

# Let's start creating digital stories about South Africa

By [Molefi Mleketsi](#)

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South Africa needs to start creating inspirational digital stories to inspire both local and international travellers to explore everything our beautiful country has to offer, once borders re-open and travel bans are lifted.



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The global Covid-19 pandemic has had a devastating impact on many industries. Few industries, however, have been as profoundly impacted as the tourism and travel sector. Borders have been closed, flights have been grounded, and despite the global calls to 'postpone, not cancel', many tourism players have seen their bookings drop to zero overnight.

However, there is an opportunity for tourism SMMEs to bring their tourism product to life by embracing technology. The tourism playing ground has fundamentally shifted, and technology-enabled solutions have become the main focus for anyone who wants to stay connected with their clients – in their own country and across the world.

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For SMMEs, the shift towards technology represents an opportunity to tap into tools and activities previously only available to larger enterprises. Effective customer relationship management tools are just one example of expertise that was only available to large corporations with impressive budgets at their fingertips. Thanks to the fact that the majority of people – even in rural areas – now have smartphones and are connected to the Internet, this expertise has become accessible to even the smallest players.

The key to success in this fourth industrial revolution era is no longer about access to technology, but rather about how well tourism SMMEs understand their business and what message they want to share with their clients. Once this has been identified, technology can bring this message to clients across the world.

Technologies that are currently available are often free, or at a very low cost, and can significantly enhance the way

tourism enterprises do business.

## **Use artificial intelligence to create cyber-physical experiences**

Tourism players can use augmented reality and virtual reality to showcase their property, B&B or experience in real-life. Google offers a 360-degree view that anyone can use: so, showcase your rooms, the facilities you offer, and anything you want your customer to see. Keep in mind, however, that what you showcase virtually, needs to correspond to the reality. There's nothing worse than creating false impressions for travellers.

## **Leverage hyper-connectivity**

We've seen the evolution from 2G to 3G to 4G – and now the government is even talking about 5G. Once implemented, 5G will revolutionise the travel technology landscape, as 5G networks will enable large amounts of data to travel at high speeds with delays imperceptible to humans.

As we've witnessed during the lockdown, humans have a fundamental need for connectivity and relationships. This means there's a massive opportunity for technology companies to help people connect in meaningful ways, both with each other and with other organisations. The opportunity to use this connectivity to help others enhances its value yet further and makes humans happier as a result.

## **Automation of cognitive work**

Start using advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to automate processes in your business. Find out what your customers require and make use of the technology at your disposal to answer your customers' needs.

Tell your digital story to the world with the use of multimedia solutions

With everyone now able to take high-definition videos on their mobile phones, it has become more straightforward than ever to share digital stories on a multitude of platforms, including YouTube, Instagram and Facebook. Also, a platform like Jurni can feature your hospitality stories.

As a product owner, you need to make sure, however, that you narrate the story you want people to hear about your attraction or establishment. In other words, you are the author of your story – and your success.

## **Create job opportunities in your community**

Eventually, after the Covid-19 crisis is over, technology can continue to create exciting job opportunities for the community. Is there someone in the village who is good at taking photographs or making videos? Make use of your local resources and grow your community together.

At Jurni, we are passionate about helping SMMEs develop to reach their full potential. We want to make sure every SMME has access to the technologies that will propel them into the future – and that will help them thrive for years to come.

The first step is for SMMEs to analyse what their business offering encompasses. Once you have a firm grasp on what your business is about and what sets you apart, it becomes easier to translate this into a digital story. The beauty of a digital story is that you are no longer limited to your geographical area, you can publish your story to the world.

Although international travel will remain subdued for the foreseeable future, as countries ease their lockdowns in phased stages, domestic tourism is expected to return first. So, let's provide our local travellers with beautiful digital stories about their own country. Let's ignite their passion for exploring South Africa and encourage them to tell the story of what our beautiful country has to offer to the rest of the world.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Chief Technology Officer at Jurni, Molefi Mmeketsi is committed to driving digital transformation for the travel and tourism industry in South Africa.

He has a demonstrated experience in enterprise architecture, data, application, technology, security and integration architecture domains, data and analytics, software engineering amongst others, in multiple industries (telecoms, banking, insurance, oil and gas) both locally and internationally.

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