

Mobile dominates at World Travel Market Africa

Mobile first is no longer just nice to have. This was the sentiment at the recent World Travel Market Africa, a trade show and conference for African tourism.



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Leading a panel who were discussing Mobile and the Visitor Journey, Digital Tourism Think Tank's CEO, Nick Hall, pointed out that businesses whose websites were not optimised for mobile were missing a big opportunity to communicate effectively. This impacted negatively on the 'real life' experience of a product or event, as well as the online experience.

Panelist Alana Witte of Revinate said that there was a real opportunity for hotels to use mobile to enhance the customer experience, even before the visitor arrives. They should be able to indicate pre-arrival whether they want room service, what newspaper they would be interested in reading and whether they want a room service breakfast. Establishing communication in this way was also an opportunity for hotels to gather data and feedback from their customers systematically.

Iain Manley of Voicemap said 2015 is the year of the native app, and that news agencies were now looking to publish straight to app, leaving the Web out altogether. Whilst this is still the domain of early adopters, and app noise is high, this area of development is one to watch.

Simplicity is the key

Cape Town Tourism's Executive Marketing Manager, Velma Corcoran, said that when entering the mobile domain, being clear is more important than being clever. "Simplicity is the key and it's vital that you are speaking to a visitor need. Those getting it right use mobile to solve real-world problems. Uber is an example of this. Cape Town is a notable hub for innovation, with user-intuitive apps such as Snapscan, gometro and apps against Ebola all coming out of the Mother City."

Talking best practice for blogger campaigns in the travel industry, Cape Town Tourism's Corcoran joined panellists Michael Bean, Business Director of Brand's Eye, a digital analytics tool, Keith Jenkins, founder of iAmbassador, a blogger

placement programme, and Mariette du Toit-Helmbold - owner of digital marketing company, Destinate to discuss the role of bloggers in destination and product marketing.

The panel agreed that authenticity and independence were the key elements of a compelling and credible blogger campaign. Corcoran said that Cape Town Tourism no longer focused on bloggers alone, but on influencers - bloggers, Instagrammers, photographers and locals amongst others. Cape Town Tourism was working with these influences to tell the story of the destination.

Brands Eye pointed out that there were lots of different ways to measure online campaigns, but, increasingly, people were valuing engagement rather than reach as a measure of influence. It is also important to look at the broader reach that the followers of followers could give.

Bloggers, not 'blaggers'

Corcoran added that, increasingly, bloggers were becoming content generators, and if they were able to provide excellent content, destinations would pay for it. Du Toit-Helmbold added that there was a difference between bloggers and 'blaggers' (defined as bloggers who were in it for the fun and freebies). Serious bloggers presented their strategy and statistics well, provided compelling ideas to destinations and, ultimately, delivered great content.

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