

Creating experiences online

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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While technology is disrupting the tourism industry, it is also bringing with it benefits to the industry and the end user. By 2030, 1.8 billion tourists will visit the continent. Africa can greatly benefit from technology to grow its share of the global tourism market.



Image via [Travel Indaba Twitter](#)

Technology and its impact on the tourism industry was a topic at the recent Africa's Travel Indaba. Heading the panel was the well-known technology expert, Aki Anastasiou.

Host of CNBC Africa's television show *Tech Busters*, and the presenter of technology and gadget-driven features on 702's *Technobyte*, Anastasiou was joined by Paul de Waal, an engineer and the owner of Wetu as well as Jarred Cinman, managing director (and a founder) of NATIVE VML.

The panellists all agreed that the challenge the continent faces is getting travellers here. This was the motivation for De Waal when he started Wetu, a central bank where tourism businesses can manage their content and distribute it free of charge to wholesalers and retailers. "Wetu was born out of my own frustration, firstly after trying to find a particular place in Africa and not being able to and secondly, travelling there and not feeling comfortable."

"I realised that if I am uncomfortable, and I know the continent, how must overseas visitors feel? All first-time visitors know about Africa are the perception out there of the 'dark continent'. The second-time visitors know better so we need to focus on helping the first-time visitor feel comfortable - and confident - when they come here," explained De Waal.

Bringing the customer experience to life

Cinman said it is about the customer experience. "Travellers to Africa want to know what they are going to encounter when they want to come here." Cinman suggests that, as a continent, the industry map this out to see how to offer a better experience than other destinations: "Whether it is booking a holiday or buying insurance, look at the experience you are offering from a customer point of view and engineer it, so it is as entertaining and painless as possible."

Cinman added that the tourism industry can learn from new businesses: "For example, Uber. At its core, it offers an amazing experience that is also easy and this is what the tourism industry needs to do."

De Waal agreed with Cinman, saying: "To get travellers to choose us over other destinations, we need to think differently. For example, traditionally hotels or BNBs put up four to five images with some copy on a site. We are saying no, that's not correct. Show more pictures - up to 20 or 30 – with no copy, do a Google walkthrough and video. This is what potential travellers want to see and that is what will get them to come here over other destinations."

Cinman added to this: "To make a decision on a destination, travellers want an upfront experience. We live in a visual world. This should not cost you an arm or a leg; you do not have to be a millionaire to do this. People watch cheap YouTube videos and love them."

ABOUT DANETTE BREITENBACH

Danette Breitenbach is a marketing & media editor at Bizcommunity.com. Previously she freelanced in the marketing and media sector, including for Bizcommunity. She was editor and publisher of AdVantage, the publication that served the marketing, media and advertising industry in southern Africa. She has worked extensively in print media, mainly B2B. She has a Masters in Financial Journalism from Wits.

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