

Q&A

CORPORATE INTERVIEW | DUSTID2 HOTEL



dustid2 Hotel General Manager Michael Mateyas

By JECKONIA OTIENO

dustid2 Hotel General Manager, Michael Mateyas, who is also a member of the American Chamber of Tourism Committee, spoke to Business Beat about the growth prospects in Kenya's tourism industry.

There has been an influx of foreign/multinational hotels in the Kenyan

market in recent years. What is making the local market so attractive?

Nairobi is considered to be the hub of East Africa and has seen growth in business in recent years. With this growth, there has been a rise in demand for both local and multinational hotel chains.

Travel and tourism's total contribution to Kenya's growth domestic product (GDP) was SH588.6 billion last year, which is about 10 per cent of GDP. The sector is forecast to grow by 4 per cent in 2016, and then by 5.8 per cent per year after this to generate SH1 trillion, which will be 10 per cent of GDP by 2026. These numbers are attractive.

The hotel industry will also continue to grow in Kenya simply by having international chains wanting to a piece of the pie. It is important, however, for the growth to be healthy, and for infrastructure to grow as fast or even faster than the hotel industry. This infrastructure growth includes transport/road systems and state-of-the-art convention centres.

dustid2 has been in operation in the country for just under two years. What has business been like so far?

dustid2 opened its doors in September 2014 at a soft opening, and then held an official opening on March 30, 2015. Since then, the business has speedily grown and we have seen

our popularity get stronger in the market.

Penetrating the market has been a challenge, but with the consistency in service and our open approach to both the corporate and leisure markets, we have seen that in the short period that we have been operating, we have caused a stir in the Nairobi market.

What is driving the popularity of boutique hotels across the world?

A boutique hotel is categorised as having less than 100 rooms, but at the same time offers exceptional and attentive service to its clientele. Attention to detail and offering a unique and memorable experience is what distinguishes such hotels from the larger players in the industry.

The attention to detail in service while giving the feeling that one has not left home means people do not have to adjust to a strange environment.

Kenya has hosted high-profile visits from foreign dignitaries, including the American president and the Pope. What's the impact of these kinds of visits on the tourism industry?

I believe the period leading to the visit of the US president last year was exciting for all hotels in Nairobi. However, the period after this has not shown any huge growth in the number of visitors coming to Kenya. Still, the

lifting of security measure in areas such as Mombasa somehow helped improve trust.

But the fact that to date we do not have direct flights to the US makes potential visitors from this country a bit reluctant to travel to Kenya as they have to use connecting flights, which often means long layovers and expensive tickets.

What are some of the challenges the hospitality industry is facing in the local market, and what can be done to overcome them?

Some challenges include the road system and the difficulty experienced moving around the city. The bad publicity that media gives to Kenya also affects visitor arrivals. Local news makes it onto major TV networks across the world, and can put off both tourists and business people.

What are the current consumer trends in the industry?

The current hotel consumer trends include a fast internet connection offered, in most cases, for free. Others are excellent and fast check-in procedures, and a clean and secure environment. With Nairobi being a city for corporate clients, hoteliers must ensure they meet the needs of this market in terms of business services and meeting requirements.

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