

Research paves the way for tourism growth

30 October 2020

Neil Armstrong said: “Research is creating new knowledge”. In line with this ethos, the Department of Tourism today hosted a Tourism Research webinar with the theme: “Advancing tourism growth and development through research in partnerships with universities”. The tourism sector is in a constant state of flux and fluidity. Research, therefore, guides the way forward in identifying knowledge gaps as well as prioritising important trends. Because tourism is a cross functional sector, it requires collaboration with its stakeholders.

This seminar is held annually to ensure that the research findings address the needs of stakeholders in the sector and to disseminate and discuss the findings of the research studies and to obtain constructive feedback from key stakeholders and researchers in the sector. It also aims to disseminate research findings to key stakeholders in the sector, thereby ensuring that research recommendations are implemented, and translated into policy and practice.

Three research studies were presented at the webinar today. The University of Johannesburg started with a presentation on leveraging state-owned tourism assets for black Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMME) development: a case of state-owned parks, lodges and attractions- phase 2. The aim of the research study was to examine business linkages that exist between state owned entities (parks, lodges and attractions) and tourism SMMEs with a view to improve the growth and development of these SMMEs. It is believed that such linkages could be exploited by Black-owned SMMEs in order to advance transformation in the tourism sector. The study further sought to determine the possibility of enforcing conditions for procurement by these state-owned entities from the tourism SMMEs.

This was followed by the University of Venda who presented an analysis of the public sector expenditure in the tourism value chain: identifying socio-economic opportunities for black-owned enterprises in South Africa-phase 2. The purpose of this study was to examine and analyse how tourism sub-sectors benefit from public sector expenditures with a view to determine potential socio-economic opportunities for black-owned SMMEs within the tourism value chain

The University of Pretoria, concluded with an assessment of the impact of mega trends in the tourism sector-phase 2. The purpose of the study is to identify and analyse global shifts as well as tourism specific megatrends that impact the tourism sector at a global, regional and local level, from both the demand and supply side of the sector, with a view to develop a framework that will enable the sector to proactively respond to challenges and capitalise on opportunities for future development.

Research has been identified as a critical area for the development and growth of the tourism sector. The revised National Tourism Sector Strategy 2016-2026 highlights the importance of research as one of the important tools in destination management and recognises that much has been done to improve this area of research, data and statistics, however much more is still required.

Since 2012, the Department signed Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) and has been working closely with universities on tourism research and capacity building. The universities are the University of Pretoria, University of Johannesburg, University of Venda, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and University of KwaZulu-Natal. The MoUs are aimed to facilitate collaboration and strengthen capacity in the realm of tourism research and skills development. Furthermore, the MoUs made provision for financial assistance to postgraduate students pursuing tourism related studies at these universities.

The research collaboration with universities produced significant work which contributed towards policy and programme development, planning and decision making for the Department and sector. To date, thirty-six (36) research studies and reports have been completed. The research focus areas of the studies included,

among others, service excellence, community participation and beneficiation, cross-border tourist guiding, tourism competitiveness, impact assessments, rural tourism, destination development, and coastal and marine tourism.

While the collaboration efforts with the universities worked well and produced significant work over the years, some limitations were noted. As a result, the extensive review of the collaboration model was undertaken to assess its successes, failures and effectiveness. Subsequently, a Research Collaboration and Funding Framework was developed to enable the Department to make improvements to the collaboration model and to clearly formulate conditions within which to conduct and fund collaborative research.

Anemé Malan, Deputy Director-General: Tourism Research, Policy and International Relations, who hosted the research webinar, concluded saying: "The sector strategy emphasizes the importance of building capacity for high quality tourism research and promoting the development of a research culture within the tourism sector to enhance individual and institutional capacity. Key recommendations from the sector have informed decision making, the compilation of strategy and the development of programmes."

Tourism Research webinar presentations can be found on the departmental website at:

https://www.tourism.gov.za/CurrentProjects/8th_Annual_Tourism_Research_Seminar/Pages/Tourism_Research_Webinar.aspx

Enquiries

Ms Susan De Bruin

Acting Chief Director: Communications

Department of Tourism

Tel: +27 (0) 12 444 6605

Cell: +27 (0) 82 921 7303

Email: sdebruin@tourism.gov.za