

# Impacting lives through sustainable tourism and transformation

 By [Sisa Ntshona](#)

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With the gradual easing of border restrictions around the world and as countries slowly start welcoming tourists back, it goes without saying that Covid-19 has been particularly devastating on the tourism sector. In her recent budget vote speech, Minister of Tourism, Ms Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane told Parliament that an estimated R54.2 billion in output may already have been lost between mid-March and the end of May this year. The sector now faces a potential 75% revenue reduction in 2020, with 438,000 jobs at risk.



Image via [South African Tourism](#)

As tourism activities slowly resume, it is inevitable that certain things are going to change. Expected changes include new tourist behavior patterns and preferences. For instance, research done by South African Tourism shows that, as tourism restarts after lockdown, unsurprisingly, travellers are going to prefer open spaces and avoid crowded and "touristy" areas.

As part of its recovery, the sector is set to adopt technologies to improve operational efficiencies and serve its post-Covid-19 travellers better.



Tourism recovery plan to be submitted to cabinet next month

22 Jul 2020



But, despite the expected changes in traveller behavior and business processes, there are certain fundamentals that should stay intact. In this regard, I can single out the sector's contribution to the support and development of Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). This is consistent with our commitment to sustainable and responsible tourism which is premised on the sector's positive impact such as job creation and economic growth.

By its nature, the tourism sector tends to support a number of localised projects. Sustainable tourism fosters a positive economic, social, and environmental impact on host destinations. On the other hand, responsible tourism is about the manner in which visitors, residents, and small businesses interact with a destination.

## Leveraging growing trends

How does tourism help entrepreneurs, small and medium enterprises to survive and thrive? Expected changes in traveller behavior post-Covid-19 present an opportunity for smaller and marginalised enterprises to leverage the trends that are anticipated. As visitors want to explore destinations less travelled, avoid crowds and take road trips rather than risk flying there are opportunities for individual travel guides, shuttle services, and one-person operators to tailor experiences to these preferences.

As we revitalise the sector and position South Africa as a preferred leisure, business and events tourism destination, we must be mindful of our responsibility to foster inclusivity and meaningful transformation.

Part of our role as SA Tourism is to improve the lives of South Africans by contributing to the inclusive growth of the country's economy through tourism. It stands to reason that, for tourism to contribute sustainably to job creation and poverty reduction, its value chain must be inclusive and transformed.

The revised National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) 2016-2026 envisages sustainable development and growth of tourism enterprises in a manner that facilitates inclusive participation, job creation and contributes to the competitiveness of tourism destinations.

An important element in the drive towards sustainable development and growth of tourism enterprises is enterprise development.

## Playing a positing role

By supporting marginalised and empowered enterprises, the sector contributes to South Africa's long-term economic growth. Given the inequality and unemployment problem in the country, enterprise development is an opportunity for companies to play a positive role in the society.



### Supporting local tourism SMMEs during lockdown

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Covid-19 has exposed the vulnerability of smaller and marginalised enterprises and the inequality gap which vastly reduces our ability to fight the pandemic. With no revenue for months now, most tourism SMMEs are going to emerge from the devastating lockdown worse off than before. Many will not survive.

Government is taking steps to support vulnerable enterprises. The Minister of Tourism says the Department of Tourism intends to implement an Enterprise Development Programme, primarily targeted at women and youth to provide support to

rural tourism enterprises over the medium-term period. The Programme comprises Hub-based Tourism Incubation Support and offsite national support for SMMEs with a drive to reallocate the business event and related tourism spend away from the golden triangle to incorporate the villages, towns and small dorpiess.

## Accelerating sector development

Established companies in the sector must also play their bit. If the sector fails to accelerate the development and sustainability of marginalised enterprises, it will have missed a golden opportunity to contribute to a vibrant, robust, productive and diversified economy. Given the inequality and unemployment problem in the country, enterprise development is an opportunity for companies to play a positive role in the society.

Enterprise development is not charity work or an afterthought. It is a sustainable business relationship. Big players can diversify their procurement spend by first and foremost buying from local suppliers; buying from emerging black, women, youth owned enterprises. Support for the local restaurant, tour guide and buying craft from local entrepreneurs goes a long way in empowering smaller and marginalised businesses.

Therefore, we must be deliberate and resolute in our support for small and emerging enterprises owned by the women, black people or persons with disabilities.

Authentic partnerships with marginalised enterprises are an investment in the future of South Africa.

## ABOUT SISA NTSHONA

Sisa Ntshona was appointed Chief Executive Officer of South African Tourism in October 2016. In this position, he is responsible for steering the mandate and all operations of the National Destination Marketing Organisation's head office and its country offices.

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