



# Blog-focused conference sessions successful

The inaugural World Travel Market (WTM) Africa, which ran from 2-3 May 2014 at the CTICC, joined forces with director of Travel Bloggers Unite, Oliver Gradwell to share key insights at two special blog-focused conference sessions.

The traditional travel decision-making process of awareness to interest, interest to desire and desire to action has morphed in the social media world. Travel decision-making is now influenced by reach, engagement, activation and nurturing.



According to social media specialists, the story of a destination has become the unique selling point in selecting a travel or holiday destination and, through telling this story, destinations can create interesting information potential travellers and tourists will actually pay attention to, helping them stand out from the crowd.

## Successful Cape Town blog example

Speaking at WTM Africa, founder of Destinate, Mariette du Toit-Helmbold says, "Destination marketing organisations need to entrust their citizens and visitors to share the 'authentic' story of a destination. Travellers have a deep need to connect emotionally with a destination and they want to get into the flesh and blood of a destination.

"Travel bloggers, travellers and citizens share a trustworthy message about a destination. Press junkets look like a junket. Travel bloggers should simply be pointed in the right direction to find their own stories. These stories must be more than pretty pictures. People can smell fake miles away."

She highlighted how Cape Town had successfully used travel bloggers, travellers and citizens to elevate the destination's status through its #LoveCapeTown campaign that generated over 37 million impressions, reached 1.2 million people and generated a return on investment of 21:1.

The marketing campaign, which was launched in 2011, generated unprecedented engagement of a destination's locals that it was cited as one of the most impressive blog trip campaigns ever run.

"The engagement of locals in the campaign led to Cape Town's authentic story being revealed. In addition, this type of content helps to change people's perceptions about a destination. Destination marketers need to work on their stories, be personal and engage. Be brave enough to let your personality shine through," she concluded.

## Blogger Passport initiative

In addition to the dedicated blogger education sessions, bloggers and exhibitors were also given the opportunity to take part in an exciting 'Blogger Passport' initiative. This enabled bloggers and exhibitors to engage with one another and proved to be extremely popular.

"We were extremely pleased with the blogger programme at WTM Africa," comments WTM Africa marketing manager, Kate Shepherd. "The education sessions provided valuable insights into how tourism businesses can work and engage with bloggers and were very well attended and we will certainly be looking to develop the blogger programme in the future."

WTM Africa 2015 will take place from 15 - 17 April at the Cape Town International Convention Centre. For more information, go to [www.wtmafrica.com](http://www.wtmafrica.com).