

DRAFT TOURISM POLICY 2001 - 2010

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The purpose of this policy is to present a vision for tourism in Namibia in the next decade, its objectives and roles of stakeholders. Successful tourism requires that all key stakeholders work together: government, private sector and NGOs. This policy aims to provide the framework for that collaboration within strategies and programs to fit within it.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Namibian economy is dominated by the mining, fishing and agriculture sectors. As unemployment is high, Namibia needs to create increased employment opportunities. Tourism is a major user of people and offers significant opportunities for the employment of youth and has a gender bias towards women. Tourism has the lowest ratio of investment to job creation, many activities are immediately accessible to the previously disadvantaged part of the population. Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange (and via domestic tourism the retention of foreign exchange within the country). Tourism can provide funds for conservation of the country's fragile environment, has a substantial economic multiplier effect and generates tax revenues for Government.

The potential of Namibia's tourism sector is enormous. Namibia offers a range of unique and exciting natural, cultural and man-made resources that will, if planned and managed effectively, continue to attract increasing numbers of tourists. Namibia is committed to a sound conservation strategy, which will ensure that its attractions are not over-utilised and/or damaged. Namibia has good infrastructure and a strong private sector industry offering accommodation, transport and tours of good quantity and to a competitive standard. Namibia has established perceptions in its source markets of political stability, health and security, which relative to other African countries do not inhibit tourism.

An overall policy is required to make sure that tourism is developed in a sustainable, equitable and responsible manner to create a significant contribution to the economic development of Namibia and the quality of life of all her people.

Government, private sector, communities and stakeholder organisations (NGOs) are committed to working together to bring about the changes and improvements required to achieve this mission.

Policy Definition:

Policy is a guide for making decisions in the future. Policy statements are made to indicate to those concerned just what the organisation will or will not do in pursuance of its overall purpose.

A good tourism policy provides definite and clear direction and at the same time allows for decision making within clearly stated limits.

The elements of the proposed tourism policy include:

- A profile of the existing industry and its performance.
- A tourism development philosophy.
- Social, economic and environmental objectives.
- A set of programs
- An institutional framework indicating roles for stakeholders

2. PROFILE OF THE EXISTING NAMIBIAN TOURISM INDUSTRY AND ITS PERFORMANCE

Tourism in Namibia has a history of being developed around state owned resorts in protected areas. The product has been predominantly of a self-catering nature, mainly for national and regional (Southern African) travellers. Today, tourism is becoming an increasingly vital component of livelihood strategies for the communal and private farmers. Traditional farming activities are being complemented with tourism at so called guest farms and communal area residents are organising themselves in conservancies to create benefits from wildlife tourism.

There are indications that degradation of the environment, over-utilisation of scarce resources and the destruction or pollution of attractions is increasing throughout Namibia. Proper control of tourist activities is a prerequisite for responsible and sustainable tourism. It is therefore of prime importance that framework plans be prepared for the parks, communal conservancies and commercial land, which provide an enforceable guide for tourism activities in all these areas.

International arrival trends indicate a growth in multi-destination travel within Southern Africa by high-spending long-haul travellers. Such visitors like to combine highlights of the region into one itinerary. The tourism policy should take recognition of this fact and support the current number of important cross border parks being investigated by Namibia and her neighbours. These include initiatives with the Richtersveld in the Karas Region, as well similar projects in the Kunene and Caprivi Regions.

It must however, be recognised that the majority of Namibia's visitors are South Africans who travel overland and as they tend to make use of low yielding tourism facilities, currently add little in net value added terms to the tourism economy.

Little work if any, has been done in developing new or alternative source markets. The Namibia Tourism Board will have specific responsibilities in this area.

Nationally capacity utilisation is on average relatively low with bed occupancy rates averaging 36% in 1998. Service standards in most establishments and businesses serving the tourism industry are adequate. The quality of some of the smaller establishments, particularly in the communal areas, is variable. The importance of these small enterprises should however not be underestimated in terms of being the entry point of rural residents into the tourism industry. In an effort to maintain and improve overall standards programs of training have been initiated through the existing training establishments.

3. OBJECTIVES

Tourism development needs to be sustainable - economically, socially and environmentally. The Ministry has formulated various principles into a tourism development philosophy, which will guide the implementation of this overall strategy. The tourism policy will take due recognition of and strengthen the intent of existing policies and legislation (CBT Policy, Conservancy policy and legislation).

Philosophy

- The development and promotion of the tourism industry in Namibia will place emphasis on the country's natural, cultural and man-made resources.
- Tourism should be a legitimate land use, a vital industry and a critical development tool for the empowerment of previously disadvantaged groups as well as a means for diversification of livelihoods of communities on both private and communal land.
- Tourism development is equitable, with user-rights and responsibilities vested in 'host communities'
- The industry should develop in a manner, which will preserve the national pride and dignity of the peoples of Namibia, while simultaneously encouraging visitors to experience their way of life.
- Tourism development requires a consultative planning process and subsequently the approved tourism plans must be implemented with monitoring by the relevant partners.
- In developing tourism products, infrastructure and related facilities, the Government will take into account the need to stimulate the expansion of domestic tourism within all layers of the population in harmony with the drive to increase international tourism arrivals.
- Ensure the international competitiveness of the Namibian tourism product through the development of a safe, reliable, quality product and encourage competitive marketing by all stakeholders.
- The Government will pursue a policy of exploiting the tourism market selectively; stressing to the various target groups the uniqueness of the tourism product within the destination.

The philosophy seeks to ensure that the industry evolves in a cohesive manner that permits the country to derive the greatest possible direct and indirect benefits from the investment of resources. These objectives are related to the division of sustainability -

Economic

The Tourism Policy seeks to ensure that the tourism industry makes a significant impact on the expansion of Namibia's economy by way of the following:

- The generation of substantial net foreign exchange earnings.
- The provision of direct employment opportunities at all levels within the industry.
- The provision of additional sources of income (profits, wages, rents, fees, etc.).
- The generation of linkages with other sectors of the economy e.g., agriculture, transport, handicraft, sports and construction.
- Consequential increase in the tax base.

Social

The Tourism Policy seeks to ensure that tourism serves as a vehicle for securing definite social gains to the population, in

particular the previously disadvantaged while simultaneously avoiding and/or minimising as far as possible the negative aspects of tourism development activities. It aims to:

- Ensure that as far as possible all sections of the Namibian community benefit from tourism
- Encourage the development of those cultural forms and expressions, which are distinctly Namibian in origin, and development into new attractions.
- Promote greater international awareness of Namibia through the projection of Namibia's cultural forms.
- Foster greater national awareness and pride by attention to the preservation, restoration and promotion of historical sites, cultural festivals, art forms, natural scenic sites, etc.
- Protect historical and archaeological sites to ensure that the delicate balance of the physical environment is not threatened.
- Safeguard the physical and social territorial rights of residents especially with respect to the facilities where visitor numbers are likely to exceed the population of the established local community.
- Ensure the close cooperation and partnerships of key stakeholders at local, national and international levels.

Environmental

It should be acknowledged that tourism resources are found throughout the country in protected areas, on communal, on freehold land and in urban areas and that diversification of tourism is therefore required.

Namibia has a unique but fragile resource base and all stakeholders must strive to develop high quality low impact tourism products.

In order to protect the long-term future of the protected areas and their impact on their neighbour's livelihood, strategies must be developed to ensure that costs and benefits are shared equitably.

4. PROGRAMS AND POLICIES

The policy identifies priority areas for support. These are based on a geographical and responsibility division and covers:

Protected Areas

The purpose of protected areas in Namibia includes the maintenance of relatively unspoiled areas for posterity and biodiversity improvement. These areas need to fulfill their potential in a responsible manner as engines of growth. The future of the protected areas relies on the integration within neighbouring economies. If done responsibly, improved management should also be a consequence of this approach.

Based on carefully planned exercises, protected areas should be utilised to an increased extent for the benefit of diversifying and complementing the tourism product of Namibia. National Parks and game reserve form the core attraction in Africa and in Namibia, there is scope to increase the international drawing power by increasing the utilisation of the protected areas in a sustainable manner.

Requirements:

- Implementation of the People and Parks Policy 1996.
- The clarification and enabling legislation re the rights of people living within parks.
- The establishment and implementation of tourism management plans which include integration of protected areas into surrounding economies.
- Standards, monitoring and evaluation of park products.
- Understanding of park management issues related to tourism utilisation.

Private land

Private land has title deed that allows owners to exercise control over tourism. Private land has traditionally been utilised for agricultural purposes. Due to land degradation and enabling ministerial policies regarding wildlife since the 1970's, a booming consumptive and non-consumptive tourism industry has developed. Tourism development has however not been well planned and the impacts of tourism on the environment not always adequately addressed. Private land includes proclaimed towns and cities where much potential exists, but little "urban tourism" efforts have been initiated.

The enabling environment regarding tourism on private land is adequately addressed. This sector can function well in the free market within responsible tourism guidelines. Encouragement will be given to this sector to take a lead in innovative product development that can attract new market segments able to bring tangible benefits to Namibia. In that same

context, there will be a discouragement for tourism initiatives that bring little or no benefits and have doubtful environmental impact like uncontrolled 4x4 routes.

Requirements

- Regional/National plans to be drawn up, standards set, monitoring systems of tourists data gathering and impacts of tourism on the environment to be introduced. Linkages with neighbouring land use types should be established. Identify training needs and introduce measures to address these needs.
- Local responsible tourism plans are to be done per proclaimed town or city to address local issues. This should include the promotion of diversification of activity e.g. cultural, craft, historic etc. issues such as improvement of the service industry should be addressed. The need for various establishments Bed and Breakfasts etc.
- Partners to develop, manage and market the tourism product.

The communal lands

Recognition for MET's communal conservancy policy has been obtained, nationally, regionally and internationally. This stems from the fact that conservancies enable rural dwellers to engage in the tourism market in a meaningful way as equal partners and direct benefits accrue to them in an equitable manner. Income from tourism is ploughed back into resource management and community development.

Communal lands have the potential to integrate tourism into all layers of Namibia's society. It can contribute effectively to the diversification of livelihood activities of rural communities which will add to the acceptance of the industry within Namibia.

Communal Conservancy legislation provides adequate rights and responsibilities for responsible consumptive utilisation of wildlife. Non-consumptive tourism is not addressed adequately to allow the effective management of tourism. This situation needs to be addressed and conservancies must be enabled to manage tourists and tourism effectively.

Requirements

- Implementation and strengthening of the Namibia Community-Based Tourism Policy.
- Implementation of the Communal Conservancy Legislation 1996.
- Strengthening of conservancy rights to manage tourism and tourists effectively on communal land.
- The introduction of incentives to investment and operation in the communal areas if their undertakings are certified as being sustainable.
- PTO application process formalised with due recognition of conservancies, Traditional Authorities, Regional Council, MLRR and MET.
- Investor security through legally binding contracts with conservancies.

In addition to the policy for these geographical areas, there are programs required related to:

Marketing

Although at present there are numerous activities offered such as ballooning, horse riding, camel trails, hunting, angling, hiking, bird watching, photography, camping, yachting, cruises, star - gazing and adventure tourism (skydiving and paragliding, dune adventures, rock climbing, gliding, caving, mountain biking, white water rafting), the main volume in terms of revenue and visitor numbers is still found in general purpose tours, either guided or on a self drive basis.

A strategy of precision targeting will be pursued for maximum effectiveness. Accordingly, marketing initiatives will stress the following:

- Tourism development in Namibia will not be based on mass tourism but in finding and exploiting specialist niche markets.
- The international tourism promotion effort will be aimed at a low volume, high yield customers.
- The fostering of support amongst the travel trade in the source markets, including carriers as well as the establishment of joint marketing programs wherever possible.
- Improving the information infrastructure to facilitate easier access by potential customers to information, reservation services, etc.
- The availability of tourism products and facilities for the domestic market.

Continuous research both amongst arriving/departing visitors as well as in the source markets will be carried out in order that trends can be identified, basic data assembled and that performance of the sector can be monitored

In order to achieve the anticipated growth of the industry and the success of a marketing drive a programme to ensure product readiness and acceptability will be undertaken as an essential part of the strategy. Attention will be focused on

upgrading all tourism facilities.

It is recognised that the following are basic prerequisites for sustaining the appeal of the destination to the above average income visitor who faces so many competing choices -

- Accommodation, which is simple, clean, functional and in harmony with the environment and which meets the minimum requirements as set out in the regulations.
- Service in tourism facilities which is warm, friendly, sincere and efficient.
- Food which is wholesome, fresh, hygienically stored and served,
- Tourism facilities which are accessible, convenient, and which reflect a high degree of efficiency, maintenance and management.

The lead role in marketing will be played by the Namibia Tourism Board.

Investment incentives

The Government of Namibia is committed to the supply of appropriate improvements in infrastructure and plans to rely on private capital to spearhead the expansion of tourism. In so doing, Government will welcome appropriate investment by both foreign and domestic capital.

Preference will be given to those investors who can demonstrate credibility and successful experience with respect to the operation of such facilities and who offer sound prospects for tapping targeted niches within source markets.

Selective use will be made of financial incentives in order to obtain the type, quality and quantity of tourism facilities required by the market place. Such facilities may also apply to repair, renewal, refurbishing and extension of existing facilities.

5. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

The role of government

Tourism within Namibia comes under the auspices of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism, which has a Directorate of Tourism responsible for the development of policy and the gathering and dissemination of tourism statistics.

Government's main role will be in the creation of an enabling environment for responsible private sector tourism to operate throughout Namibia. This will mean that:

- Responsible tourism implementation will be monitored by Government
- The creation of tourism investment incentives will be introduced.
- The implementation and enforcement of regional and local tourism plans, integrating consumptive and non - consumptive tourism into existing land use practises where appropriate
- Development, promotion and support of craft, historical, artistic and cultural, in addition to existing traditional attractions of Namibia.
- Discouragement of products without tangible benefits (e.g. 4x4 routes).
- Proclamation of national monuments without limiting responsible tourism access to these sites and applying for the listing of World Heritage sites with the United Nations
- Adaptive management using 'Limits of acceptable change' will be investigated.
- Dialogue with other Ministries in issues related to sustainable tourism development.

The Regional Tourism Organisation of Southern Africa, RETOSA, was formed in 1996 to act as the tourism marketing arm of SADC and promote the tourist attractions and services of the region to source markets. During 1998, a Tourism Protocol for the SADC region was also ratified which has as its aim the facilitation of tourism to and within the region. Namibia is a full member of WTO.

Affiliated government tourism institutions include:

Namibia Tourism Board

The Namibia Tourism Board in conjunction with the private sector and the ministry, will be responsible for marketing of the tourism product including:

- Actively market and promote Namibia as the premier tourism destination
- Actively promote successes in the communal areas locally, nationally and internationally.
- Use the local and international media to recognise and promote establishments that take action to become socially and environmentally responsible
- Encourage successful responsible tourism suppliers to champion the cause of the communities and the spread of Responsible Tourism

Human resource development & training will be a key responsibility of the NTB.

There is a need to establish a standard national qualification framework for the tourism sector. All levels of training should be considered for accreditation including community level.

The NTB will also be responsible for the creation of industry standards.

Namibia Wildlife Resorts

As operators of tourism accommodation within Namibia's protected areas, Namibia Wildlife Resorts play a key role in the development of tourism. It is recognised that the facilities are inherited from a pre-independence period and that the product needs to be adapted to fit market demand, as well as overall development objectives of the country.

Air Namibia

As the national carrier responsible for the majority of air transport facilities, domestically, regionally and internationally, the airline plays a pivotal role in the supply of customers to Namibia's diverse tourism products. A close working relationship between the NTB, the industry and Air Namibia will be important. Jointly funded marketing programs will be encouraged.

The role of the private sector

The private tourism sector in Namibia is represented by the Federation of Namibia Tourist Associations (FENATA) of which the following tourism organisations are members:

- Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN)
- Tour & Safari Association of Namibia (TASA)
- Car Rental Association of Namibia (CARAN)
- Tourism-related Namibian Business Association (TRENABA)
- Namibia Community-based Tourism Association (NACOBTA)
- Namibia Professional Hunters' Association (NAPHA)
- Association of Namibian Travel Agents (ANTA)

Other private sector associations are: -

- Regional and Publicity Associations, e.g. Namib i, Etosha i and Southern Tourism Forum
- Conservancy associations (CANAN)

The private sector is the operator of tourism in Namibia. It is recognised that they have created trust with the industry in the various source markets which is beneficial for the whole country. These relations need to be kept and expanded.

Although the product offered by the industry has been successful in the markets it was targeted for, the industry is encouraged to expand their product to different markets and to take recognition of broad development issues to which the tourism industry can contribute. These are mainly related to integrating previously disadvantaged groups into the industry as players and recipients of tourism benefits.

The industry is encouraged to enter into partnerships with community organisations to develop tourism in a responsible manner. Their contributions may include:

- Capital investment
- Management expertise
- Transfer skills to communal area provision of capital investments
- Assistance in marketing and other technical areas.

The role of NGOs

NGOs, particularly those with an environmental and community-based focus, are expected to play a vital role in the development and spread of responsible tourism practices. They are expected to play the following roles:

- Contribute to the development of policies and plans for the tourism industry
- Assist government in developing standards for responsible tourism
- Assist government, private sector and communities in implementing, monitoring and evaluating responsible tourism
- Source funding from donor agencies to develop specific community-based tourism projects
- Assist communities and community groups in getting organised, preparing themselves for tourism and implementing tourism projects
- Assist government in conducting tourism and environmental awareness programs among communities and the tourism industry at large
- Liase between the private sector and communities to generate more community involvement in the tourism sector and stronger private sector commitment
- Deliver education, training and bridging courses to local communities

MET/ NGO partnerships include:

- Namibian Association for Community Based Natural Resource Management Support Organisations (NACSO)

The role of communities

Communities should ideally be seen as private sector players in the tourism industry. However, it is recognised that their entry is of a disadvantaged position and that additional effort by all other stakeholders need to be made to achieve the overall objectives through tourism development.

Communities should be involved in the development of tourism in the following ways:

- Organise themselves at all levels (national, provincial and local) to play a more effective role in the tourism industry and interact with government and role players at all levels
- Oppose developments that are harmful to the local environment and culture of the community
- Conservancy development
- Raising community awareness of resource management and tourism.
- Commitment to developing tourism related enterprises to contribute to economic development of local community.
- Maintain and develop traditions and encourage cultural tourism
- Enter into joint venture partnerships with private sector
- The provision of a conducive tourism environment.
- Actively participate in and promote responsible tourism

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