

How will the events industry rebalance itself beyond Covid-19?

 By [Nicci Botha](#)

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The meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (Mice) industry was particularly hard hit by the pandemic. The big question is: What will the future of events look like?



Image: CTICC

On the positive side, virtual conferences have a higher attendance, but on the other hand it's very difficult to network on an online platform, Esmaré Steinhöfel, regional director, Africa, International Congress and Convention Association (Icca) told the Africa Travel Week Virtual conference that: "Going forward, we will still see virtual and hybrid events for the next two to three years."

Tamlynne Wilton-Gurney, chief ideas officer, Idna Africa, disagrees. She believes virtual events will be around for a lot longer, and therefore events organisers need to build experiences that will engage attendees. "A zoom call is not getting my emotions going."

She said her company had to think completely out of the box to create real magic in the virtual space.

“ *The events industry has always been in the shallows of technology. Covid has forced us to think differently.* ”

A mix of a live event and online gives people the option of choosing where they feel safe. "Hybrid is the way forward. Not just a zoom meeting," she said.

Venues

"Face-to-face events will come back, but they will never come back in the way it was before," said Taubie Motlhabane, chief executive officer of the Cape Town International Convention Centre (CTICC).

With technology, people don't have to physically be there. The good thing about virtual events is that it gives people who don't have the resources to pay for travel and accommodation more accessibility to knowledge sharing, she said.

“ But what to do with the monstrosities we've built? What can we do with venues to make the same money. ”

For instance, during South Africa's first wave, the CTICC was repurposed as the Hospital of Hope, the country's first large-scale field hospital.

“You aren't going to get people back to venues unless they feel safe,” said Wilton-Gurney.

She suggested a three-tier model which includes a live, indoor event, and the choice of an ancillary outdoor venue with livestreaming at a discounted rate and an even cheaper online option.

Mothabane said that venues must “find the sweet spot of running an amazing live event, and an amazing online experience, which is still sustainable”.

ABOUT NICCI BOTHA

Nicci Botha has been wordsmithing for more than 20 years, covering just about every subject under the sun and then some. She's strung together words on sustainable development, maritime matters, mining, marketing, medical, lifestyle... and that elixir of life - chocolate. Nicci has worked for local and international media houses including Primedia, Caxton, Lloyd's and Reuters. Her new passion is digital media.

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