airbnb

AFRICA
TRAVEL SUMMIT

Making a difference through travel:

Learnings from the Africa Travel Summit

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How to use this report

Airbnb was honored to convene 200 innovators in tourism and tech from across Africa in Langa, Cape Town from 11-13 September, 2018 to discuss how technology can best be used to accelerate inclusive, sustainable economic growth through travel on the continent.

This report documents the programme and seeks to distill the key themes, learnings, beginnings of new ideas and moments of inspiration that emerged in the room—as a resource for those who were present and most importantly, in support of the shared vision of a healthy tourism for Africa from which Africans and their communities are the primary beneficiaries.

The report was written by global tourism advisor and author Anita Mendiratta, Founder and President of CACHET Consulting (www.anitamendiratta.com), who facilitated parts of the Summit discussion at Airbnb's request.

About Airbnb

Founded in 2008, Airbnb's mission is to create a world where people can belong through healthy travel that is local, authentic, inclusive and sustainable.

Airbnb makes available a unique technology platform to economically empower millions of people around the world to unlock and monetise their spaces, passions and talents to become hospitality entrepreneurs. Airbnb's accommodation marketplace provides access to 5+ million unique places to stay in more than 81,000 cities and 191 countries.

With Experiences, Airbnb facilitates unprecedented access to local communities and interests through 15,000 unique, handcrafted activities run by hosts across 1,000+ cities around the world. Airbnb's people-to-people platform benefits all its stakeholders, including hosts, guests, employees and the communities in which it operates.

About Airbnb's Office of Healthy Tourism

Launched in April 2018, Airbnb's Office of Healthy Tourism drives local, authentic, sustainable tourism in cities and communities across the globe. As tourism becomes an increasingly important pillar of local economies, Airbnb is committed to ensuring that these communities and their residents remain the primary beneficiaries.

Our Office of Healthy Tourism forges partnerships and supports initiatives to both empower the full range of destinations from established to emerging, and promote economic and environmental sustainability in the communities in which we operate.

Foreword

We were truly honored to host Africa's best minds in travel and technology to talk through how all stakeholders can collaborate to get the continent's powerful tourism opportunity right.

Since humans walked out of Olduvai Gorge, the story of humanity has been and always will be a story of travel, a story of advancement through connection, understanding and the embrace of an open world. In my travels to South Africa, I have learned about the concept of Ubuntu, the big idea that true community is based on everyone belonging—that there are no foreigners. Enlightened by this spirit of belonging, Africa is uniquely positioned to leverage the opportunity represented by people-to-people tourism to advance its society.

This opportunity is as expansive as the continent itself. Alongside Europe, increased travel to Africa drove a new record in international tourist arrivals in 2017. Tourism is projected to account for more than 8 percent of African GDP within the next 10 years. Almost 400 million millennials are expected to be traveling within the next three. And a growing (though it needs to grow still faster) middle class across Africa is driving an 8-percent increase in domestic tourism.

With this great opportunity comes a great responsibility, shared by all of us gathered in that beautiful space in Langa, to help African tourism grow authentically, sustainably and inclusively— what we at Airbnb call "healthy travel." Authentic travel that stays true to Africa, but to all of Africa, blowing open limiting stereotypes as to what African travel can be. Sustainable travel that is both environmentally aware and set up to grow in a responsible way. Inclusive travel that distributes the economics to people—young people, older people, women, people in rural areas—who not only have not benefited from tourism before but who may otherwise face limited options for building better livelihoods for themselves and their families.

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Africa's greatest natural resource is the mosaic of people living across its countries and communities, and ensuring that the benefits of tourism flow to the people is foundational to getting the opportunity right.

One of the most echoed refrains from Summit participants was how vital the teaching of basic technological skills will be in accomplishing this goal. Airbnb is a technology platform, but one that is dedicated to using technology to take people offline, connecting with one another and doing our part for an open world by helping anyone belong anywhere. Airbnb's Africa Academy provides would-be hosts with resources and tools including the basic smartphone-based skills needed to set up and manage their listings on the platform. Amid all of today's booming technology-based industries, tourism remains a powerful, people-driven force for economic and societal good.

Beyond ensuring that the economic benefits of tourism are democratized, at a time of growing global concern about the challenges posed by inequality, climate change and social justice, healthy tourism rooted in local communities can help inspire the global sense of community we need to address them.

Chris Lehane
SVP, Policy and Communications

Walking the "healthy tourism" talk of inclusivity, Airbnb hosted a breakthrough, pan-African tourism event in the township of Langa, Cape Town: the Africa Travel Summit.

Introduction

From 11-13 September, a new, 200-strong continental tourism community gathered to discuss how best to use technology to accelerate the creation of opportunity through tourism that is local, authentic, sustainable, and both geographically and demographically inclusive.

Fundamentals of the Summit included:

Admired local, regional and global speakers from across all levels of business and government, all excited to share their unique knowledge and insights as well as learn from others.

Partners and stakeholders committed to working with the tourism industry to unlock meaningful change for the benefit of all.

Participants excited to be a part of interactive, innovative discussions and debates focused on the power of technology as a tool for tourism's authentic, inclusive, sustainable growth.

A carefully designed program that optimized Airbnb's global experience and expertise in convening leading thinkers and doers excited to share their stories and skills.

Media open to amplifying the positive, empowering narrative of people-to-people tourism and of the African continent.

The Africa Travel Summit was convened by Airbnb's Office of Healthy Tourism, an initiative launched in April 2018 to drive community-based, authentic, sustainable tourism in cities and communities across the globe. Airbnb is committed to ensuring that as tourism becomes an increasingly important pillar of local economies, these communities and their residents remain the primary beneficiaries.

The Summit also was an important element included within Airbnb's 2017 USD$1 million investment commitment for the African continent to empower locals and lift communities through our proven model of people-powered tourism, both home sharing and Experiences, for the benefit of local families and their guests..

Designed to make a difference

From the very start of thinking about the Summit, Airbnb was committed to designing a first-of-its-kind tourism industry event that was optimized for enduring impact. We wanted to support all involved in the shared desire to not have a one-off discussion but truly help shape the future of technology-enabled tourism in Africa—a continent heavily reliant on the industry not only for its own economic, social and environmental sustainability, but for tourism's potential to bridge cultures and foster unity.

The power of technology to unlock the future of tourism in Africa, for Africans, is a given. But how to unleash this power in a way that breaks down barriers to opportunity?

"Celebrating [Africa's] people, not just its animals!"

Mehalah Beckett

For this reason, with Airbnb acting as a convenor of tourism stakeholders, every aspect of the Summit's design and execution was anchored in two overarching questions:

1

How do we ensure that more people across Africa benefit from tourism growth and the ever increasing interest among travellers in having local, authentic experiences?

The Summit programme provided a stage for a rich array of thought leaders across tourism and technology to share their perspectives from their own countries and roles. To inject even more practical knowledge into the mix, a carefully selected set of "change-makers" were invited to share their unique stories about building their own offerings and brands through visionary, tourism-based business ideas that both mobilised and benefited their local communities.

2

How can technology catalyse positive change in Africa's tourism industry?

From policymakers to change-makers, speakers shared their experiences and learnings. This included deep dives into key challenges seen by all as impeding Africa's ability to grow and sustain a tourism industry that benefits all stakeholder groups: individuals and communities within destinations; businesses of all sizes; governments at all levels; and travellers. All those present recognised that access to, and training in technology is critical to achieving step-change opportunity creation.

Five panel discussions were titled to reflect what are, effectively, top priorities for people-to-people growth of tourism in Africa:

Tourism for All

The potential of innovation and technology to help tourism deliver economic empowerment in communities across Africa

Financing as an Enabler for Technology and Tourism Development

Innovations in flexible financing that can help more people and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) access funding to grow travel-based businesses

Telling the Africa Story

The role and responsibility of the media in shaping Africa's narrative with travel writers, bloggers and journalists

Government as an Enabler for Innovation

The role of government in advancing new forms of tourism and innovation that benefit everyone

Resilient Tourism in Times of Crisis

Building sustainable, resilient tourism fueled by innovation and technology

Change-maker talks punctuated the panel discussions to create a thought-provoking mix of theory and findings, best practices and from-the-field insights.

From all these discussions, four themes emerged:

1 Pride of place

2 Taking ownership

3 Making the business case

4 Foundations first

Four themes & change-maker case studies

Theme one:
Pride of place

The joy of exploration has no geographic imperative. When people think about "tourism," the default is to think of going someplace distinct and distanced from where one normally lives, often crossing some sort of geographic boundary or marker—because it is presumed that discovery lies far away. But as the Summit discussions repeatedly raised, discovery can in fact be most enriching when it occurs just beyond your doorstep.

The choice of Langa as the Summit location confronted participants with prevailing stereotypes about African tourism, raising a provocative question: Why dismiss or at least devalue what is right in front of us, and instead presume the value of travel for tourists lies somewhere else? As Airbnb's Chris Lehane recalled about his honeymoon in South Africa with his wife:

"When we came here we had actually wanted to come to Langa—this was 2001—and we could not get here, even though we were only, what, 10-12 miles from the CBD up to here, we could not find a way. 'Driver take us here.' [We could not] find any way to intersect. We asked people, and they sort of looked at us with a, 'why?'"

Unlocking Africa's full potential for tourism growth is not just about innovating to create travel experiences that are not yet available. It is as much about appreciating, and raising others' appreciation for what is all around in African daily life, in the continent's cultures and communities. We cannot create healthy, community-based tourism value until we embrace that there is value in community tourism.

Once this truth is internalized, innovation can begin through local, people-to-people experiences as a way of showcasing culture, traditions, lifestyles and values through immersive interactions between destinations and guests. In turn, the opportunity for guests to have truly local experiences can stimulate entire supply chains and unlock entrepreneurship, whether focused on food, art, adventure, exploration, or any other form of healthy, community-based tourism.

Innovation in African offerings—especially in urban centres and through more youth-focused offerings—is critical to grow beyond the traditional wildlife-and-culture fare, as well as beyond international inbound tourism. Regional and domestic experiences can be vital drivers of year-round tourism for those interested in going beyond traditional traveller fare in Africa.

This, participants agreed, is an opening for technology to play an invaluable role in destination marketing and promotion. Using technology as an experience sharing platform, product and service providers, as well as guests themselves, can help future guests from across the world, the continent, and the country gain advance exposure to people and places to be visited—seeing their worlds and hearing their stories. This will serve as a powerful, honest and personal way to build awareness, confidence and appeal for prospective guests in experiencing local communities first-hand.

Importantly, giving travellers the ability to see for themselves how their presence in local communities stimulates supply chains and inspires local pride and cooperation increases the value of these experiences for inclusive economic and societal development. The power of technology to transcend physical, psychological and financial barriers enables local communities to optimize for inclusion within the broader industry and SME opportunity creation.

Sheryl Ozinsky

Co-Founder, Oranjezicht City Farm

"Growing food with purpose. What does that mean? That means it's growing food not for the purpose of eating alone." After a dramatic experience with violence shocked her into asking herself the question, "Who is responsible for taking care of us in our homes?," Sheryl realized that to live safely, both physically and emotionally, neighbourhoods must take care of their people—increasing community contact, connecting more with nature, and bringing economic and social opportunity together through food.

In 2012, the seed of the Oranjezicht City Farm was planted and began to grow. As the farm grew, on a patch of bowling green land in the centre of Cape Town, so did the community and its relationships between farmers and residences, people and nature. The farm soon launched the Oranjezicht weekend market, where local producers also connect with their community. Together, the farm and market have directly or indirectly created more than 200 jobs, injecting over R35 million in spending into the local economy.

Sheryl emphasized in her talk, however, that while she is indeed tempted to look at the numbers, the social benefits of the project have been immeasurable, between the power and impact of local communities connecting with one another and taking ownership of their safer, more secure, shared future.

For more information about the farm and market: ozcf.co.za

Theme two:

Taking ownership

A number of practical aspects of tourism opportunity realisation were voiced by both speakers and participants alike throughout the Summit. Interestingly, while each of the individual points raised was deemed critical to establishing truly inclusive tourism in and for Africa, there was also clear awareness that they need to work in concert, supporting one another to ensure that a sustainable tourism ecosystem can be built—socially, culturally and economically.

Most importantly, participants felt strongly that Africa must stop waiting for the world to cultivate tourism here. Leaving it to others to propose ideas for new ways to see and sell Africa is no longer acceptable. Africa must take ownership of the future of tourism in Africa.

What does "taking ownership" mean? The room determined that the meaning lies in critical connections, connections extending beyond just technological and even people-to-people connections to mean all aspects of tourism's potential. Taking ownership includes:

- Generating the opportunities for growth: Considering the places and people around us with fresh eyes to identify new, exciting and inviting ways of showcasing a destination, especially through partnering with local entrepreneurs (such as the Change-makers profiled during the Summit) to deepen the impact of innovation.

- Collaborating through technology to turn ideas into scalable innovation: Using technology to break through barriers of geography, finance and lack of knowledge, putting it to work to help new ideas and innovators gain traction.

- Supporting supply chains and unlocking experience: Using tourism products and services as a way to generate activity throughout the wider experience delivery chain, helping local communities establish supply chain ecosystems.

- Addressing barriers to traveller connectivity including transport, policies and investment: Championing the case for linkages in tourism at higher levels to ensure that travellers are not prevented from travelling as a result of visa restrictions, lack of transport (whether flights, road systems or otherwise), funding for infrastructure, or other obstacles that impede the movement of visitors around the continent.

- Seeing fellow African countries as collaborators, not as competitors: Embracing a cooperative approach to tourism development, looking to one's neighbours as partners in building out tourism opportunities.

- And critically, owning the African narrative through storytelling and in the media: Defining and magnifying the positive, hopeful, accurate and inspiring image of Africa.

Stronger connections must be made for tourism to develop in an inclusive way. This includes the obvious approaches of connecting transport (airlines, airports, roads, rail, etc.) and accessibility (visas, open skies). It also includes connecting domestic tourists to destinations along with regional and international tourists, bridging between urban and rural offerings, bridging between high and low seasons, connecting tourism hosts (individuals, SMEs and communities) with the skills they need to establish their digital presence and use basic technologies effectively, and

tying the history and culture of a destination to the vision for its tourism future.

Critically, attendees agreed, destinations must stop seeing themselves as competing with one another. When they collaborate, whether within or across nations, they can create more sustainable, compelling and financially viable destination offerings for regional and international travellers.

The narrative of Africa as a monolithic destination is reinforced when African tourism refers to itself without acknowledging, much less celebrating its diverse communities and cultures. The media are not the enemy—they amplify what they are told. The media are a critical means of educating people about a place, so working with them to establish and evolve the story of the continent, with its spread of cultures, will help build the reach for the lesser known positives as well as de-emphasize the spread of the negatives. This narrative ownership must occur not only on the travel pages but on the business pages.

"Do you travel to disrupt your view of the world or to confirm it?"

– Velani Mboweni

Innocent Mukheli

Founder, I See A Different You

In 2011, the story of Innocent's neighbourhood of Soweto was one of danger, poverty and hopelessness. But Innocent knew that "our Soweto" was a place of talent, happiness and joy. Through the lens of his camera, and with his iconoclastic eye, Innocent began to take photographs of his home—his people, his place, the unique style and spirit of his community— showcasing a new view of Soweto, helping people see beyond a stereotype.

Excited to start using his camera to create images that enable people to see a different Africa, Innocent ventured beyond Soweto further across the continent. In his travels, he and his business partner realized this: "Us travelling there made us see ourselves differently as well. People had a perception of where we were from. Perception is bigger than what we think—it's not just Soweto, it's the whole of Africa. We need to start telling our own stories, we need to start sharing our lives."

Today, as a creative agency lead with a successful portfolio and following in the fashion industry, Innocent has become a trusted, authentic eye from and of Africa, finding and showing beauty in a way that inspires others to also look at the world differently. As Innocent believes, "There is negative and positive in everything. We choose to see the positive out of everything."

With the power of technology especially social media putting the world literally at our fingertips, Innocent believes that the people of Africa have a responsibility to spread the word, the images and the spirit of Africa in a way that takes ownership of how the world sees Africa, and how Africa sees itself. Committed to this responsibility, Innocent has established a movement that makes a conscious choice to positively project the world around him, influencing millions through his images that they now project through their businesses and brands, both local and global

For more information:
iseeadifferentyou.tumblr.com

Theme three:

Making the business case

Summit discussions also included a great deal of recognition of poor case-making, particularly in making the case for tourism's economic and social value for local communities. Participants felt that this gets further amplified by a narrative of Africa as a monolithic destination rather than one that celebrates the richness and diversity of its countries and communities.

The importance of the tourism industry to African economies, and particularly its "healthy" potential for inclusiveness, is easily eclipsed by generic views of the industry as one focused on providing its customers with fun, fanciful escapes. Challenging as it may be, an unemotional business case must be made if decision-makers outside of the tourism sector are to be convinced of the wider economic, social and environmental value of tourism in their spheres of influence and impact.

This case for tourism must, attendees agreed, be led by local and global representatives of the industry itself, in person to policymakers and in the media they consume. So often, however, the media are expected to do this, and are blamed when it does not occur. The media are not the obstacle—they simply amplify what they are told.

The media are a critical means of educating people about a place, so working with them to establish and evolve the story of the continent and its nations will help build the reach for the lesser known positives as well as lessen the spread of the negatives. This narrative ownership must occur not only on the travel pages but on the business pages. As was made clear by Rosette Rugamba, former Director General of Rwanda Tourism and current member of Airbnb's Tourism Advisory Board:

"Let's communicate. Let's have statistics. If you are not telling the Minister of Finance the GDP contribution of tourism, then he's not going to put money on the table. So we must communicate the right way to the right audiences and giving facts. I'd [also] like to see tourism moving away from the leisure pages... Can we move tourism to the business page? I think if we do, then government will spend. But if we continue to keep tourism on the leisure page, then that is where we are going stay. It is where people who have extra money actually go to spend it, but not really telling it to a key economic drive, a poverty reduction strategy. We are not communicating right."

This is another area in which technology can be utilised—to support and spread positive, data-driven, timely, multidimensional, case-making around the tourism story of Africa as a rich mosaic of nations and communities all benefiting from tourism.

Change-Maker Profile:

Abigail Mbalo

Founder, 4 Roomed eKasi

As a South Africa Masterchef Top 12 finalist facing the intense quest to become #1, Abigail, a dental technologist by training, needed a greater purpose than simply winning. "My purpose in the competition was that—I need to move back to township. I'd been out of the township space for almost 20 years. I'd use this to create something unique around food, hope to stimulate the economy of the township space."

South African township cuisine became her culinary identity and her competitive edge. While South Africa Masterchef was airing in 2014, she and her family put her talents on the road, travelling with a food truck back to the townships, giving people there a genuine taste of what their own cuisine can be. In 2016, she and her family moved back to the township permanently, creating an "eKasi culture" community of young people proud of their food and wanting to tap into her vision and energy to turn their love of food as a basis for shaping their own futures.

In 2018, the Township & Rural Tourism Drive was created, uniting different township tour operators with their experiences, enabling tourism operators to directly enjoy local cultural and dining experiences, giving exposure to the diversity and richness of township products. The end goal: getting the travel industry to appreciate and offer bookings of township tourism products for their customers, creating a proud, sustainable, and authentic township tourism ecosystem.

As the concept grew, eKasi culture spread to Southern Africa's largest travel trade fair, as well as to Switzerland, strengthening a full circle of not only township tourism products and providers, but new sources of funding to support young, aspiring eKasi culture hopefuls.

Through eKasi culture's efforts, township tourism activity and value has moved from local kitchens and dining tables, to homes where travellers can stay in the townships with local families, reinforcing that when welcoming people into your home, their heads and hearts find ways to unlock unity and powerful opportunities.

For more information:
4roomedekasiculture.com

Theme four:
Foundation first

Speaking of technology and innovation tends to bring to mind new apps and devices. But Summit discussions made it clear that well before we consider the potential role of apps and devices, we need to lay a solid foundation of the basics—basic technologies and the skills to use them—across the continent before we can start scaling the tourism economy for maximum local impact. These basics include:

- Data access

- Smartphones

- And importantly, the skills to use devices to their full benefit

After identifying these basics, Summit participants deemed skills development as key to unlocking the reach and richness of the benefits of tech for Africa. This was determined to be particularly important in the context of mobile banking and its potential to unlock SME business activity. As stated by Mastercard's Gabriel Swanepoel:

"We are very much focused on establishing infrastructure from an emerging economies perspective to facilitate payment, and from a payment point of view, what Mastercard tries to do is try to solve particular pain points for consumers in making the process of payment easier. But none of that really matters if we can't solve issues around acceptance development—the ability to enable electronic payment at the point of transaction, whether that is online, through an app, or sticking a plastic card into a point of payment device."

As a result, where investment in tech is concerned, participants espoused an overarching belief that government and private stakeholders must invest to ensure cross-continental access to digital opportunity creation and activation. Without continent-wide investment, the push for tourism sector development for the benefit of all would only reach a few.

The room agreed that however digital commerce may evolve, including the adoption of cryptocurrencies and the concerns around cybersecurity, essential infrastructure must be put in place in order for Africa to be able to democratise the power of tourism to lift up communities. Importantly, with the hardware—network infrastructure, access to devices, and data—must come the "software:" ongoing training for operators. Ghana offers a perfect example of the need to ensure that software is not neglected: as a nation with 119-percent mobile penetration (through ownership of multiple devices), its challenge is not connectivity but usability.

Connectivity and user capability will provide a strong foundation for a technology-powered future for tourism. Again, the ability of technology to transcend boundaries of time, geography, finances and learning makes it an invaluable tool for ongoing, easily accessible e-learning around critical aspects of skills access and entrepreneurship.

"Community-based tourism is creating opportunity that impacts everyone in the value chain!"

Mark Mwongela, Pesapal

"Celebrating the riches of communities (wealth of culture, stories, warmth, connectedness, time for each other), NOT pity poverty in money terms."

Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism

Airbnb Africa Academy 2019

Airbnb's **Africa Academy** is a programme designed to give hosts in under-resourced communities the **tools and skills** to participate on the Airbnb platform. Along with the Africa Travel Summit, the Academy was an **important element** included within our 2017 USD$1 million investment commitment for the African continent to **help empower locals** and **lift communities** through travel.

Airbnb Africa Academy 2019

Airbnb's vision for the Academy is to build it into a world-class accelerator providing thriving entrepreneurs with the tools and skills they need to participate on the Airbnb platform. The Summit convened representatives of 15 grassroots and development organisations across five African countries, as well as the World Bank, to discuss and debate how best to scale the Academy in Africa.

Key Learnings:

Focus on scaling efforts in communities that already have high tourism potential.

Input from the Innovators' Programme, a network of nonprofit groups we convened at the Summit to provide input into Academy design, recommended that the Academy is likely to be more successful if it focuses first on communities with high tourism potential and includes clear criteria for participation.

Leverage opportunities to build demand.

One of the biggest challenges faced by the community-based tourism sector is how to build and grow demand for experiences and to give hosts the opportunity of generating sufficient interest and bookings. Working with partners to jointly build demand—such as through university exchange programmes, with established tour operators looking to diversify their offerings, or with local tourism offices to promote specific communities—will be key to the success of this programme.

Expand partnerships.

In addition to identifying partners who can help build demand, in order to scale the Academy, Airbnb will seek partners who can contribute to the programming as well as provide support for hosts, particularly among strong grassroots organisations in South Africa and Kenya that have a vested interest in community success.

In 2019, with these and other learnings from the Africa Travel Summit, Airbnb will work to implement and scale the Africa Academy with partners in Kenya and South Africa. Based on our partner learnings, we will then aim to refine, formalise and ultimately expand the Academy programme through the establishment of a new online presence that makes resources easily accessible to others.

"Touch. Feel. Experience. Be one with the people and culture of this continent."

Tshepo Ntshole, Botswana Unplugged TV

"Understanding the real meaning of hospitality, Ubuntu—I am because you are—embodies that"

Ntsiki Nconjana, Host on Airbnb

Big Ideas Wall

As the Africa Travel Summit brought together close to 200 leaders, influencers and innovators from across the continent to discuss the power of technology to help unlock the potential of tourism in Africa, for Africans, our hope (and hunch) was that incredible ideas would emerge. And, that these sparks of ideas would have the potential to ignite great flames of possibility.

For this reason, the Summit's Big Ideas Wall was created, making it possible for each and every participant to freely share thoughts and ideas inspired throughout the course of the event. Ultimately, nearly 100 inspiring comments decorated the Wall by the Summit's close, prompted by discussions linked to the Summit's areas of focus: healthy tourism, use of technology to enable inclusive travel, and ideas for the future of tourism In Africa. The comments reflected the diverse experiences of Summit participants and how their participation may have shaped their perspective on technology-enabled travel in Africa.

But activity at the Big Ideas Wall did not stop there. Participants also used it to express support and supplemental thoughts for other posted ideas, injecting even greater energy into the thinking on display. The collection of provocative ideas were themed around how, together as a community of travel leaders and travel lovers, the future of tourism in Africa must be tackled proactively to ensure that the industry best serves people and places across the continent, with the support of technology.

"We want to use this unsung hero of Airbnb to shine the light on tourism in Africa"

– Sisa Ntshona, CEO, South African Tourism

The three most commented-upon themes were:

We must value our tourism.

One of the most inspiring aspects of the Big Ideas Wall was the number of commenters who spoke loudly to the need for Africans themselves to see the beauty, value and opportunity of the continent's tourism offering—hospitality the African way. Taking a passive, "Big Five" (the safari quest of seeing: lion, leopard, rhinoceros, elephant, and Cape buffalo) approach to Africa's tourism proposition creates not only limited, lazy tourism, but also prevents innovation in tourism products and experiences that shine a spotlight on:

- African cultures, past and present
- Urban and rural Africa

- Africa and its individual countries
- Global connections across generations and geographies (i.e., diaspora)
- Domestic tourism

Central to all of this is Africans owning and shaping a positive narrative of the continent and its nations and communities, rather than allowing stereotypes or sensational media to define Africa's value and voice for prospective guests.

Uplifting for all.

Another strong theme was the need to take a proactive partner approach to unleashing the potential for the continent through technology-enabled opportunity creation. Within this:

- Consciously developing tourism offerings that involve community participation and activate economic and social ecosystems
- Investing in skills development, especially as a means of empowering youth

- Using technology to create routes to market
- Building awareness and opportunities for community-based, eco-friendly travel
- Valuing and promoting local innovation

Unlocking connections.

As importantly, the future of inclusive, empowering tourism in Africa is seen as dependent upon African countries making connections that are essential to the freedom of movement of travellers—physically, commercially and psychologically. Connections that were deemed to be the most vital for travel growth and development:

- Destination access: visas, air routes
- Technology: networks, data, commerce
- Opportunity: ownership, funding, skills transfer, information

Conclusion

The 200 participants gathered in Langa formed the core of a new continental tourism community committed to identifying and cultivating ways to ensure that African tourism reaches its incredible potential, and lifts African people and their communities in doing so. With a solid, continent-wide foundation of basic technological skills and infrastructure, technology can accelerate the creation of opportunity through tourism that is local, authentic, sustainable, geographically diverse and demographically inclusive.

Airbnb's Office of Healthy Tourism, as presenter of the Summit, will incorporate and apply these learnings, including learnings from the success of the Summit's design itself, into future initiatives in its mission to ensure that as tourism becomes an increasingly important pillar of local economies, communities and their residents remain the primary beneficiaries.

The Summit also was a tourism masterclass for all involved—a chance for innovators, influencers, intellects and officials to connect and engage, directly and dynamically, with like-minded tourism industry enthusiasts across the industry. We invite the broader industry to consider this report, join us going forward in applying what was learned, and keep the conversation going at #africatravelsummit.