

2023 Wine Tourism Conference to address brand building and distinction

The Wine Tourism Conference, now in its seventh year, takes place at Lanzerac, Stellenbosch on 17 May. The annual event will feature a list of international and local speakers addressing the theme of "brands, brand building and brand distinction" - all within wine tourism, a major contributor to the GDP of the Western Cape.



Source: Supplied

The keynote address will be delivered by Pepe Marais, co-founder and group chief creative officer of Joe Public United, one of the country's foremost branding and communication agencies.

Margi Biggs, convenor of the annual event, now in its seventh year, has marshalled an impressive list of international and local marketing, branding and tourism experts and innovators as speakers for the event. "On the whole, local wine tourism is doing well and is approaching recovery to 2019 levels," says Biggs. "While we fervently hope this trend will continue, the global economic outlook remains uncertain. If we are to continue to attract long-haul international visitors as well as those closer to home, including domestically, we are going to have to be that much smarter, nimbler, and more compelling in our offerings and the way we deliver them."

Taking wineries to customers

According to Andile Ntingi, founder of GetBiz, writing for Business Day, the South African government hopes to attract 21m international visitors a year by 2030. In 2019, a total of 10,2m travellers entered the country. "Prominent wine commentator Michael Fridjhon highlighted last year how useful attendance at the conference can be for winery CEOs and managers. As he stressed, now, more than ever, we must find convincing new ways to take our wineries to customers. We believe delegates will come away inspired and enthused by what they learn this year."

A much-in-demand Australian to take the podium will be Peter McAtamney, who heads Wine Business Solutions (Australia), global specialists in wine market research, wine education and direct-to-consumer (DTC) wine business. He works actively in the South African, Australian, New Zealand and Spanish markets.

Another major drawcard will be Australian wine tourism suprema, Robin Shaw. Founder of the celebrated consultancy Wine Tourism Australia, she is a popular speaker on the global wine tourism circuit and the brains behind Wine Australia's newest Growing Wine Tourism programme. She works with a range of wine and tourism bodies, not only in Australia but globally, and has even consulted with VinPro.

Building collective brand identities

Mike Ratcliffe, CEO of the Stellenbosch Wine Route, who has been a leading player in re-establishing the pre-eminence of Stellenbosch as a centre of excellence, will be addressing ways in which to build collective brand identities. He was a major contributor to the success of Warwick Wines and more recently, Vilafonté, established as the first South African/US joint wine venture. Stellenbosch Wine Route is also a sponsor of this event.

The day-long event will feature several other prominent tourism and branding specialists. They include Tshifhiwa Tshivhengwa, CEO of the Tourism Business Council of South Africa; Katlego Flocart Dithokwe, founder of brand strategist agency The Hyphen; Chantel Botha, MD of Brandlove Training, who will discuss cultivating brand warriors; and Hardy McQueen, executive producer, The CyberCellar Wineshow, who will be talking about diversity and inclusion of audiences.

Wesgro will open the conference. Delta Air Lines will talk about changing trends in air travel.

While Paul Siguqa, CEO of Klein Goederust in Franschhoek, will be looking at building a new South African brand; DTC futurist Andrew Douglas will be moderating a discussion on rebuilding established brands. Panellists to appear will be wine personalities Hein Koegelenberg, Kevin Arnold and Pieter Cronjé.

A panel discussion on how eco-conservation can impact brand building will be moderated by André Morgenthal, project manager of the Old Vine Project. Panellists will include Shelly Fuller of WWF South Africa, Jeremy Borg of Painted Wolf Wines and Kathryn Cilliers of Spier.

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