UNWTO and Google Host First Tourism Acceleration Program in Sub-Saharan Africa

Advancing digitization will be key to adapting to the new tourism environment

The Covid-19 crisis has disproportionately affected tourism, a sector that accounts for millions of jobs around the globe. While no one can say with certainty when tourism will recover, people are starting to dream again of getaways whether closer to home or to remote destinations. As more and more people go online to search where and when they can travel, accelerating the digitalization of the tourism sector will be key to adapting to the new tourism reality.

That is why the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) and Google have partnered to develop an online Acceleration Program for UNWTO Member States’ tourism ministers, top travel associations and tourism boards to further develop innovation and digital transformation skills.

Today, ahead of World Tourism Day, the two organizations hosted the first UNWTO & Google Tourism Acceleration Program focused on insights from South Africa, Kenya and Nigeria. Tourism is the backbone of many economies around the world. As data from UNWTO shows, tourism represents 9% of global trade for Africa and 1 in 10 jobs directly and indirectly. Moreover, the sector drives inclusive growth, as women make 54% of the workforce.

“UNWTO is committed to helping Africa grow back stronger,” says Natalia Bayona, UNWTO Director of Innovation, Digital Transformation and Investments. “With the right policies, training and management in place, innovation and technology have the potential to foster new and better jobs and business opportunities for tourism in Africa while improving the overall wellbeing and prosperity of the region.”

Africa is home to 30% of the world’s population, adding hundreds of millions of new online users every year. Google is a highly trusted partner in Africa to find relevant and reliable information, and Search is one of the places they go when researching and booking travel.

“We’re here to help the tourism sector rise up from this unprecedented crisis and emerge stronger. Our travel data insights and tools can help tourism authorities identify and understand the barriers and drivers to visit travel destinations for better tourism

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planning,” said Doron Avni, Google’s Director of Government Affairs and Public Policy for Emerging Markets.

Below are some of the Sub-Saharan Africa travel data insights shared with participants in today’s session:

South Africa

Google Search data shows some encouraging signs of increased interest in tourism in the region:

GROWING SEARCH INTEREST IN TOURISM SOUTH AFRICA: +29% MOM

Source: Google internal - search trends September 2019 - August 2020

Travel by Province

FASTEST GROWING DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS VS. DEMAND IN S/AFRICA BASED ON SEARCH INTEREST
Kenya

The top three questions users asked Google globally related to travel conducted in July comprised “When can we travel again,” “when will international travel resume,” and “when will it be safe to travel again.” while top questions in August were related to where and when we can travel “right now”. In fact, 45% of the top 100 questions related to travel focused on the impact of COVID-19, the need to travel as soon as possible and travel safety.

Travel Demand by Counties

**FASTEST GROWING DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS VS. DEMAND IN KENIA**

Source: Google internal search trends data 2018 - August 2020
Nigeria

Since Nigeria announced the intention to reopen its borders to international travel on August 29th, search interest for travel has grown.

**INCREASED INTEREST IN DESTINATION ACTIVITIES DURING AND POST COVID-19 LOCKDOWN**

[Graph showing travel demand by state]

Source: Google trends data 2018 - August 2020

**Travel Demand by State**

**FASTEST GROWING DOMESTIC DESTINATIONS VS. DEMAND IN KENIA**

[Graph showing demand vs. demand in Kenya]

Source: Google internal search trends data 2018 - August 2020

This slowdown presents a unique opportunity to rethink tourism, innovate and further develop the digital transformation of the sector so it can build the foundations for future sustainable growth.
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Related Links:

UNWTO & Google Acceleration Programme

Travel Insights for Recovery