

The role of online travel in unlocking Africa's tourism potential

The services sector, tourism, in particular, is one of the major contributors to Africa's economy through such functions as providing foreign exchange and employment. It is, therefore, crucial that governments and the private sector are increasingly working together to grow the sector which accounts for approximately 7.8% of the Africa GDP.

 By [Josephine Wawira](#) 30 Aug 2017



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"We believe that business opportunities and investment potential within Africa's tourism sector are significant. It's a vast market that holds promise for businesses looking for new markets," said President and CEO of Corporate Council on Africa, Florizelle Liser, while addressing the ongoing [41st Annual World Tourism Conference](#) in Kigali, Rwanda on Tuesday.

Growth of intra-African tourism

Sharing the same platform, UNCTAD's Secretary General Mukhisa Kituyi said intra-African tourism - due to its non-seasonality and characterised by conference, medical, education, and business tourism - is growing fast tourism, providing more sustainable support to the hotel industry. "Over the past 10 years, intra-African tourism grew from 34% to 44% of the total number of tourists in Africa, with a projected growth of 50% over the next 10 years," said Kituyi.

The role of online travel

In this light and in today's globally digital world, tourism related businesses are striving to position themselves on the online map. The travel sector is one that has, over the years, evolved in its online presence, notably from the mid-1990's. Today, most travelers for both business and leisure plan their trips, book their hotel stays and flights online.

In a report published earlier this year by Jumia Travel, highlighting Kenya's hospitality trends, 96% of primary travel searches in the country are done online. 44% of them are made less than a week before check-in, while 25% of the customers search and book a hotel room online the same day. Globally, the number of bookings made on the internet stood at 148.3 million while the percentage of same day hotel reservations via smartphone stood at 65%.

Also speaking at the three-day Kigali conference - under the theme *Unlocking Africa's Potential Through Tourism* - Jumia Travel's Country Manager Cyrus Onyiego, noted that "the convenience brought about by the availability and accessibility of services online at the travellers' comfort, has been a key contributor to this evolution that has made a vivid impression on the travel industry."

By enhancing travellers' options, online travel is changing tourism trends in the region. Thus, adopting unique and seamless models such as online payments will help relevant players including travel agents, hotels, and even government ministries to give tourism consumers personalised experiences, while maintaining strong margins.

ABOUT JOSEPHINE WAWIRA

Josephine Wawira is a consultant in communication and public relations with over six years of progressive writing and broadcast experience. She is currently a writer for Africa's online hotel booking portal, Jumia Travel, focusing in the areas of travel, tourism, and hospitality as it relates to Africa.
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