

Media Statement



Thinking Pair Group and Tshwane University of Technology join forces in taking a lead in digital transformation and capacity building amongst Tourism & Small and Medium Enterprises.

Durban, 5 September 2023: Annual Tourism Week is set to become bigger and better than ever, with Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) collaborating in the 2023 segment of Annual Tourism Week, a programme fully owned by the Thinking Pair Group (TPG). The collaboration's main aim is to promote digital transformation amongst Tourism SMEs whilst undertaking research and development for tourism supply chain networks. This year's segment of the capacity building presents a one-day programme featuring a presentation by Dr. PPS Sifolo (TUT) an expert panel constituted of tourism and tech experts and an exhibition by a cohort of tech-preneurs.

Together, TPG and TUT aim to contribute to digital transformation through research and practical interventions.

Another event will also be held in the Gauteng province shortly to ensure the geographic spread of this programme's benefits and interventions. TPG launched Annual Tourism Week in December 2021. Central to the objectives of Annual Tourism Week is the Capacity building programme which continues to grow. Previously the programme provided interventions towards businesses that were stricken by the Covid 19 pandemic. These annual programmes include expert panels, compelling content, networking opportunities, and an opportunity for policy makers, entrepreneurs, academics, and small businesses to participate in shaping their solutions.

The 2023 programme has also extended an invitation to tech entrepreneurs to promote their goods and services to the business community that will participate in the event.

The Group Chairman and CEO Sthandiwe Mkhize, said: *"The Digitalisation Workshop and Exhibition" is a truly suitable tech platform which pays its attention and seeks solutions for the Tourism Industry SME's. The programme is also suitable for TPG and TUT to also share some of its programmes designed for SME's".*

Dr PPS Sifolo, a senior lecturer and researcher on the digitalisation of tourism supply networks, added: "We approached Thinking Pair for collaboration in our research titled "Digitalisation of the SMMEs in the tourism supply chain: A Transformation Transdisciplinary Approach". Thinking Pair is willing to engage, assist in conducting research, and collaborate in areas of working with their members and networks to provide transformative support and work collaboratively to improve the members' success through capacity building. This includes social media integration (Traditional social networking sites- Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, LinkedIn, Tik-Tok, WhatsApp) for supply networks and partly for marketing strategies needed by the businesses, based on the results from the survey in 2023/4. Where needed, about 40 businesses' websites could be upgraded or developed with the assistance of the businesses in providing content, as per the results of the study. The MOU we signed will change the SME landscape in the country, particularly in SME development.

About Annual Tourism Week

Annual Tourism Week is an annual event taking place every year addressing pertinent issues facing the Tourism Industry and the SME sector in general. Since its launch in 2021 Annual Tourism Week has benefited Tourism SMEs across different sectors, reached over 1.800 social media audiences, trained over 50 SMEs, and given market access opportunity to dozens of SMEs. Over 40 Graduates have been trained and at least 66 SMEs have been engaged in related projects. Notwithstanding funding constraints Thinking Pair aims to continue utilising this platform in the growth of SMEs through working with strategic partners such as the Tshwane University of Technology.

As owners of the Annual Tourism Week Thinking Pair welcomes the academic work, value and foreseeable interventions by TUT that will come as a result of the study findings. Thinking Pair has always believed in the derivation of scientific value in its capacity-building work.

Event Details

Title: Digitalisation of Tourism SME's and Exhibition

Venue: Durban Botanic Gardens Visitors Complex,
9a John Zikhali Road, Berea, Durban

Date: 15 September 2023 | **Time:** 9–3pm

Panellists: Dr PPS Sifolo, Mr Day Munatsi (Computer Scientist and Entrepreneur and Tech Advisor), Mr Sthandiwe Mkhize (Moderator), Mr Dube (Tech Entrepreneur) and Ms Mpume Kantaku, Experience Hotel Management Professional.

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