

Zimbabwe to launch international marketing campaign

The Zimbabwe Tourism Authority (ZTA) is planning to launch an international marketing campaign in “the next few weeks” to counter what chief executive officer Karikoga Kaseke described as negative publicity on Zimbabwe.

Political turmoil in the country sparked bad publicity on Zimbabwe in the international media, triggering a sharp decline in international arrivals.

“You'll see us on CNN, SKY News and other international news channels in the next few weeks to counter negative reports from our detractors,” Kaseke told BizCommunity today.

The campaigns will involve advertisements “which we'll pay for,” he said, indicating that ZTA would retain British-based public relations firm, Africa Sunset, to manage the campaign in Europe.

Currently, Africa Sunset has a partnership agreement with the ZTA under which they bring in tourists to Zimbabwe and earn their income from the tourists as an outbound operator.

However, Kaseke said they are likely to retain the public relations company “to help with publicity”. He said the campaign in Asia, where the ZTA has signed marketing deals with a number of publicity firms, was doing very well, with a contingent of Zimbabwean beauty pageants having been flown to China and Hong Kong this week by Chinese firm, Zimbabwe International Travel and Tours.

“For the whole month, Zimbabwe is being promoted in Hong Kong,” said Kaseke.

Tourist arrivals from China, the biggest target market under the government's Look East policy, have remained subdued, according to official statistics from the ZTA's Annual Report 2006.

Last year, arrivals from China increased from 7 146 to 9 583. The figure however also includes arrivals from Hong Kong. Arrivals from the rest of Asia grew by a marginal 19% from 31 000 to 37 000, but, overall, international arrivals have remained low.

Hotel and tourism sector operators say Asian visitors are not big spenders compared to their European and American counterparts. This has forced a policy rethink in Harare over the Look-East policy that shunned the European and American markets in favour of Asian ones because of increasing criticism on President Mugabe's regime for alleged human rights abuses and economic mismanagement.

Early this year, the ZTA appointed Spanish Pedro del Campo, who has vast experience in marketing and advertising, to help market Zimbabwe in Europe and South America.