

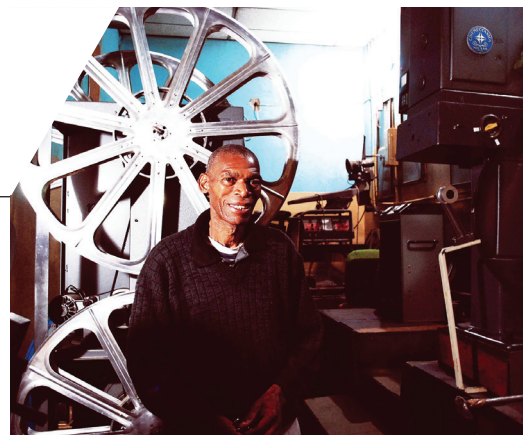
# The real Mzansi

*Tourism in SA is undergoing a refreshing shake-up thanks to Tour2.0. Eugene Yiga finds out more*

**Y**ou've seen them. The bemused tourists clutching their Nikon zoom lenses, dressed in khaki and huddled on the corner of some overdone tourist destination, waiting for their 'adventure' to begin. While it seems novel for many, the tourism circuit in SA has become so refined that many of our popular locations and experiences seem to have become watered-down versions of what made them special in the first place. Something's wrong with African – and, indeed, local – tourism. And for Daniel Adidwa, founder and CEO of Tour2.0, it's best to illustrate this problem with a hypothetical tale of three people: Anke, Lee-Anne and Petronella.

*Giving tourists more authentic experiences helps them appreciate our cultural diversity*

'Anke is a 24-year-old Swedish fashion designer travelling to South Africa for cultural enrichment,' Adidwa explains. 'Behind all the stereotypes and negative perceptions about SA, lies a rich and diverse country. And that's what she wants to come here and be exposed to. She wants to



meet the people, sample the culture and come away with an experience that she's able to share with her family, friends and peers.'

**THE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE** To help assemble her itinerary, Anke approaches Lee-Anne, who works for a reputable tour operator. But even though, as an agent, Lee-Anne is skilled and of the ideal demographic to handle Anke's trip, she's limited to an arsenal of tried, tested and tired products that will add little value to Anke's cultural curiosity. Lee-Anne just doesn't have the tools or the know-how to find something new.

'Generally, what happens is that Anke is sent to a "traditional cultural experience", like gumboot dancing or something similar,' Adidwa says. 'It's not bad, but Anke

isn't happy with the trip because it's not what she expected. This cycle cannot end because Lee-Anne continues to get requests from people like Anke and she keeps sending them to these experiences.'

**WHERE THE REAL COMMUNITY HANGS OUT** Petronella, on the other hand, is an insightful member of the local community, and she's in the perfect position to help add value to Anke's trip. She's the type of person who can take Anke to where the real community hangs out, show Anke where to get the best local food and let Anke experience how the people live. But, Anke won't get that authentic experience through

Lee-Anne, because Petronella isn't involved in Lee-Anne's tried-and-tested process at all, and thus doesn't play a role in the value chain.

'Petronella is actually the right person to take Anke on an authentic experience,' Adidwa says. 'And the great thing about Petronella is that her approach is inclusive. Because the community sees the benefits from the tourism industry, Anke is respected, treated well, and exposed to so much more.' ▶

**TOP:** Abraham Nkomo, owner of Alexandra's Kings Cinema, where Nelson Mandela used to watch movies.

**MIDDLE:** Lesika Matlou of Tour2.0's 'A taste of Africa' Joburg tour.

**LEFT:** Traditional cuisine on the Knysna 'A home away from home' tour.

**MAIN IMAGE:** The Kings Cinema on the 'Lights, gangs and all that jazz' tour in Johannesburg.





**THIS PAGE, TOP:** Oom Bolo's heritage shop in Kliptown, Soweto. **MIDDLE:** Petronella Machobane of Onverwacht's Afrikaans Khoisan community. **BOTTOM:** Jazz group Amadoda Anetshebe in Alexandra. **OPPOSITE PAGE:** Shembe church seniors and members at Inanda in KwaZulu-Natal.



### NEW AFRICAN PERCEPTIONS

This was the inspiration for Adidwa to start Tour2.0, a local company that aims to create new African perceptions by ensuring that people like Anke are exposed to people like Petronella. Adidwa believes that giving tourists more authentic experiences helps them appreciate our provinces, countries and the continent's cultural diversity. 'We, as a company, are serious about creating authentic travel experiences,' Adidwa says. 'It's important for us to ensure that Petronella plays a role in the value

chain, because, with this approach, we're able to guarantee that Anke gets the local experience that she wants, that Lee-Anne continues to satisfy her clients, and that Petronella and her community benefit from the tourism industry. That's what drives us as a company.'

### BROADER HORIZONS

Tour2.0 recently expanded its reach from five SA provinces to being nationwide. It has also increased the number of experiences across the country to over 50. All this is thanks to having a dedicated research person who stays in the know by going into various communities to find the person who knows the most, the person who everyone respects, and/or the person who would get them the most 'access'. 'The best way to find local people is to go into a community and get to know the elders,' Adidwa says. 'They know who the best person to speak to is when it comes to bringing in tourists. Then, my team has to visit the community, build the relationships and experience the offering, before it even lands on our platform.'

### DEPTH OF EXPERIENCE

At the moment, the company tends to focus on urban tours, with the occasional foray into rural regions. In time, they plan to expand to different niches and focus areas, but the most important thing is to find the right local hosts (referred to as 'community ambassadors') who can offer the authentic experience. 'We maintain an internal standard to guarantee that the experience is unique in the sense that, if you go to one community in Cape Town and another community in Johannesburg, you come away with two different experiences, rather than just visiting two communities that do the same thing,' Adidwa says. 'Our platform aims to enable you to get more depth out of each individual experience.'

### STICK TO SMALL GROUPS

But how authentic can an experience be when so many tourists are doing the exact same thing at the same time? This is a well-worn debate between Adidwa and his team. Their decision was to stick to small groups so that everyone gets value, which wouldn't be the case if 30 people went to a dinner in a small township home. Yes, it does impact things financially, but keeping things authentic matters more. 'The community ambassadors are in charge of setting the rates - they know what is comfortable for them and they want all the participants in a tour to benefit,' Adidwa says. 'For example, on our "Lights, gangs and all that jazz" tour in Alexandra in Johannesburg, Asanda, the community ambassador, will include a guide rate, Mam Togo's rate for providing the *vetkoeks*, and Ntate Abraham "The Boss" Nkomo's rate for opening the King Cinema so that people can see where Nelson Mandela used to watch movies. We don't meddle in that.'



### AUTHENTIC COMMUNITY NARRATIVES

Tour2.0 works with several partners to provide training to the community ambassadors; not just in terms of language - most foreign groups will bring in their own translator anyway - but also in terms of how best to portray their communities. 'When it comes to essential training, like how to choose your points of interest, how to tell your community's story and how to give the client a great experience, we have partners that specialise in that,' Adidwa says. 'We just focus on ensuring that the overall experience is correct and that, from a platform perspective, we get it in front of the right audience.'

### GROWING IN POPULARITY

Even though the tours are quoted in South African rand, Tour2.0 has a flexible platform that allows people to pay in various currencies. And, despite the persistence of negative perceptions about safety in many of SA's communities, the company is getting numerous repeat visitors - especially once people realise that the stereotypes are untrue. Indeed, Adidwa says that most communities are remarkably welcoming as long

as you approach them with intentions of inclusivity. 'It's growing in popularity, especially with international travellers. We're starting to see specific demographics that are looking for more authentic experiences. They want to live with you, eat with you and be able to say that they stayed with so-and-so and experienced life in the community first-hand. That's what makes travel so much more enriching,' Adidwa concludes. 

Learn more at [tour2-0.com](http://tour2-0.com)

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