

Positioning Africa globally, promoting Africa internally

By [Danette Breitenbach](#)

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In less than 15 years it is hoped tourist figures will rise from 56 million to 136 million in Africa. However, Ambassador Abba Omar, Mapungubwe Institute for Strategic Reflection believes the continent can do better.



Image courtesy of INDABA via [Reg Caldecott](#)

He was addressing delegates, including the South African Minister of Tourism, Derek Hanekom and Deputy Minister of Tourism, Tokozile Xasa as well as a number of ministers and delegates from African countries at the Ministerial Session, held at Moyo Restaurant, uShaka Marine World on the eve of the Tourism Indaba in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal.

We must make Africa work

The event examined how Africa could realise its tourism potential, and also hosted presentations from Dr Christopher Rodrigues, Chairperson Visit Britain and Thebe Ikalafeng, Thebe Ikalafeng, founder and Chairman, Brand Leadership Group.

“We must make Africa work and to do this we have to break out of the box of low growth over a long period. We must ask ourselves are we doing enough? So we need to look at positioning our continent globally and the tourism ministers need to work together to achieve this,” he says.

Promote Africa to Africans

The other part of the strategy is to promote Africa internally. Intra-Africa trade is at 11%, which is very low when you compare it to Intra-Asia trade at 50% and Intra-Europe trade at 70%. “African governments need to be convinced of the high Return on Investment (ROI) that intra-tourism can provide. Tourism specific taxes and tariffs need to be removed and closer cooperation with the private sector encouraged. There needs to be investment around tourism to promote Africa to Africans, especially the rising middle class.”

Currently, Africa has six visitors per 100 people he says while the world average is 22 visitors per 100 people. “I suggest we aim for at least the world average. While this is a stretch, let’s find out how we can accomplish it.” By the same token, while Africa takes in five percent of worldwide arrivals, it only has a three percent share in tourism receipts. “Again I suggest we stretch ourselves and set our goal as five percent, instead of three.”

Tourism matters

Tourism matters, says Dr Rodrigues. “Every 40 visitors equal one job which equates to 25,000 jobs if you have one million visitors. But it is not always that simple.”

Government sees tourism differently to how we do he explains. “Government talks about jobs, tax and foreign exchange revenues and regeneration while we talk about bottoms in seats and heads in bed. We need to talk the language of the government.” It is also about cooperation. “Firstly with government, and then between government and the private sector. This is followed by the need to collaborate internationally,” he says.

Building a compelling brand

“Countries are about perceptions. We are in the business to encourage others to travel to our continent. So how do we build the nation brand? A brand is not a logo it is only an entry point to the country. A nation is a brand because it fights for a share of the wallet. How do we that?” asks Ikalafeng, founder and chairman, Brand Leadership Group.

Firstly with clarity. Be clear in what you stand for. What is your competitive advantage? Find that one unique thing to compete on and do it well. Second is creativity. “This is not about beautiful words and images but focusing your brand on what people believe. It must be compelling. Common identity and national pride is nation building and national branding campaigns provide a country with this,” he says.

Third is cohesive, which is about working with other players. Last but not least, he adds, is leadership and this is key in building this brand.

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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