

The power of exhibitions in the tourism and travel industry

As proven by WTM Africa 2017, which saw \$365,950,813 of business generated, exhibitions remains a powerful marketing tool for business, particularly for an experiential business in the travel and tourism sector where buyers appreciate face-to-face negotiations.



In addition, it has been reported that across the WTM Portfolio in 2016, the amount of business done totalled an incredible \$7bn.

Recreating the pull of travel experiences

Chardonnay Marchesi, portfolio director for Reed Exhibitions' Africa Travel Week, attributes the success of WTM Africa 2017 to the human-centric approach taken to create an environment ripe for business deals, and ensuring that both buyer's and exhibitor's needs are met through an intensive feedback process each year. At WTM Africa 2018, experiences focusing on the five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing will become integral to on-site innovations designed to recreate the emotional pull of a variety of travel experiences.

According to ufi.org, 80% of businesses agree that customers spend more money with companies they have met with face-to-face. While according to the CEIR survey's consensus, visitors value in-the-moment interaction with your exhibiting team that will let them experience everything there is to know about your product. This includes product demos, sensory engagement with products to let visitors see, touch, smell and taste (where possible) your product, and leaving with relatable information takeaways that they can explore after leaving your stand.

Harnessing the power of technology

Technology is becoming an increasingly important component of exhibitions too, with the digitisation of content and the utility of hardware such as touch screens, virtual reality apparatus and gaming elements all being brought onto the exhibition floor. This was demonstrated at WTM Africa 2017 with the inclusion of a dedicated section on the show floor

for travel technology providers, and with the Travel Tech Show, a conference theatre for technology-specific content.

The City of Cape Town, for example, demonstrate the highlights for a traveller in the city using virtual reality technology.

Says Executive Mayor of Cape Town, Patricia de Lille: "WTM Africa remains one of the foremost exhibition shows hosted by the City of Cape Town. We are delighted that our virtual reality experiences and touch screen information kiosks were a hit among delegates. The use of technology in the City of Cape Town exhibition stand also earned us the award for the 'Most Innovative Stand' at WTM Africa 2017. Since 2014, the City of Cape Town has made significant progress in harnessing the power of technology. We have set ourselves the goal of becoming the digital capital of Africa. Our investment in the digital city is one of the biggest contributions we can make towards building the opportunity city of the future by leveraging technology for progress. Becoming a truly digital city is one of the key factors that will help unlock



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growth in all sectors.”

Bringing the world together in one room, facilitating international business

“When approached with strategic and well-planned messaging, goals and activations, exhibitions remain one of the most effective platforms to market your brand from, with many organisations experiencing a positive return on investment in financial, brand awareness and marketing capacities,” reports Marchesi.

Exhibitions have the ability to bring the world together in one room. Each year, there are approximately 31,000 exhibitions globally, with over 4.4 million companies that exhibit. There is something truly exciting about being able to connect and communicate with international visitors on a common interest, which inevitably leads to the opportunity to do business internationally, making a positive mark on the economy.

“Worldwide, it is estimated that over \$109bn is spent at exhibitions by visitors and exhibitors. Our team has seen this first hand at WTM Africa where, in 2017, over 5,000 industry professionals from 72 countries attended the event in Cape Town with the primary objective to do business with one another. Over 200 hosted buyers were present and an incredible 11% year-on-year increase in the number of appointments has been recorded,” concludes Marchesi, citing statistics from a survey done by the Center for Exhibition Industry Research.

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