

# Trends developing in Africa travel

By [Kerry Hayes](#)

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Tourism is an organic industry, growing and changing as the needs and wants of travellers shift, and service providers adapt their offerings to meet these requirements.



Slava Bowman via [Unsplash](#)

"What Wetu sees unfolding in tourism in Africa is a greater cohesion within the travel trade as operators, destination marketing companies (DMCs), travel agents and hospitality/activity suppliers and other tourism service providers collaborate more proactively," says Tiaan Theron, Digital Marketing Manager of Wetu.

"From joint destination marketing to simply supporting each other with content and secondary promotion, we see stakeholders embracing the digital trend to be present at all stages of the travel buyer journey to the benefit of the traveller as well as the travel professional selling tourism products."

## Content is king

Travellers will no longer accept what is just 'handed' to them, says Theron. "They hold the power of the travel purchase and are exercising it increasingly with the click of their mouse. Content is king and distribution wears the pants," he continues. "This speaks to the persuasive power of beautiful, emotive, visually-rich content that inspires travel, and the vast, global exposure that digital distribution tools guarantee. The trade are learning that their market can be as large as wherever they feature their content, in as many global languages they can."



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He suggests that tourism service providers supply the kind of content that engages prospective clients, which leads to the sales funnel standing to benefit from initial interest stage down to travel stage. "It's about servicing a need and saving travellers the time and energy it has traditionally taken them to source good travel info that helps make informed decisions and feel reassured that they're being taken care of."

## Awareness and access

Gavin Rennie, Director of Off 2 Africa, says that one of the trends he has noticed is the shift in many African camps and lodges towards an eco-friendly approach to the building of camps and their upkeep in the most environmentally-friendly manner. "This might be due to the volume of wildlife around many areas," suggests Rennie, "and so ensuring they are doing what they can to preserve the land/environment in its most natural state is of huge importance".

Rennie continues that suppliers are working towards making transportation to and from hard-to-reach locations as easy as possible by providing air charters to the camps. "Some camps are forced to close down in the rainy season due to the soil type and high risk of vehicles (4x4s included) getting bogged down," he adds.

## Developments to attract top source markets

In Zimbabwe, Rennie says that he is seeing a number of trends developing that are 'speaking' to top tourism source markets.

### These include the following:

- Self-drive tourism around Zimbabwe is gaining popularity again. It allows the adventurous traveller a more affordable way to explore the off-the-beaten-track properties and experiences around Zimbabwe. The good condition of roads is allowing travellers to reach more destinations, and immerse themselves in local culture.
- The Kaza Unvisa, is enabling tourists to travel freely between Zimbabwe and Zambia for 30 days. It also includes day trips to Botswana through Kazungula Borders, and comes at a cost of \$50.
- The new airport in Victoria Falls has made travel easy for those travelling from abroad and has become one of the main airport hubs in southern Africa for tourists. With a modern look and great services, the airport is comfortable, and the use of it is increasing.
- 500 animals journey from the Kruger National Park (KNP) to Zinave, in Mozambique, in an effort to form a new conservation management plan for KNP that looks beyond their borders. Glenn Philips, Managing Executive of KNP, says: "If we can share our surplus wildlife with our neighbours, and in so doing eventually share our 1.9 million annual visitors into Mozambique, it will not only benefit the people of Mozambique, but contribute to a balanced and sustainable ecotourism system for the whole region."



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## Snapshot of emerging trends

- **Digital assistants** are feeding into travellers' need for immediacy, a seamless experience and personalised content and service. Artificial intelligence (AI) can answer queries, assist with information and bookings, in a fast and efficient way with almost-immediate results.
- **AI in hotels.** From mobile access keys to tokenised payments (seamless automation of payments using an online payment gateway); and instant messaging which helps customers book by communicating with them and answering their queries via live chat is growing.
- **Voice recognition** is poised to change the travel industry. Digital assistants are providing weather and traffic information, entertainment content, and enabling travellers to search hotels, check the status of flights, etc. through a voice-activated query. It is estimated that by 2021 there will be 7.5 billion digital assistants in the world.



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- **Travellers are seeking experiences** over 'things', so tourism service providers should be looking at ways to enhance the full traveller experience.
- **Convenience is king**, and packaging all elements of a journey into one seamless booking and offering experience is becoming vital. Package demand on Expedia, for example, generated nearly 1.4 times longer booking window when compared to standalone hotel bookings.
- **Consumer awareness of the environment**, as well as a desire for convenience, is impacting the way tourists travel. e-tickets, mobile check-ins, online reservations and bookings save time and streamline travel – as well as do away with the need to print and carry documents. And a single smart device can carry all the necessary documentation in digital format.

## ABOUT KERRY HAYES

Kerry Hayes is a senior account manager at Irvine Partners. She used to be the Editor of Tourism Update, a tourism news publication reporting on tourism-related news across southern and East Africa. She has worked in the publishing industry for over a decade, with editorial experience in the décor and design, food and wine, motoring, marketing and social media, and travel and tourism industries. Hayes holds an Honours degree in Marketing Communications.

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