

Media Information

Young entrepreneurs from the USA, India, Poland and the Netherlands win WTFL "Start-Up Innovation Awards 2017"

At the 5th World Tourism Forum Lucerne in early May, Tastemakers Africa (USA), Global Himalayan Expedition (India), Hello Here (Poland) and Bidroom (Netherlands) beat a combined total of 170 competing young enterprises to win the "Start-Up Innovation Award 2017" in their four categories. The competition was held within the framework of the Forum's first "Start-Up Innovation Camp".

Lucerne, 23 May 2017 – At the 5th World Tourism Forum Lucerne held in central Switzerland from 4 to 5 May 2017, young and ambitious talents (and/or their start-up concepts) were assessed by an expert jury within the framework of the first "Start-Up Innovation Camp". From among the 170 business models originally submitted from 50 countries, the best in each of the four categories "Destination", "Hospitality", "Impact" and "Transaction" were awarded the "Start-Up Innovation Award 2017". Each won prize money of CHF 20,000 and will also receive two years of professional coaching.

1st place "Destination" category – Tastemakers Africa (USA)

Tastemakers Africa is an online market place, where travellers can book local excursion experiences in currently 15 African cities. The US concern entered the travel market two years ago and sees itself as a culture driven experience platform. CEO and co-founder Cherae Robinson: "We focus on people on the spot. This facilitates encounters between like-minded young people sharing similar interests, and enhances the opportunities for local population to earn an income from their tradition skills and know-how". Offers range from a pub-crawl with a DJ in Accra (Ghana), a meeting with photographers in Addis Abeba (Ethiopia) and working in a vineyard in Cape Town (South Africa).

The jury's verdict: Tastemakers has a rock solid business model which is making a big impact in an emerging market.

www.tastemakersafrica.com

1st place "Hospitality" category – Hello Here (Poland)

Worldwide only an estimated 25 per cent of the some 10 million providers of alternative overnights are linked to major players such as Airbnb or Home Away. The rest of the market is highly fragmented. This is where the "Welcome App" Hello Here from Poland comes into play. The system enables private providers of accommodation to enter into contact with guests, including target groups such as families or business travellers. Above all, the host provider is able offer their guests – via the app – additional services such as airport transfers, shopping services, city sightseeing tours etc. In this way the provider is able to generate further income. Hello Here CEO and co-founder Piotr Kubiczek: "Guests want to live like the locals – to go out like they do, to go shopping like they do, and so on. Communication with their host is a key element of this guest experience."

The jury's verdict: Hello Here has developed a great and practical solution for this fast growing but very fragmented holiday rental market.

www.hellohereapp.com

1st place "Impact" category – Global Himalayan Expedition (India)

The Indian start-up Global Himalayan Expedition focuses on providing remote mountain regions with clean energy such as solar energy. This ensures that a foundation is laid on which to establish villages on the touristic map. CEO Paras Loomba: "The light this energy provides makes it possible to work at night when darkness falls, and also means that children are able to learn for longer hours. In particular, it facilitates the development of construction projects and the organization of expeditions, all of which serve to boost the local economy. The major problem, however, is to locate these villages in the first place – because they are not to be found on geographical or Google maps. Global Himalayan Expedition has so far been able to provide 300 villages with energy, thus improving the living conditions and standards of some 15,000 people.

The jury's verdict: Global Himalayan Expedition has created significant impact that is desperately needed when there is very limited resource.

www.ghe.co.in

1st place "Transaction" category – Bidroom (the Netherlands)

Bidroom is a revolutionary booking platform on which hotels are able to offer their rooms without having to pay the customary commission of 15 to 25 per cent. In addition, hotels are also able to offer accommodation at more favourable rates than on competitive sites such as Expedia, Booking.com etc. – which is normally impossible. The key feature with Bidroom is that clients sign up to the system by paying an annual subscription fee. The room offers are not publicly advertised, and are accessible only to a restricted client base. On average, the annual fee is covered after only one and half bookings. CEO Michael Ros: "The power of present-day booking portals means that hotels have lost control over their products. With Bidroom they've won back control – and that free of charge." Every day hundreds of new hotels join the portfolio. By the end of this year it is expected to comprise some 75,000 properties.

The jury's verdict: Bidroom could be the real disruptor of booking.com.

www.bidroom.com

Following the success of the first "Start-Up Innovation Camp", Martin Barth – President and CEO of the World Tourism Forum Lucerne – commented: "We were overwhelmed by the extent of the response. The quality and the wide range represented by the 170 business models submitted demonstrate the great strength of innovative thinking in tourism today. This is a basic precondition for tourism to continue playing a key role as a driving economic force." The successful 2017 event was able to count on the experience and support of start-up innovation partner Kenya as well as Smart Hospitality Solutions.

World Tourism Forum Lucerne

The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is an interdisciplinary professional platform which takes place annually, alternately in Lucerne (Switzerland) and – from 2018 – China. It offers decision-makers in business, politics, science and finance an overview of current topics and trends in the global tourism industry. It is also the only international platform which enables leading decision makers and emerging young talents in the industry to interact under the "Next Generation" designation. The World Tourism Forum Lucerne is supported by an international Advisory Board under the chairmanship of Reto Wittwer. The 6th World Tourism Forum Lucerne to be held in Lucerne will take place from 1 to 3 May 2019. www.wtflucerne.org

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