

Research topic: An assessment of the impact of mega trends in the tourism sector

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Abstract:

Global tourism has grown steadily over the last 60 years and is predicted by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) to reach 1.8 billion international arrivals by 2030. As an economic sector it has outperformed the global economy for the seventh year running, growing by 4.6% against 3%. This has not been the case in South Africa despite the fact that South Africa currently gains the lion's share of international arrivals to the African continent. According to StatsSA, the contribution of tourism to the economy has declined from 3.3% in 2006 to 2.8% in 2017. Despite this tourism is increasingly being perceived as an important economic driver that can help turn South Africa's fortunes around. Globally tourism is influenced by shifts and megatrends, and South Africa, as part of this global industry, is also affected by these megatrends. This raises the question of whether South Africa can harness the opportunities presented by these megatrends to stimulate the growth of the tourism sector to contribute more to economic growth in South Africa. The aim of this study was to identify the megatrends that affect tourism globally, to assess the impact of these trends on the South African tourism industry and to develop a number of scenarios that depict the possible direction of tourism in South Africa. The future scenarios provide the alternative directions in which tourism can develop towards 2030 within the context of both certainties and uncertainties in the South African tourism sector. Five major trends were identified using a qualitative approach comprising the analysis of secondary sources and in-depth interviews with tourism industry leaders and policy makers: Economic; Political; Social; Technological and Environmental. Four future scenarios were developed through a consultative workshop. Each scenario depicts the level of competitiveness and industry integration that could potentially be achieved under different sets of circumstances with the best-case scenario showing an industry that is highly competitive and fully integrated.