

Title: *Sho't left or Right: Leveraging Tourism potential to enhance economic transformation within the local government sphere.*

Authors: Shirin Motala (smotala@hsrc.ac.za) and Stewart Ngandu (sngandu@hsrc.ac.za), Economic Performance and Development Programme, Human Sciences Research Council

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Abstract:

Tourism is recognised as one of the few sectors which have continued to demonstrate [a contribution to both economic growth and of the economic and a substantial contribution to job creation \(NDP Vision 2030\)](#). South Africa's growth in tourism visitors has outperformed continental and global averages. Importantly it is also one of the sectors which absorbs large numbers of young people. It also creates pathways into the labour market for those with little education and skills largely due to its low entry requirements.

Constitutionally local government has a function in relation to tourism promotion. The Municipal Structures Act allocates this responsibility to district and metro municipalities with respect to provision of infrastructure and basic services/amenities which are critical for tourism development. It has also largely manifested the role of local government in creating and managing the regulatory function. The Municipal Systems Act on the other hand defines a role for local government to establish and resource marketing institutions such as Tourism promotion and information offices.

Ethekwini Metro has and remains at the forefront of efforts to position Durban as a leading tourist destination and in promoting [sustainable](#) tourism. There is however widespread recognition that tourism industry's full potential has not been leveraged. This in part arises from a lack of investment in the human capabilities necessary to offer "[an excellent](#)" tourism visitor experience. As a service [industry](#) a core element of the industry are the people who staff tourism facilities and deliver appropriate services. ~~... in short it is people centred and driven.~~

The National Department of Tourism (NDT) has outlined that the industry "*requires, the right people in the right place, at the right time and with the right skills/competencies*". Herein lies the challenge:

- The industry is populated by large numbers of people who lack basic skills;
- Although the industry attracts many young people it is unable to afford them career pathways and mobility within the industry;
- Majority of the enterprises in the industry are SMME's. It is widely known that SMMEs face serious sustainability challenges. Lack of capacity is one of the factors impacting on sustainability.

It suggests that human resource development in tourism has been largely neglected and suffers from a few key problems namely

- The lack of coordination, vertically and horizontally amongst core stakeholders in the planning for THRD;
- The absence of effective engagements between tourism industry enterprises and education and training institutions in the delivery of interventions to address THRD which addresses industry needs;
- The lack of role clarification in respect of addressing THRD and the silo approach to delivery in programmes to address THRD by all stakeholders;
- The lack of data (intelligence) to inform planning as well as the lack of effective monitoring and evaluation systems for evidence based planning and programming.

Importantly local government, as the sphere of government closest to tourism enterprises, plays almost no role in strengthening HRD. It begs the question of why should it, particularly as it exceeds the mandate of local government.

The paper will present evidence from research conducted by the HSRC in supporting the NDT in the development of a National Tourism Human Resource Development (THRD) Strategy. Based on a consultative and participatory process a National Human Resource Development Strategy for Tourism has been developed. The paper will outline key findings from the research and share recommendations on what role local government should play in order to enhance its share of tourism growth and contribution to the economy and to addressing unemployment.

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