

We all 'do' tourism

Tourism's impact and reach is misunderstood, especially within science, engineering and technology (SET). Tourism is part of a much larger system that relates to almost every area of life. Tourism has intrinsic links to SET; yet its role and reach is not clearly understood by governments, policymakers, academics, and people in general.

NSTF national Discussion Forum on 'Science & Sustainable Tourism' held from 3-4 August 2017 in Gauteng:

The discussion forum looked at, among other things:

- Research in tourism
- Research in the areas where tourism happens
- Science tourism

The NSTF provides neutral collaborative platforms where issues and sectors meet

One of the [National Science and Technology Forum \(NSTF\)](#) functions is to hold [discussion forums](#), bringing the private and public sector together to make connections. Feedback from these discussion forums is then given to the stakeholders, including government.

United Nations declared 2017 the International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development: [Sustainable tourism](#) is about the optimal use of environmental resources, respecting the socio-cultural context of host communities, and providing viable long-term socio-economic benefits to all. Sustainable tourism also encompasses poverty reduction, increased employment, biodiversity protection, and working within a green economy.

SA first country to include responsible tourism in legislation: Ms Morongoe Ramphela, Deputy Director General: Tourism Sector Support Services, Department of Tourism (DoT), explained that DoT's mandate is to develop sustainable tourism. This includes various [programmes and strategies](#) encompassing areas such as rural tourism, heritage and culture, tourism at a community level, and responsible tourism (climate change, resource efficiency, and community participation).

DoT key sustainability challenges reflect SET issues:

The sustainability issues range from the inefficient use of water resources and energy to improper waste management and climate change impacts. Issues also look at biodiversity loss and poaching. Ramphela emphasised that more research is needed for all of these.

SA as a research destination and science tourism: Mr Bheki Hadebe from the Department of Science and Technology (DST) spoke about science tourism in South Africa. This can be described as visiting and exploring scientific landmarks, museums, research facilities, observatories, nature reserves and science centres. It is where scientific endeavours attract tourism.

He used the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) as an example. It turned Sutherland from a small agricultural town to a science tourism destination. The number of visitors to Sutherland has grown exponentially.

SKA for research and science tourism: "SA has positioned itself to be an astronomy hub," says Mr Lorenzo Raynard from the Square Kilometre Array (SKA SA). It draws audiences from across the globe and not just researchers. The country's astronomy investments range from the SKA and the South African Astronomical Observatory (which also manages the SALT and other facilities at Sutherland) to the historical observatory in Cape Town and the Iziko Planetarium with its new digital dome.

SKA SA places a strong emphasis on science communication, outreach and community engagement, including citizen science (such as data collection). Raynard explained that the drive is to be as multi-disciplinary as possible, ensuring that history, geography, biology, archaeology etc are part of the context. Another strategic element is ensuring that local communities derive direct benefit from the project.

Tourism for economic development and inclusivity: Africa needs to diversify its economic streams beyond natural resource activities such as mining. Tourism supplies part of the solution, explained Sisa Ntshona, CEO of South African Tourism, the public entity responsible for promoting tourism in SA.

The trend in SA is opposite to that of most countries – we have higher numbers of international tourists compared to domestic tourists. Ntshona relates this back to apartheid, the legacy of contained movement and lack of inclusivity, which still remains in people's minds. Part of the SA Tourism strategy is to increase this domestic market and to promote inclusivity.

Impact of tourism on the economy

- Travel and tourism generated a total contribution of \$27 billion to South Africa's GDP in 2016. This is larger than that of the automotive manufacturing, agriculture, and chemical manufacturing sectors.
- In 2016, travel and tourism sustained a total of 1.5 million direct, indirect and induced jobs in the country. This means that it directly supported nearly twice as many jobs as the mining sector and more than five times as many jobs as the automotive manufacturing sector.

(Benchmark Report 2017 – South Africa)

All have a role to play in tourism: Ntshona noted that tourism benefits all industries and that SMMEs and entrepreneurship are essential to success. While South Africa has been a preferred destination for the 3 Bs (beach, berg and bush), this is a restrictive view of tourism. Ntshona says we need more products to sell, such as township tourism and agri-tourism. SA Tourism wants people and industries to understand that they all play a role in tourism, from building cities and roads to developing tourism services and picking up litter.

Tourism links into other economic sectors: Without other industries, tourism initiatives have to import products and services such as food and laundry services from other provinces (if not from other countries). Investment only remains in the area by creating a local ecosystem and value chain. While not all areas qualify as direct tourist destinations, communities and municipalities can engage in the value chain for other tourist areas by providing necessary products and services.

People key to sustainable tourism: An overriding theme is the importance of people – from the role they play in tourism development to socio-economic effects and the impact tourism can have on poverty alleviation.

Local communities must benefit: Tourism's role needs to be clear to local communities. For example, why the land for national game parks is better used for wild animals than for grazing or agriculture and how the surrounding communities receive direct benefit (ranging from employment opportunities to the development of surrounding infrastructure).

Framework for Socio-Economic Research: Prof Melville Saayman, Director of TREES (Tourism Research in Economic Environs and Society), North-West University, has a particular research focus on the socio-economic impact of tourism on communities regarding improving people's quality of life. (He is also an [NSTF-South32 Award winner](#).)

The professor developed the Framework for Socio-Economic Research as a conceptual model for studying the interaction between communities, attractions, businesses and tourists. It's about identifying community benefits, identifying money spent by people, and the money received by businesses and the attractions. The framework also considers the multiplier effect ie how much money remains behind in the local area.

Tourism needs to be multidisciplinary: Collaboration and a multi-disciplinary approach is not a simple task, especially in a silo-based system. There is a lack of coordination within government, academia, and business, with role players not even realising they are in tourism. Another aspect is that research into tourism in South Africa is under researched and underfunded.

[Video clips](#) with the full [presentations](#) and discussion can be found on the [NSTF](#) web site (www.nstf.org.za).

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www.nstf.org.za
E-mail: enquiries@nstf.co.za
Tel: +27 12 841 3987
Fax: 27 12 841 3025

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About the NSTF

The National Science and Technology Forum (NSTF), established in 1995, is a broadly-representative stakeholder body for all SET and innovation organisations in South Africa, which seeks to influence policy formulation and delivery.

The NSTF Awards are unique in SA, recognising the outstanding contributions of individuals and groups to SET and innovation.

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