

Wine & Food Tourism conference announces big data speaker lineup

This year's Business of Wine & Food Tourism Conference, which takes place on 17 October at Spier near Stellenbosch, has lined up several high-profile international and local speakers, some of whom will discuss the role of big data as part of the event's wider theme of innovation.



Image Supplied - Spier, Stellenbosch

Convinced that big data is pivotal to helping the industry catch up on its global competitors, conference convener, Mari Biggs says: "Data is the key to unlocking real-time, unmitigated insights into existing and potential markets. Data can give us information that frees us from confirmation bias and that can catalyse new ways of reaching consumers. Now's the time. We just can't afford to keep on letting our competitors steal a march on us."

UNWTO, the World Tourism Organisation that is also focusing on data, innovation and the digital impact on tourism this year, has found Africa's tourism competitiveness to be lagging its competitors and operating below its potential. Biggs believes South Africa can play a leading role in reversing the situation.

This year's headline speaker will include big-data specialist Cathy Huyghe, co-founder and CEO of Enolytics LLC. Huyghe, who is a Forbes and Inc columnist, consults to a range of wineries, wine marketing bodies and beverage businesses in the Americas and Europe. She stresses that big data is no longer the exclusive domain of well-resourced corporates and that it can drive better business decision-making.



A focus on The Business of Wine & Food Tourism Conference 2018

Marisah Nieuwoudt 28 Jun 2018



In addition, Huyghe highlights that given today's technology, and the platforms available to consumers to convey what they think about wine, it just doesn't make sense anymore to have a blind spot around consumer behaviour and sentiment. "When harnessed strategically, big data can provide a highly cost-effective way to build insights for well-targeted interventions by all types of business, regardless of size. The skill lies in knowing the type of data to seek and how to interpret it. By integrating different sources of data, it becomes possible to identify previously unrealised opportunities and

obstacles.

Building insight with big data

"Working with data specialists can help in developing a far more comprehensive picture of consumers than ever before. It allows decision-makers to discover what triggers certain consumer behaviours and choices, their spending thresholds, responses to competitor offerings and more. Data can help wine businesses identify who their competition actually is and not necessarily who they think it is. It can also uncover correlations that would not otherwise have been apparent. All these insights can help to create far more powerful, targeted and relevant sales and marketing strategies.

"How deep you drill in your analysis depends on your requirements, but it is possible to identify country-, category-, wine-style- and brand- and even label-specific trends."





Cathy Huyghe





Tim Harris

Another speaker to address guests will be Wesgro CEO Tim Harris, who also serves on the board of Silicon Cape, Cape Town's technology promotion initiative. Focusing on Cape Town's public-private management of the water crisis in relation to tourism, his talk will be titled *The power of a single voice; don't let a crisis go to waste*.

"January 2018 marks the decisive moment when as a province, we embraced the opportunity to change our relationship with water forever."

"The 'Cape Town Model' for dealing with climate change shows how tourism can be an important part of the solution. Our strategy very much included tourists as part of the water-wise solution, calling on visitors to truly embrace what it is like to live in our city and province by encouraging them to 'save like a local'. The overwhelmingly positive response points the way for other metropolises around the world to apply what we have learned."

Other conference speakers include online story-teller Chris Joubert; Spicer de Villiers, who owns A Single Thread, a boutique communications agency active in local wine; and Marisah Nieuwoudt, wine tourism manager for VinPro, the organisation that represents around 3,500 South African wine producers, cellars and industry stakeholders.

Also addressing delegates will be Dr Donovan Kirkwood, an ecologist and biodiversity conservation specialist; chef and West Coast foraging specialist Kobus van der Merwe; and Dr Serge Raemaekers, a marine biologist who has developed a fresh seafood sustainable value chain to service Cape Town restaurants.

[Full conference programme and lineup of speakers here.](#)

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