

# Tourism branding needs new approach as numbers drop

At the cornerstone of Cape Town Tourism's proposed tourism brand repositioning, is the idea that cities are considered to be the new super-brands of the 21st century. So says Cape Town Tourism CEO, Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold, who is calling for a new approach as a slow recovery rate equates to high losses. In line with this is the release of the new book, *CapeAbility: Stories and Successes from the 2010 FIFA World Cup*.



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11 June 2011, marks one year on from the kick-off of the 2010 FIFA World Cup games and the tail end of the global financial crisis has hit South Africa and the tourism industry hard, perhaps initially diverted in the run-up to and during the World Cup. Demand has diminished, visitor spends have steadied and costs have increased.

Tourism is a major contributor to GDP, nationally and internationally. In Cape Town alone, the international visitor industry spends some R14 billion per annum and at least 298 000 people are directly employed in tourism. However, at the current slow recovery rate of about 3-4%, Cape Town will only reach 2007 tourism visitor and revenue levels again by 2014,

representing a cumulative loss of R1.5 billion to the sector over seven years. Many other sectors are facing similar challenges, but in a region dependent upon tourism for such a large part of its economy and job market, the industry cannot remain passive and rely on the city to market itself.

Faced with an urgent need to respond to this environment, du Toit-Helmbold says, "To date, market conditions have allowed us to be reliant on leisure tourism, as a key focus area. In this competitive time, we cannot afford to take the view that the 'a city sells itself', nor can we continue to be perceived purely as a place of natural beauty. It is absolutely necessary for destinations to actively and continuously present themselves to potential visitors with a strong brand positioning and compelling message to create sustainable demand from a cross-section of markets.

"Successful cities of the future will be stand-out urban centres seen as the most liveable and enjoyable places on the planet; delivering benefits to residents and visitors alike. For many people, to escape does not always mean a wilderness experience, but rather to explore new and different cultures. Cities are now the epicentres of modern, living culture. They are the hotspots for urban travellers, who make up 70% of the world's travellers."

Cape Town's market share of world tourism is less than 0.18% with a 0.3% share of the global urban tourism sector. Added to this, the destination is challenged by its long haul status and is a small competitor, in an overcrowded field. "Cape Town has some wonderful attributes; it is iconic, complex and multi-faceted. However, to visitors, these attributes are not self-evident and for us to unleash this urban wealth, the offer to potential visitors must be made continuously and compellingly."

## World Cup focused on cities

With national tourism marketing still focusing predominantly on wildlife and natural beauty as the central theme, cities receive very little exposure in international campaigns. The World Cup provided the world with a different perspective of South Africa, showcasing its cities through their growing infrastructure, people and vibrant cultures. However, little has been done at a national level to capitalise on this marketing legacy, post the World Cup. A joint marketing alliance between Cape Town, Johannesburg and Durban launched at Indaba this year will focus on urban tourism and lobby for a more representative marketing exposure of urban South Africa.

## New focus for Cape Town

Cape Town Tourism believes that the city's urban identity, innovative outlook, entrepreneurial spirit, academic excellence and pioneering medical and science sectors must be added to the brand palette in order for it to effectively compete in the

domestic and global market. Beauty is no longer enough to create the kind of demand to sustain year-round economic growth and job opportunities.

Du Toit-Helmbold is quick to caution against abandoning traditional source markets and leisure focused tourism marketing, but calls for a new focus which is inclusive of business and domestic marketing themes.

"We are committed to driving and implementing an inspirational brand for Cape Town; rooted in our story and the evidence of inspiration found within this exceptional and complex city. It is an inclusive process that involves citizens, tourism, business, academia, events and the knowledge and innovation economies of Cape Town in playing a key role. The brand proposition of inspiration allows for multiple messaging and alignment with consumer behaviour and sentiment.

"If we do not act decisively now, our industry and the economic well-being of our city and people are at great risk. If nothing is done, or if we neglect our strong tourism markets, the city and tourism businesses will not generate effective returns from the significant capital investments that were made prior to the World Cup. If we don't proactively engage in a new marketing and branding strategy we run the risk of being positioned nonetheless - by our competitors, our critics and the media - most likely to our disadvantage," concludes du Toit-Helmbold.

View the entire [business case study](#).

## Book reviews, guides mega event planning

The new book *CapeAbility: Stories and Successes from the 2010 FIFA World Cup*, a 194-page coffee table style book that captures the planning, delivery and effect of the event in the Western Cape, was launched by Western Cape Premier Helen Zille and executive mayor of Cape Town, Patricia de Lille on 10 June 2011.

Understanding that the World Cup in South Africa was a "once-in-a-lifetime" event, the book makes every effort to extract honest lessons to understand the hosting of such mega-events better. It is designed therefore not as a memento of the event, but a review of what worked, what didn't and what could be done better and becomes a guide to hosting future events.

As Zille says in the foreword, "The 2010 FIFA World Cup has shown that anything is possible, but this book highlights that success requires strong leadership, innovative approaches, attention to detail and above all a determination to deliver quality on time."

Sourcing from a broad range of contributors, from ambassadors, youth and the foreign press to officials, business people and NGOs, the book includes first-person narratives that combine with fact-based reports and articles to yield eight chapters including Economic Development, Environmental Legacy, Social Cohesion and Lessons in Communication.



Susannah Holz

Managing editor Susannah Holz, a freelance copywriter and strategist, will see 5000 copies printed for exclusive distribution to key opinion makers amongst trade and investment groupings. Marketing and communications may not be core service delivery functions of government but it also clear that attracting foreign direct investment and promoting a region's assets is an important marketing challenge.

The book is meant to play a marketing role and points out that it is crucial that opportunities, such as the World Cup, are converted into more than just short-term profits for a small tourism and events sector, but into huge brand building opportunities for a country.