come to you, it needs to be cultivated"

"SA is a beautiful and diverse country, with a range of attractive countries that border it as well. The local prices are very reasonable and the current level of the rand is adding to the country's attractiveness."

"I'm particularly optimistic about 2012."

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