



LIGHTS, CAMERA, ECONOMIC GROWTH: UNLOCKING THE POWER OF CREATIVE-CONTENT FILM TOURISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

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The Hidden Economic Force of Film Tourism

Film tourism is not just about fans visiting locations from their favorite movies. It's a dynamic ecosystem that drives real economic impact. Consider this: over an eight-month period, foreign film personnel working in South Africa accounted for 59,182 hotel bed nights. At an average of R2,500 per night, this translates to nearly R148 million spent on accommodation alone. And that's just the tip of the iceberg.

**Source: Bobby Amm – CPASA
Rudi & Marna Riek – FIVA**

South Africa's film industry has long been admired for its breathtaking locations, world-class crews, and competitive production costs. But beyond the cameras and call sheets lies a powerful, often underappreciated economic engine: film tourism—and more specifically, creative-content film tourism (C-CFT). As the global digital economy expands and storytelling evolves across platforms, South Africa finds itself at a unique intersection of opportunity. With youth unemployment sitting at an alarming 46.1%, innovative, inclusive industries are no longer optional—they are essential.

These “business tourists” contribute far more through:

- Restaurants and hospitality
- Vehicle rentals and transport
- Flights and logistics
- Retail and entertainment
- Insurance and production consumables

While these additional expenditures are harder to quantify, their cumulative impact is undeniably substantial—injecting millions more into the local economy.





A Sector Full of Potential—Yet Underdeveloped

Despite its promise, creative-content film tourism remains underutilised and under-researched, particularly in Africa.

There is:

- Limited academic focus on its economic value
- Weak integration into tourism and economic policy
- A lack of measurable frameworks to track its contribution
- Fragmented value chains with unclear revenue pathways

At the same time, the digital content economy—already valued at over \$32 billion globally—is growing rapidly, creating new entry points for participation, especially for young people.

Bridging the Gap: Youth, Inclusion, and Opportunity

One of the most compelling opportunities within C-CFT is its potential to address youth unemployment, including among young people with disabilities.

Creative-content film tourism opens doors through:

- Mobile filmmaking and low-barrier content creation
- Social media monetisation
- Brand partnerships and digital storytelling
- Tourism marketing content creation
- Entrepreneurial ventures in media and production

However, barriers remain:

- Limited access to funding and skills development
- A persistent digital divide between urban and rural areas
- Lack of inclusive frameworks for people with disabilities
- Fragmented participation across the value chain

Without intentional intervention, these challenges risk excluding the very groups who could benefit most.



Rethinking the Value Chain

To unlock the full potential of C-CFT, a more integrated and inclusive approach is needed.

A proposed conceptual framework highlights key drivers of success:

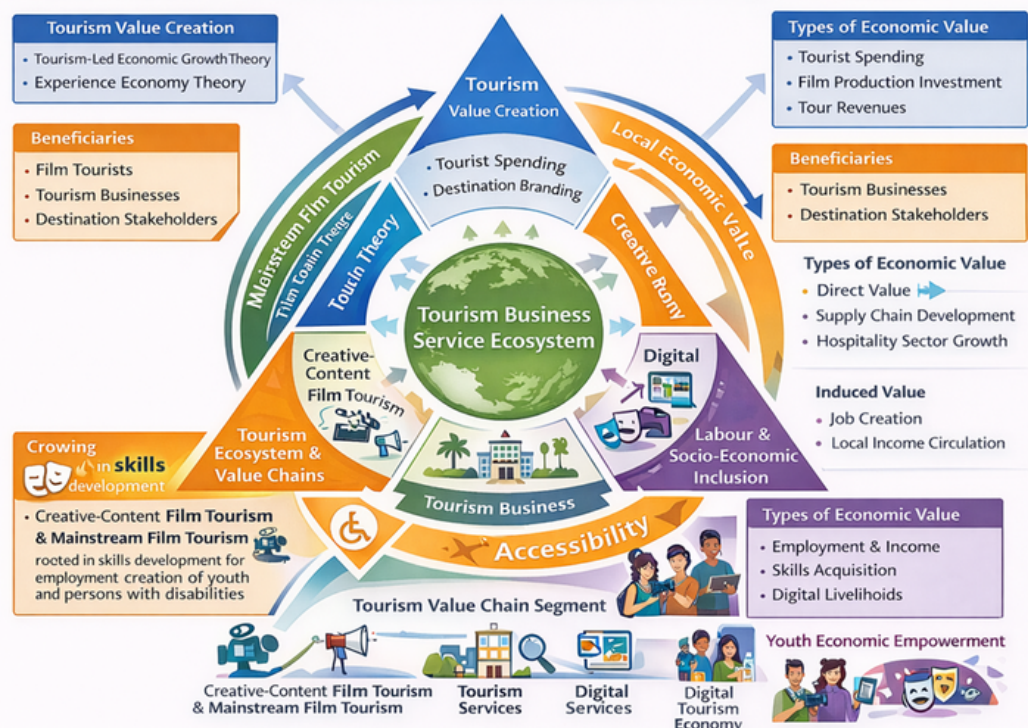
- Accessibility – ensuring opportunities are open to all
- Vision – aligning stakeholders around a shared goal
- Adaptability – embracing digital transformation
- Collaboration – strengthening partnerships across sectors
- Emotional Intelligence – fostering human-centered innovation

This framework positions creative-content film tourism not just as an industry, but as a vehicle for inclusive economic development.

Tourism Business Mainstream Value Chain and Creative-Content Film Tourism as Employment Pathways for Youth in Africa & South Africa



Film Tourism, Accessibility, and Youth Economic Empowerment Framework



From Theory to Action: Practical Interventions

Turning potential into impact requires tangible steps:

- Creative Digital Labs to build technical and storytelling skills
- Youth Media Agencies to create employment pathways
- Tourism Content Squads to promote destinations through authentic narratives
- Accessible storytelling platforms to include voices of people with disabilities

These initiatives can help formalise the value chain, create sustainable income streams, and empower a new generation of creators and entrepreneurs.

A Call for Policy and Investment

For C-CFT to thrive, stronger alignment between research, policy, and industry is essential.

Key priorities include:

- Integrating film tourism into national tourism strategies
- Supporting inclusive entrepreneurship
- Investing in digital infrastructure
- Developing measurable frameworks for economic impact

Without this support, South Africa risks missing out on a powerful opportunity to drive both economic growth and social inclusion

Conclusion: A Story Worth Investing In

Creative-content film tourism is more than a niche concept—it's a transformative opportunity. It sits at the crossroads of tourism, digital innovation, and storytelling, with the power to:

- Create jobs
- Drive entrepreneurship
- Boost tourism revenue
- Promote inclusive economic participation

Yet, as it stands, it remains largely untapped. With the right investment, policy support, and collaborative vision, South Africa can position itself as a global leader in this space—turning stories into livelihoods, and creativity into economic impact.





“Creative-content film tourism isn’t just an industry—it’s a bridge between creativity and economic inclusion.”