

5 tips on how tourism SMMEs can survive lockdown

With no airlines flying into or out of South Africa and no tourists to participate in experiences, tourism SMMEs are finding themselves in a difficult situation. Is it even possible for tourism SMMEs to remain productive during lockdown? "The main thing to remember during this difficult time is that you are not alone. Now is the time to pull together as an industry," says Dr Nomvuselelo Songelwa, Jurni CEO.



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"As SA Tourism says in their moving video clip: Yes, there is fear. Yes, there is panic. But, do not be alarmed. We will meet again. We will do the things that matter with the people we love again. We will go back to our favourite spots, and we'll even discover new ones. We will travel again."

So, how can you ride out the storm, and come out stronger on the other side? Dr Songelwa shares five tips on how tourism SMMEs can remain relevant during this period of lockdown:

1. Reach out to your tourism family

It is said that one in ten people globally works in travel and tourism. That makes this industry the biggest family in the world.

Reach out to colleagues by joining industry associations like NAA-SA, SATSA, FEDHASA, SAVRALA and those associated with the Tourism Business Council of South Africa.

These organisations provide their members with the resources they need to not only respond to traveller questions, but also to weather the storm as a business. To keep its members informed so that they can employ proactive measures and precautions, Satsa is updating its Coronavirus website page continuously with information from official sources.

2. Connect with your travellers

Although travellers from key source markets will not be able to visit South Africa for now, it remains important to connect with potential travellers, remembering that there will be a time that travel will once again flourish.

"I would encourage small, medium and micro enterprises to make sure they're being seen by their audience," says Dr Songelwa. "In this difficult time, it's imperative to increase your brand visibility, making sure it's cleverly targeted, in places and on platforms where your target audience will see you."

Travellers are already on social media, but these days, they are likely checking in much more frequently as they are in lockdown. Try to offer light, positive content to help take people's minds off the panic and give them something to look forward to. Increase your posting frequency to ensure you are showing up in their news feeds.

3. Think out of the box

Just because you're not out and about showcasing our beautiful country to travellers, doesn't mean you should sit back and relax.

As an SMME, you are likely to have an entrepreneurial spirit. Use it to think out of the box and position your company in a new and innovative way.

The pilot of Jurni's booking tool went live in December 2019. Small businesses mustn't lose sight of these types of platforms, which will put them directly in front of customers during the buying stage of their travel planning.

Unlike your business's social media pages, once you've listed your business on a booking platform, you can manage your inventory and prices easily, and you won't need to create fresh content every day to stay top of mind.

4. Enrol the government for financial help

The government has vowed to support small businesses during these difficult times. There are several support measures in place.

The Department of Small Business Development has made over R500m available immediately to assist small and medium enterprises that are in distress. This fund can be accessed through a [simplified process](#).

The Department of Tourism has made R200m available to assist SMMEs in the tourism and hospitality sector who are under particular stress due to the travel restrictions. To be eligible, businesses must meet the specific application qualifying criteria, available on NDT's website.

Meanwhile, President Ramaphosa also announced that tax compliant businesses with a turnover below R50m would be allowed to delay 20% of their pay-as-you-earn liabilities over the next four months, as well as a portion of their provisional corporate income tax payments, without incurring penalties or interest charges over the next six months. Ramaphosa said this intervention is expected to assist over 75,000 small and medium-term enterprises.

5. Keep a routine and stay updated

When working from home, it is very easy to start feeling isolated. In our current age of technology, fortunately, there's no need to feel disconnected from your colleagues or the world.

Keep up the chats with colleagues in a virtual way and check in with friends and colleagues daily. Use video-conferencing and make sure to be reachable and responsive during working hours.

It's important to structure your day, keep up with the news in the tourism sector and manage your productivity. That way, when things return to 'normal', you will be ready.

As we are all navigating uncertain times, remember that this too shall pass. We will come out stronger and ready to once again welcome tourists to our beautiful shores, parks and cities.

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