

Airbnb's authentic experiences boost local communities through technology

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

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The City of Cape Town and Airbnb recently signed a collaboration agreement to promote the benefits of people-to-people tourism for Cape Town residents and their communities.

Chris Lehane, head of global policy and public affairs for Airbnb took part in a conversation with Cape Innovation and Technology Initiative's (CiTi) chairperson, Joshin Raghurbar at the Bandwidth Barn in Khayelitsha, which included discussing how, through technology, tourism can generate new economic opportunities and authentic experiences, as well as how technology can support inclusive tourism.



Airbnb's Chris Lehane and CiTi's Joshin Raghurbar

Facilitator for the conversation, CiTi's Michelle Matthews welcomed guests, including Bandwidth Barn Khayelitsha's business developer, Fezeka Marusa and Airbnb's Velma Corcoran who also took to the stage. Local tourism entrepreneurs, Ayand Cuba, [ABCD Concepts](#), Wandisile Ngeketh, [18 Gangster Museum](#) and Xolisa Bangani, [Khayelitsha Indigenous Garden](#) also took to the stage to speak to guests about what they're doing as entrepreneurs in the Khayelitsha township and how they go about making guests feel welcome during their visits.

Bangani recited a poem about trees, which highlighted the importance of caring and nurturing plants, and life. This poem is regularly taught to visitors making their way to the indigenous garden in the township. Lehane opened the conversation with memories of when he had first made his way to South Africa and, especially to that of Cape Town, sharing his first impressions of the City and how the people, make it what it is. At the heart of what Airbnb stands for, as Lehane puts it, is an authentic experience.

“ Airbnb is about Ubuntu – bringing people together, from different backgrounds, to share experiences. As a traveller, you should always be able to take something from your experience, and also, leave something behind. ”

“ With [#AirbnbExperiences](#), you can live like a local wherever you go. ”

Describe your dream trip in three emojis. pic.twitter.com/FrJcoaSNTS— Airbnb (@Airbnb) [October 19, 2017](#) ”

Something that Lehane noted was that travelling has to centre around passion, food and engaging your visitors, that we need to ask ourselves how it is that we can become more authentic, and also use technology to make our vision all that clearer. Millennials, today, have become the sort of travellers who are looking for an authentic experience, an authentic version of, in this case, South Africa – they want to see art, music, and delve into the history of their destination. It's no longer a question of just selling your product, without it being real and tangible.

Technology and local communities

By giving local entrepreneurs a marketplace to be themselves, showcase their ideas, dreams and expose the real Khayelitsha and its people, Airbnb has expanded growth in townships and has expanded the South African experience, and by making use of technology, Airbnb is making it possible for anyone to travel – and as Lehane pointed out, everyone should be able to go anywhere – they'd like to have people travel all over the world and make use of the experiences that the world has to offer.

By transforming the way in which we view travel, an enormous potential to drive healthy tourism is created. Today's travellers are looking for unique experiences and Airbnb, through market investments, are creating those experiences, not only for the moment but for a lifetime.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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