Microsoft eTourism Workshop to empower local SMEs

Microsoft is on a steady course to provide the necessary business boost to local SMEs that operate in the South African tourism sector.

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In collaboration with the City of Cape Town and Cape Town Tourism, Microsoft aims to accelerate innovation and create job opportunities for young entrepreneurs and small businesses in the province. This stems from the belief that small businesses are the engines driving local economies, and that tourism is a major driver for the economy within the City of Cape Town, South Africa and the African continent.

Mteto Nyati, managing director at Microsoft South Africa, says, "Through the Microsoft 4Afrika initiative access to technology and skills development pillars, we are providing opportunities for small businesses to acquire 21st Century skills needed to take their businesses online for better profitability. We can only do this through partnerships and programmes such as the recently hosted eTourism Workshop in Cape Town. In turn, this strengthens Africa's economic development to achieve global competitiveness.

"Through another worldwide initiative called CityNext, Microsoft aims to create more business opportunities for small businesses, which also spans the tourism sector. In partnership with the City of Cape Town, one of the worldwide cities identified as part of this initiative, we are looking to support government to deliver on its National Development Plan objective to eliminate poverty and reduce inequality in South Africa by 2030," says Nyati.

"The World Travel Market Global Trends Report 2013 estimates that world online travel growth is expected to continue to rise steadily in the next five years at a 9.5% compound annual growth rate. Tourism-focused SMEs must position themselves to attract, engage and interact with customers. Microsoft South Africa and online training partner, eTourism Frontiers, are working to create platforms to guide and train SMEs to be competitive in this demanding and challenging space," says Enver Duminy, CEO of Cape Town Tourism.

Nyati echoes that for a small business to succeed in the tourism industry today, it needs to have a big presence online. Modern devices and services from Microsoft and its partners can help by enabling organisations create and update their

business' online presence. In addition, these same devices and cloud services allow companies to manage their daily operations more efficiently, communicate with customers better, and collaborate with their suppliers and partners.

"It is encouraging to know global players are recognising that small businesses drive local economies. The eTourism Workshop has armed me with knowledge on the latest tools and free applications to enable us to become a global force by having an online and social media presence. The workshop gave me an opportunity to grow my guest lodge and help us market our country and city as a tourist destination of choice," says Angie Polizzi, owner of The Renaissance Guest Lodge and a Cape Town Tourism member.

"During the eTourism Workshop we have equipped just under 200 small businesses in the tourism industry with the tools to take their businesses online and training to use technology for better business outcomes. These businesses are now empowered to use eTourism (internet, e-commerce and social media) to promote and run a tourism operation, using web and social analytics to track, as well as analyse user data, plus how to use location-based services, check-ins and popular applications to enable effective mobile marketing," says Damian Cook, founder and managing director of eTourism Frontiers.

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