In recent years, there has been intense focus on Africa as the new tourist hub. Through social media, people around the world are able to see Africa’s rich heritage and beautiful landscape; the vibrant Nigerian culture, the white sands of Zanzibar, amongst others. However, the conversation omits one key segment in the tourism value chain: the African Traveler. It is important to consider how the individual African traveler’s role creates value to the community.

The African traveler is unique in that there are several misconceptions that have been perpetuated about Africans with regards to travel primarily due to the negative portrayal of Africans in the media. Some of these misconceptions include rampant overstaying, illegal immigration, among others, which typically lead to tighter border controls and increased visa restrictions for Africans, thus adding to the negative narrative of the African traveler and Africa.

We believe that travel should be a tool to change the social and economic landscape of Africa. Exposing our citizens to other cultures through immersive travel can foster both individual and economic development on two fronts. Firstly, the obvious effect of increased focus on encouraging Africans to embrace legitimate global immersive travel is that they become real-life ambassadors of our heritage and culture at their destination, dispelling negative opinions in the media, and encouraging others to travel to Africa. This is far more powerful than anything a potential tourist to Africa would see on the Internet. Engaging more Africans in immersive travel can also help to develop tourism relationships with other countries which will further improve global perception of the typical African. Secondly, Africans engaging in immersive travel will undergo a mindset shift that will transform and positively impact the way they interact with their community when they return home.
The more African travelers engage in legitimate global immersive travel and leave lasting positive impressions, the more people at the various destinations we visit want to learn and see more of our culture and community.

Furthermore, this increase in legitimate immersive African travelers can help broker a visible shift in conversations on barriers to travel inevitably leading to improved tourism relationships, reduced visa restrictions and more countries willing to relax/open their borders; as Africans will now be seen as a group that can add significant economic value to the global economy, in a similar vain to the recent black travel movement.

In addition, returning African travelers can have a positive impact on their own communities by living their transformative experiences as coined perfectly by John Lehrer:

“We travel because distance and difference are the secret tonic of creativity; when we get home, home is still the same but something inside our minds has changed, and that changes everything.”
KEY SESSION TAKEAWAYS

1. The African traveler should be seen as a key value creator in the tourism ecosystem and the community.

2. Legitimate global immersive travel is the key to unlocking the value the African traveler can create.

3. This value created by the legitimate immersive African traveler will bring a positive shift in global perceptions and progressive impact on the community.
DURATION: 60mins | CAPACITY: 100-200

TOPIC: The Individual African Traveler As A Value Creator In The Community

Discussion Themes:
1. Views on the value and impact of the African traveler to their community and the world
2. The reasons why challenges exist with unlocking the value of the African traveler
3. Solutions that can be adopted to ensure that the African traveler is viewed as valuable
CountlessMiles is a technology-enabled travel startup whose aim is to transform the typical African’s perception of travel from shopping trips to immersive life-changing experiences and to ultimately change the world's negative perceptions of Africans.

At Countless Miles, we are travel-loving, risk-seeking global citizens who believe in the power of travel for personal and economic development. To achieve this, we provide free inspiring travel content and experiences from experienced African travelers to motivate others to follow our footsteps via our platform.

We also curate unique, memorable, immersive destination experiences for Africans traveling globally, providing them with niche reviews based on insider information and connecting them with locals at the destination.
Philip Akesson is the country manager of Travelstart Nigeria, an African online travel booking website, offering flights, hotel bookings, car rental, vacation packages and other travel services through their online booking engine.

Before Travelstart, Philip was one of the founding members of Konga.com, and has six years experience from the local e-commerce space. He is also an avid traveller and has motorcycled solo around South America, Europe and the Middle East.
Kemi Onabanjo is a Management Consultant by day and a world travel enthusiast and blogger by night. While travelling all over the world on her Nigerian passport, she exceeded her goal of visiting 30 countries by 30 (currently on her 35th country) and she plans to conquer more ground. She shares her adventures, mishaps, lessons learned, and other musings at her social media pages and her blog.

Ask her about her most adventurous travels, meeting people on the road, studying abroad for a post-graduate degree, her famous boomerangs, visa applications, travelling for business and making time for personal adventures, destinations across Africa and the world, and striving for ‘balance’ amidst all this.
Rosemary Okoli, popularly known as Rory, is an avid traveler whose journeys have led her to 15 countries and over 50 cities.

She is the founder of TripZapp, a travel consulting and curating company which promotes travel as a lifestyle and provides all-inclusive curated trips and experiences that help people seamlessly navigate and explore interesting destinations around Africa.


**Zainob Fashola** is a curious-minded Lagos-based entrepreneur, budding travel writer, photographer, and videographer. She is also a great lover of food and drinks with a love/hate relationship with fitness. An adventure seeker, an avid reader of romance and fantasy novels, and an amateur photographer.

She has traveled to over 40 countries and started www.ZeeGoes.com in 2016 as a platform to share her travel stories, pictures, videos, reviews, and travel tips for the curious, while working on growing Nigeria’s beauty and food industry.

Zainob also has a monthly column on The Guardian Nigeria, with regular video uploads on www.youtube.com/zeegoes.
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**PANEL SPEAKER #5**

Yomi Kazeem is reporter at Quartz, covering Africa-specific stories on politics and how it intersects with business, innovation, travel, startups and culture.

He has previously worked with leading African media platforms as a columnist and contributor.