



# Deconstructing the role of Tourism Stakeholder Engagement in the Northern Cape Province

PPS Sifolo

Doctor of Business Administration candidate at Graduate School of Business and Leadership  
University of KwaZulu-Natal (Westville Campus), South Africa  
[sifolops@tut.ac.za](mailto:sifolops@tut.ac.za)

Prof. R. Rugimbana

Executive Dean at the Faculty of Economics & Finance at Tshwane University of Technology  
South Africa

Dr. M Hoque

Academic Leader for Higher Degrees and Research at  
Graduate School of Business and Leadership  
University of KwaZulu-Natal (Westville Campus)  
South Africa

## Abstract

This study sought to investigate selected stakeholder perspectives on the levels of engagement with regards to tourism in the Northern Cape Province of South Africa. The roles of prominent tourism stakeholders (SAT, NDT, provincial and local government, NGOs) were explored to confirm if they are clearly stipulated and understood by selected tourism stakeholders in improving the tourism sector of the Northern Cape Province. The intention was to identify the factors that have the potential of achieving or hindering the South African government's economic growth agenda with regards to the tourism industry. To this end, this study is undertaken in the context of the specific tourism environment of the Northern Cape. Interviews were conducted with the relevant stakeholders. This provided rich insights into the tourism stakeholders in the Northern Cape Province as far as policy application, public private partnership, national support and future planning are concerned. These theoretical findings offer important managerial implications for the tourism sector in the Northern Cape to create an effective and a valuable tourist destination. This study attempts to contribute towards the tourism efforts of the Northern Cape, by suggesting a paradigm shift towards a stakeholder engagement perspective as an alternative approach for the improvement of the tourism sector and its contribution to economic growth.

**Keywords:** Northern Cape, Stakeholder engagement, Tourism, Government agenda

## Introduction

Over the past two decades, significant research attention about the tourism industry has been directed towards addressing the issue of how stakeholders of the tourism industry throughout the tourism supply chain should be engaged in order to effectively utilise the respective government economic policies and thus to influence the development and maintenance of economically viable tourism. Although tourism experts such as Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead (2008), identified this issue as representing an important deficiency in tourism strategy formulations over a decade ago, its resolution has continued to present an important challenge in the development of viable strategies for the tourism industry, which inter-alia include tourism attractions and their destinations.

In theory it is often suggested that tourism is among the key contributors to the economic activity and even development of any country. For instance writers have suggested that tourism not only has a significant role in the economy (Edgel Sr et al., 2008; Witt, Brook & Buckley, 2013; Telfer & Sharpley, 2015; Tribe, 2016) particularly in terms of its roles as an increasingly important source of income and employment, on one hand, and as a



major factor in the balance of payment for many countries on the other. It is these kinds of arguments that have led to further studies which find that tourism around the world is increasingly attracting the attention of various governments and other stakeholders (Kastarlak and Barber, 2012; Dwyer, Mistilis, Edwards, & Roman, 2016). Indeed Kastarlak and Barber,(2012) go as far as arguing that although there is a debate about what makes tourism an economic sector, the economic importance of tourism is recognised beyond doubt. Once again in theory, according to Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead (2008:1), "tourism is an increasingly popular component of development strategy in low income countries". However, this important idea is based on the belief that tourism can serve as a substantial source of foreign exchange earnings, and that the tourism industry's labour intensive character plays a significant role in job creation and overall improvement in income distribution (Wattanakuljarus & Coxhead, 2008; Hall, 2009).

In practice however, many scholars have often alluded to tourism as an inherently complex and even complicated field which is sometimes difficult to define (Edgel Sr et. al, 2008; Piboonrunroj and Disney, 2009). This is most likely due to the tourism sector's interconnectedness with other industries; which has led some writers to refer to it as an amalgam of industry sectors (Tribe, 2016; Novelli & Hellwig, 2013; Edgel Sr et al, 2008; Kastarlak and Barber, 2012). In addition, some scholars make mention of a number of factors that could impede the tourism sector's vibrancy in a given destination. They cite amongst others, institutional fragmentation and the heterogeneous mix of organisations ranging from public to private sectors of the tourism industry (Albrecht, 2017; Keyser, 2012; Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010; Tourism Sector Studies Project, 2008; the Marketing Tourism Growth Strategy for South Africa 2011-2013).

It is these inconsistencies between what can happen in theory and what is happening in practice that raises significant research questions in regards to a possible "missing link" that can explain the nexus between theory and practice. It is proposed that the missing link is 'stakeholder engagement'. This paper aims to undertake research that will hopefully fill that small gap.

### **Research aim**

The research aim is to establish the critical role of stakeholder engagement as the proposed "missing link" between Government support and the implementation of tourism policies in the Northern Cape tourism sector. It's posited in this paper that stakeholders within the tourism supply chain elements can play a critical role in assisting to identify potential factors that may hinder or enhance the government's agenda of implementing and improving the tourism sector in South Africa and more especially in the Northern Cape Province.

The main research question posited for this study is: Are the roles of prominent tourism stakeholders (SAT, NDT, provincial and local government, NGOs) clearly stipulated and understood by tourism businesses in improving tourism sector of the NCP?

### **Literature review: South Africa as part of a broader economic system and its tourism status**

Tourism is seen as an effective means through which South Africa could successfully enter and compete in the international economic system and in which it has a competitive advantage *vis-à-vis* other destinations (Cornelissen, 2005:680). Having a competitive advantage improves the country's image which depends on competent supply chains in today's digital economy (Kotler, 2001). South Africa is part of the African and the global community; and has been more connected and involved in business with the



international community. Hence the importance of its engagement, cooperation, coordination and interactions with the world in general matters when it comes to doing business. The Department of Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation (DPME) (2014), reiterates that South Africa's reintegration into the global community has seen its diplomatic, political and economic relations expand rapidly to include countries with which it previously had no relations. Such engagements have an effect when it comes to the tourism sector's vibrancy. According to the SAT 2012/ 2013 report, tourist arrivals from the Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC) coalition of countries accounted for 330 834 of South Africa's international tourist numbers in 2012. Moreover, according to Ogunnubi (2015) South Africa manifests its global acceptance through its affiliations and the digital economy contributes to the business environment or the market or economic environment in which a firm operates (Grant, 2011). Therefore, uncovering a few of South Africa's cooperation, engagement and interactions with the global community could be critical since this study focuses on unpacking the role of tourism stakeholder engagement in the Northern Cape Province in South Africa.

South Africa is a member of numerous global alliances including; the United Nations (UN); the G20 (the premier forum for international cooperation on the most important issues of the global and financial agenda); World Trade Organisation (WTO); G77 (developing countries signatories articulating and promoting its collective economic interests); India, Brazil, South Africa (IBSA); an international tripartite grouping for promoting international cooperation among these countries); Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS); a grouping of countries at a similar stage of newly-advanced economic development; Non-Aligned Movement (NAM); a group of states which are not formally aligned with or against any major power block; African Union (AU); a geopolitical entity consisting of 54 African States; Southern African Development Community (SADC); an intergovernmental organization seeking to furthering socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation among 15 Southern African states; Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Being a member of numerous global alliances (attractive countries/ destinations) is of paramount importance for South Africa to develop its structures, policies and strategies accordingly. For example, the same point is captured by the 2009/2010 NCTA Annual Report where it is stated that international platforms like Meetings Africa and International Tourism Exchange (ITE) form the basis for the development of new ideas, global approaches and targeted marketing for the country.

### **Significance in collaboration and partnerships**

The elevated significance of tourism continues to attract attention of various governments and other stakeholders such as the private sector to achieve growth and create jobs opportunities in many countries (Witt, Brook & Buckley, 2013). According to the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and World Tourism Organisation (WTO)(2005), most governments, international development agencies, trade associations and non-governmental organizations acknowledge that, without sustainability, there cannot be development that generates tourism benefits to all stakeholders.

The South African tourism industry recognises the vitality of cooperation and coordination among stakeholders in different levels of government. This is a pivotal point considering the interconnectedness of the sector, let alone government's vested interest of utilising tourism in its economic growth plans. However, policies and regulatory frameworks for tourism sector are deemed extremely complex (Department of Labour, 2008); due to the involvement of the national, provincial, regional and local government. Such complexity contributes towards the challenges facing the tourism industry. Therefore, understanding major challenges is important for the country to ensure

effective manoeuvring towards planning, coordinating and marketing distribution of tourism among the provinces. This will ensure competitiveness and maximum tourism economic growth of the country. Although there appears to be consensus on the role of tourism in the economic growth, scholars focus on different subjects of tourism as requiring attention of policy matters in the industry. The following section focuses on the contribution of the tourism industry to the economy of the country.

### **Tourism's contribution to the economy**

There is plethora of literature that generally confirms that tourism is a diverse industry that has the ability to contribute to the economy of a county (Timothy, 2002; Nordin, 2004; Vellas & Becherel, 1995; Nickson, 2013). The offerings of the tourism industry are characterised by natural and man-made attractions, facilities, accommodation, transportation, destination marketing organizations and restaurants (Nickson, 2013). The available literature also points to an acceptance by scholars that tourism is a global phenomenon that makes a critical contribution to the development of growing economies (Kastarlak & Barber, 2012, Nieman & Nieuwenhuizen, 2009; Liu, Tzeng & Lee, 2001; Cukier, cited in Sharpley & Telfer 2014; Sifolo, 2015). According to Kastarlak and Barber (2012), to spread the benefits of tourism for poverty reduction and income distribution, it is necessary to consider that tourism is an export industry. International tourism is the primary focus of tourism development. Evidence captured in the WTTC economic impact 2016 report declares that the GDP direct contribution of travel and tourism to South Africa was around R118.6 billion in 2015 (3.0% of total GDP), and outperformed all other sectors in terms of both GDP and job creation (WTTC, 2016). Gee, Makens and Choy (1989:76) indicate that tourism is about encouraging the 'right' type of development that will attract the 'right' type of provider, which will appear to the 'right' travel distributor who will reach the 'right' type of tourist. However, Dwyer, Forsyth and Dwyer (2010), argue that the industry is an interlinked and mutually dependent sector. According to the WTTC (2016), the direct contribution of Travel & Tourism to GDP is expected to grow by 3.8% pa to R178.3 billion (3.4% of GDP) by 2026.

The leisure travel spending (inbound and domestic) generated 66.0% of direct travel and tourism GDP in 2014 amounting to R162.3 billion compared with 34.0% for business travel spending of R83.6 billion (WTTC, 2015). The GDP total contribution of tourism is expected to rise by 4.3% pa to ZAR561.4bn (10.4% of GDP) in 2025 (WTTC, 2015). By this conceptualisation, it could be reasonably expected that governments should come up with strategies, policies or plans for the express purpose of utilising the tourism sector as a significant tool to boost their economies. This is the basis for this study. However the fact that the theoretical expectations do not appear to be in concert with the realities at hand suggests that a *missing link* (stakeholder engagement) between Government support and the implementation of tourism policies in the Northern Cape tourism sector need further interrogation.

### **Tourism sector in the Northern Cape Province**

The Northern Cape Province has five distinctive natural biomes which makes to province to be a competitive tourism destination when compared to the rest of South Africa (DEDAT, 2012). These are the diamonds, the Kalahari, Namaqualand flowers, stargazing and cultural heritage (DEDAT, 2012). Among the attractions available are the world's largest telescope at Carnarvon, known as the Square Kilometre Array (SKA), the Kalagadi Transfrontier Park at Upington, Tankwa Karoo National Park, the Big Hole in Kimberley, Mokala National Park, Augrabies Falls National Park and the Eye of Kuruman. The province is home to five out of the seven natural biomes in South Africa



and possesses rich biodiversity of provincial and national parks, that ranges from unique natural features including a desert, wildflowers, the Orange River. The Province is well known for many outdoor and adventure activities on offer (*South African Tourism*, 2012). For example, the Sutherland site possesses the largest astronomical observatory as a “unique endowment that is multinational-sponsored and is known as the Southern African Large Telescope (SALT) (*South African Year Book*, 2015); about 12000 tourists are recorded annually (Morning live, 2016).

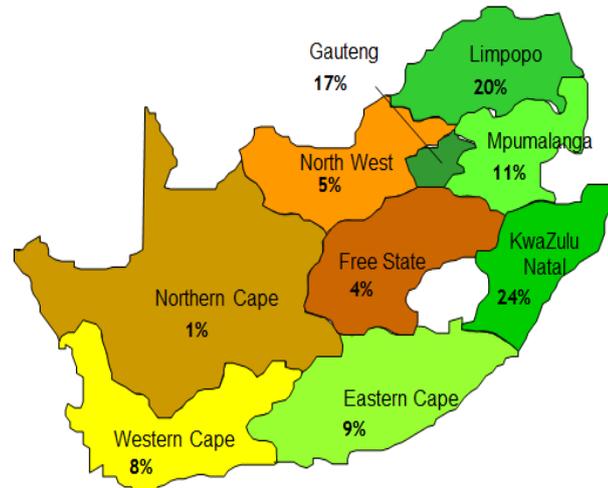
These unique features should ideally attract tourists. Since biodiversity is the major eco-tourism attraction, according to the meeting for the Ministers known as the T.20 held at the Republic of Korea in 2010, on biodiversity was recognised as an essential provision to human development due to the goods and services it delivers (Goldin, 2010). An estimated 40% of the global economy is based on biological products and processes with an estimated value of US\$33 trillion per year (Costanza *et al.*, 1997). The province prides itself on a variety of out-of-doors and adventure activities. Moreover, the Province earned an accolade of being the best naturalistic destination in 2009/2010 (*Northern Cape Tourism Annual Report*, 2009/2010:3).

To add on the list are the following main attractions and activities found in Northern Cape;

- Kalahari Gemsbok National Park (it is an international park shared with Botswana).
- The Au-grabies Falls and the diamond mining regions in Kimberley and Alexander Bay.
- The Namaqualand region in the west with famous daisies.
- The southern towns of De Aar with major transport nodes between Johannesburg, Cape Town and Port Elizabeth.
- In the northeast, Kuruman is famous for a mission station and its 'eye'.
- The Orange River that flows through the province, forming the borders with the Free State in the southeast and with Namibia to the northwest. The river is also used to irrigate the many vineyards in the arid region near Upington.

The Province possesses cultural and heritage attractions with unique museums (related to the diamond industry, the Anglo-Boer War and the political struggle); special archaeological and rock art sites, noticeable historical personalities and legacies, unique and endangered cultures (e.g. San, Nama and Griqua); historical mission stations and unique community lifestyles. According to the domestic tourism survey by StatsSA (2011:5), the main destination for day trips in South Africa was Gauteng at 23,9%, followed by Western Cape (14,4%), and KwaZulu-Natal (14,2%). However, in 2013 “KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo were destinations of choice for most domestic tourists with roughly 15% of the trips destined for these provinces” (Stats SA, 2013). The survey showed that Northern Cape had fewer visitors than other provinces with 3,0% of day trip travellers (StatsSA, 2013). When it comes to destination markets, KZN was leading with 24% largest share of holiday trips as indicated in Figure 1. Yet again, the NCP came lowest when it comes to a destination source market in 2012 (Saunders, 2014).

Tourism development in the Northern Cape has faced various challenges during the past decades, including those indicated in the Northern Cape Provincial Tourism Government White Paper of 2005. However, when it comes to the budget, Northern Cape and Free State received the same amount of tourism budget of R43 millions which is less than that of the other provinces (SA Tourism Review, 2015). Yet, the SA Tourism Review (2015) pointed out that there was a total budget of R1,5 billion for the combined tourism allocations within provincial departments in 2014/5.



**Figure 1:** Destination markets 2012 (Source: SA Tourism, Annual Tourism Report, 2012)

One may therefore pose a question that could it be that the Northern Cape and Free State provinces have smaller populations as compared to other provinces? One may argue that their populations are not equal in numbers and in terms of development. Could it be an issue of stakeholder engagement and cooperation that causes the Northern Cape Province to contribute less to the tourism GDP in the country? Or could it be an issue of not being able to attract visitors?

### Research Methodology

The research methodology commenced by identifying the research paradigm adopted which is based on the interpretivism paradigms, whereby an exploratory single case research methodology is used. A paradigm is the overlaying view of the way the world works (Jennings, 2001:34). The research paradigm adopted which is based on ontological position. According to Smith (2010:18) “ontology is the philosophy of the nature of reality”. In this case, the ontological position (the opinion of what the truth is) of the study is from the nature of reality that the tourism sector has been earmarked in the South African NDP as a springboard for economic development whilst contributing to the growth of the economy (NDP 2030, 2013; NTSS, 2011). Cohen and Manion (1994:36) postulate that interpretivist researchers understand “the world of human experience”. In this case, the South African government recognizes that tourism is one of the catalytic sectors for economic growth. It is one of the priority sectors that play a critical role in the economic activity of South Africa. One of the observable social realities is that the tourism industry in the Northern Cape Province is the least preferred tourism destination and it contributes less to the GDP contrary to the tourism sector of other South African Provinces (Sifolo, 2015). This paper aimed to investigate the stakeholder engagement from interpretivism paradigms in the field of business management and tourism because of the complexity within the industry and relationships involved.

### Population and sampling procedure

The empirical study consisted of 19 interviews the surveys. The study population in the qualitative method comprised the prominent tourism stakeholders from the public and the private sector at the national level (South Africa); provincial (Northern Cape), and at the local level (5 district municipalities and 25 local municipalities). The rationale for using a broad range of participants was to capture the viewpoints of the public and the private sector participants. The selection of the prominent tourism stakeholders was based on

the nature and the status of the tourism industry in South Africa which is public sector led, private sector driven and follows a community based approach (South African Tourism Planning Toolkit for Local Government (2008); White Paper on the Promotion and Development of Tourism in South Africa (1996); Rogerson (2001) and Bins and Nel (2002). The scope of the study lies with the public and the private sector only.

The South African government (public sector), through other policies, has identified tourism as one of the sectors that will assist to grow the economy (NDP 2030, 2013, p, 152-153). Moreover, the roles and the responsibilities of the municipalities in the Province involves basic services which have an impact to the tourism sector, was considered to be crucial in this study. The proportion of population sampled involved the tourism practitioners from (national, provincial, districts and local municipalities). The private sector was also considered as the driver of the tourism sector (South African Tourism Planning Toolkit for Local Government, 2008). One may argue that this view emphasises the structural aspects of tourism management and assumes that all the tourism stakeholders have the private and governmental support in all the Provinces. However, the aspects of the structure in which management operates may differ, but the essence of the function is very much the same. Such critical points were also based on the rationale and the research questions of the study by the researcher. The research study targeted both active tourism members and non- active tourism members of the Northern Cape Province.

### **Sampling**

Non-probability sampling technique was used by the researchers because not all the individuals in the population has equal chances of being selected. Through this, it was possible to identify potential subjects in studies where subjects are generally hard to locate (Castillo, 2009). In this case, non-probability sampling was used for the selection of knowledgeable and experienced participants; hence sampling was applicable to the following tourism stakeholders;

- Strategically placed personnel or the research department at , South African Tourism (SAT), National Department of Tourism (NDT); the provincial level involves the Northern Cape Tourism Authority (NCTA), Department of Economic Development and Tourism (DEDAT), Northern Cape Chamber of Commerce (NOCCI), Tourism Enterprise Partnership (TEP),
- Local Economic Development (LED) personnel or Tourism Officers from the district and local municipalities in the NC.

### **Data collection**

The data-collection techniques employed in this study incorporated a combination of interviews, and questionnaire guide. The primary data was collected by using unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews were conducted to suspend any preconceived notions or personal experiences that may have an undue influence. Interviews were conducted to obtain detailed input from selected interviews regarding the stakeholders' perspectives of the challenges facing the tourism industry in South Africa, particularly in the Northern Cape Province. According to De Vos *et al.* (2005:287) interviewing is the predominant mode of data or information collection in qualitative research. Secondary data were gathered by means of a literature review.

### **Interviews**



Firstly, the interviews were conducted with the tourism stakeholders (from the public and the private sector) to interrogate in greater depth the challenges facing the tourism sector in the Northern Cape Province. In-depth interviews were conducted with the key tourism stakeholders, from practitioners, marketing and strategically placed personnel in the public and the private sector at the national level and the district and local municipalities in the Northern Cape tourism sector. The purpose was to obtain an in depth information to identify themes and motifs of the stakeholders, particularly their perspective and to ensure credibility. Through convergence of different perspectives, drawing conclusions based on observation and experience from an investigation is acceptable in an empirical investigation (Quinlan, 2011).

Nineteen in-depth interviews took place in the Northern Cape Province with the strategically placed personnel (Northern Cape tourism practitioners from provincial, regional and district municipalities). The interview process started with the key stakeholders such as SAT, NDT, NCTA, DEDAT, and 4 district Municipalities, 9 local municipalities and 2 Non-governmental organisations (TEP) and NOCCI. Although 6 participants were comfortable with sharing their names, 13 participants indicated that they wanted to remain anonymous. During the interviews, a snowball technique was employed to identify other stakeholders who were considered to have relevant characteristics and valuable information regarding the purposes of the study. This helped in identifying a more complete web of legitimate stakeholders. The respondents included key stakeholders and their referrals falling within the specified category. When the saturation point was reached, the interviewing process was finalized.

Experts often indicate that if you interview top bosses you are likely to encounter the 'good news' syndrome (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009), however, in this case, there were numerous strategic personnel. These diverse stakeholders represented the industry, government and the business community. In total, 19 interviews were conducted with diverse stakeholders representing the industry, government and the private sector. The interviews conducted commenced on the 30<sup>th</sup> of April 2015 and the last one was held on the 30<sup>th</sup> of September 2015. The interviews were normally from 1 hour to 1 hour, 30 minutes. It is crucial to highlight that, the diary was kept all the time to make appointments. The interviews with district and local municipalities stakeholders commenced on the 08<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 (at the Northern Cape Tourism Expo) in Kimberley, the last one was held on the 31 of August 2015.

**Table 1:** Interview sampling frame/ Profile of Interviewees

Sample	Size	Position	Organisation type	Interview Dates	Time
South African Tourism	1	(Marketing Representative and Strategically placed personnel	Industry	29/09/15	09:00-10:00
National Department of tourism	1	Tourism Development Representative/ Strategically placed personnel	National government	25/06/15	11:00-12:00
Northern Cape Tourism Authority	1	Strategically placed representative	Official Tourism Destination Marketing organisation	25/09/15	10:00-11:30
Northern Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry	1	Strategically placed representative	Private (Non-governmental organisation)	07/07/15	08:45-10:00
Department of Economic Development and Tourism	1	Strategically placed representative	Provincial government	29/09/15	10:30-11:30

Tourism Enterprise Partnership	1	Strategically placed representative	Non-Profit Organisation	28/09/15	10:00-11:00
District Municipalities	4	Frances Baard, John Taolo Gaetsewe, Namakwa, and ZF Mgcawu/ Siyanda	District Government/ Public	In between 08/07/15 to 31/08/15	1 hr to 1hr 30 minutes
Local Municipalities	9	Sol Plaatje, Magareng, Dikgatlong, Phokwane; Joe Morolong, Khai-ma, //Khara Hais, Kai ! Garib and Emthanjeni	Local Government/ Public		
Total	19				

## Findings

### Unique selling point to attract travellers in NC

Research question seeks to establish the awareness of the stakeholders on the Province's Unique selling point and the effectiveness of the tourism sector. The question reads: *Does the Northern Cape Province have the potential to attract travellers?*

To answer this question, the following processes were conducted:

- a) The Codes Concurrence Table function in ATLAS ti was utilised to consider the tourism stakeholder's participation and different perspectives from the participants in the industry. Unique selling points and the efficiency factors of the tourism industry in the Province were analysed to determine factors that attract the tourists in the Province.
- b) Stakeholders' perspectives were categorised using relationship between stakeholders and efficiency factors of tourism, as characteristics that facilitate the tourism sector in the destination and attract the tourists.
- c) Existing tourism stakeholders' relationship and tourism efficiency factors were used as a basis for determining whether the Northern Cape Province is able to attract travellers.

From the observations made in general, it is crucial to note that getting hold of the stakeholders willing to participate in the study was not an easy task. In general the participants interviewed seemed hesitant to answer the questions regarding the participation of the Provincial tourism bodies such as DEDAT and NCTA. Other participants showed confidence. This could suggest that there could be active tourism stakeholders who would take advantage to participate in tourism related matters and talk about the issues they would want to see DEDAT and NCTA address. Another observed phenomenon was that there are a number of non-active tourism stakeholders within the Province. Some participants work together and are able to utilise the communication platforms that are not exploited fully to prosper, whilst others do not.

To get a better perspective as to whether the sampled stakeholders do have the capacity to attract tourists in the Province, the status of the tourism stakeholders' relationship will be discussed first. Following on from this of the factors that make the tourism sector efficient in the Province will then be discussed.

### Status of the working relationship between tourism stakeholders

The qualitative analysis indicated that there is a working relationship among tourism stakeholders who are operating at different levels in the Province. This includes participation from the private stakeholders to the national, provincial and at the local level. For example, some participants indicated that there are activities and

engagements regarding management of the tourism industry in the Northern Cape which include promoting tourism related activities in the area. Case 1 indicated that:

The NDT has an existing working relationship with stakeholders in the Province such as NCTA via DEDAT. There is also a continual relationship with South African Tourism (SAT) which is an extension of NDT for tourism marketing. These platforms make tourism planning and development easier, and stakeholder engagement is warranted. For example, engaging with NCDEDAT, NDT and SAT informs strategic planning process, therefore, various forums and task teams such as marketing forums are there to ensure the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS) (Quote 1:2 & 1:11).

According to Cases 3 and 9, stakeholder engagement assists in tourism planning and development at the international, national, provincial or local levels. Everyone has a common goal of wanting to make the business a success. Case 3 mentioned that:

DADAT is currently doing business with many organisations, from the public sector, private and the community as a whole. These include the district municipalities, local municipalities, tourism businesses, Gambling Board (GB) and other government departments such as Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA), SALGA, Economic Clusters led by the MEC such as Road and Public Works and the Northern Cape Office of the Premier. When it comes to the tourism industry, DADAT works with several tourism stakeholders and other government departments and the private sector. These include South African National Park's Board, (SANPARKS), Local government, NOCCI, Airport Company South Africa (ACSA), Guest House Associations (Quote 3.2)..... The integrated development plan recognises tourism potential within the area. Collaboration between Botswana, Namibia and the district is one of the success factors (Quote 9.5).

According to the excerpts above, working with many constituent groups can stimulate support. Freeman and McVea (2001), advocate for "active management of business environment, relationships and promotion of shared interests". This point was emphasized by Case 4:

Although there are engagements with DEDAT, the NCTA works well with NOCCI when it comes to sharing information; these stakeholders understand that tourism is business and should be treated as such (Quote 4.2).

Although priorities of stakeholders in tourism organisations vary due to different interests and mandates, collaboration can bear positive results. There are many tourism-related activities and organisations that bring the stakeholders together, such as those indicated by Case 14 and 5:

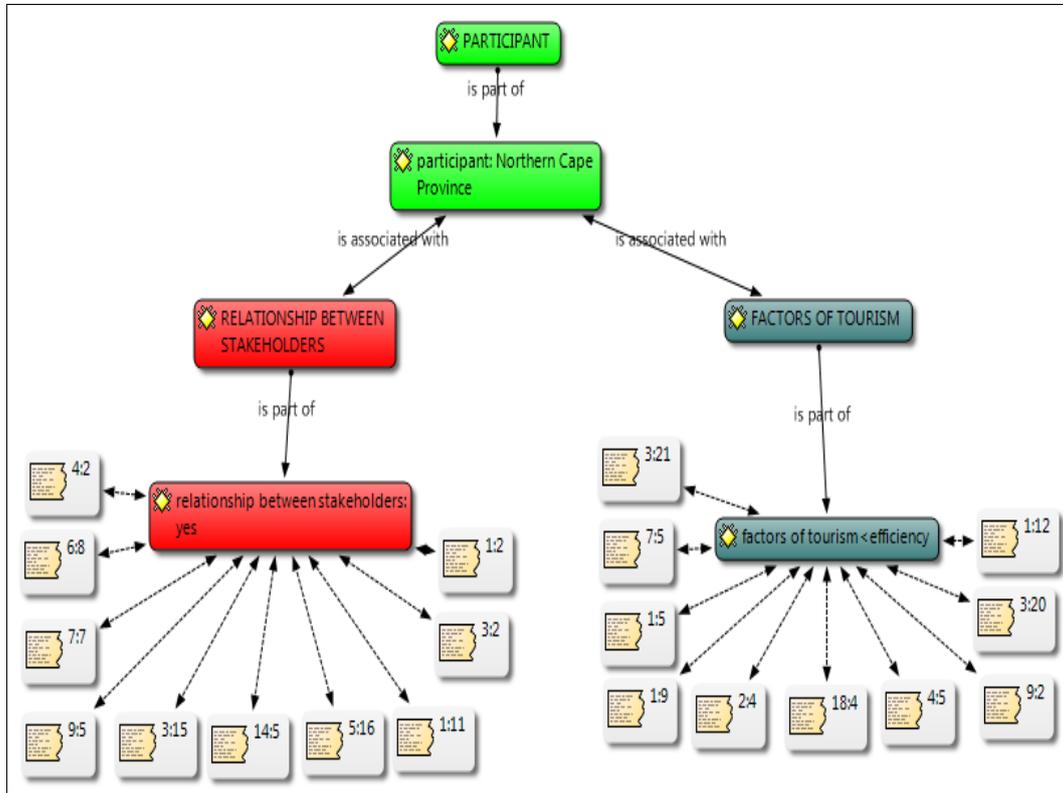
The cooperation between Frances Baard Municipality and the local municipalities remains a success story. The district hosts both national and international events such as an Annual Music Festival, the Skate boarding event. (Quote 14.5). NCTA engages with the stakeholders through e-business marketing, social platforms, mobile apps, Other ideal ways is through the NTSS, MINMEC, MIPTECH, NCTA/DEDAT, district and local municipalities (Quote 5. 16).

In order to get a better perspective of the tourism stakeholders about the unique selling points and the efficiency of the tourism industry in the Province, the factors that make the sector to be efficient to attract the tourists to the Province are discussed.

### **Tourism efficiency factors in the Northern Cape Province**

To provide effective and efficient service excellence in the South African tourism industry, upholding the promise of quality assurance is crucial. According to Langkilde (2015:10), the tourism businesses that allow diversity in the visitors' experience plays a critical role to the tourism experience of the country. Hence, Murphy (2004:371) states that for the tourist destinations to be efficient and effective, various stakeholders (national, provincial

and local government) need to evaluate the levels of satisfaction on both the demand and supply side. It could be argued that the destinations need to have comparative advantage and be marketed well by improving competitiveness of a destination to attract more tourists. To provide an analysis of the factors that makes the tourism sector in the Northern Cape Province to be efficient, the following excerpts demonstrate a range of views and perspectives of the interviewed stakeholders as indicated in Figure 2:



**Figure 2:** Status of the tourism stakeholders' relationship and tourism efficiency factors in the NCP  
 Source: Tourism stakeholders' relationship and tourism efficiency factors in the NCP using ATLAS.TI

One of the focal points in the interviews was to find out what the respondents regard as a competitive advantage for the Province. The findings suggest that the factor that makes the tourism sector to be efficient and effective includes collaboration among the tourism stakeholders, the infrastructure within the Province, appropriate marketing and a nurturing environment. Case 2 referred to branding of the Province as a crucial factor, she stated that:

The Province is branded as the extremes, with extreme sports, culture, nature or destination for adventure (Quote 2. 4).

This assertion was supported by Case 1 which showed that:

Raising the image and visibility of the Province through aggressive marketing and using e-marketing tools can be a solution towards maximising the number of visitors to the Province (Quote 1. 9).

From the above excerpt, it can be deduced that there are challenges relating to visibility and the image of the Province. Other participants indicated that collaboration and consultation are other factors that play a critical role to the efficiency of the tourism sector. There is room for improvement. Case 3 pointed that:



Collaboration and partnership can be a strong intervention on developing emerging entrepreneurs and enterprise development to promote tourism awareness initiatives that can mobilise the participation of the general public (Quote 3. 21).

For tourism supply to flourish, there should be zoning when it comes to the responsibilities. There must be a direct relationship with the key allies because there are overlapping issues regarding constitutional mandate through intergovernmental structures, TMP-Marketing Forums. Continuous consultation is essential to avoid the overlapping missions. All the municipalities must have their IDP's in place (Quote 3. 20).

Although there may be issues regarding tourism supply as suggested by Case 3, Case 1 emphasised that:

A Public Private Partnership is an ideal way to ensure the industry in the Province prospers and the products are growing.

Case 1 and 10 also pointed to funding as an important factor towards ensuring efficiency.

As far as the prospects for funding are concerned, NDT might provide possible funding for certain projects. For example, the province provided proposals to NDT for the identified projects (Quote 1. 5).

There should be funds available to capacitate or provide support for the local municipalities. (Quote 10:11).

From the quotations indicated above, one can argue that efficiency relies on several factors. The excerpts suggest that for the tourism sector to flourish in the Northern Cape the funding of attractions and environmental factors contributes towards competitiveness of the tourism destination in the province. The respondents suggested that the tourism stakeholders in the Province have a relationship with other stakeholders who are from the neighbouring countries such as Namibia and Botswana. Moreover, the excerpts indicate that although the Northern Cape Province is a competitive tourism destination, there are factors that contribute towards the competitiveness of the Province such as the unique selling points and service excellence.

A network view summarises the relationship between the tourism stakeholders who were participants in the study and the factors that makes the tourism industry in the Northern Cape Province to be efficient. The next section supports the results from the qualitative study by indicating the existence of the engagement between the tourism stakeholders who participated in the study through their current membership and by identifying them.

### **The stakeholder engagement between the public, private, district and local municipalities**

The research question sought to understand if there is an instrumental engagement between the prominent tourism stakeholders (from the national level to the local level). The question read: *How is the engagement between the public, private, district and local municipality?*

To answer this question, the following processes were implemented in analysing the responses from the interviews.

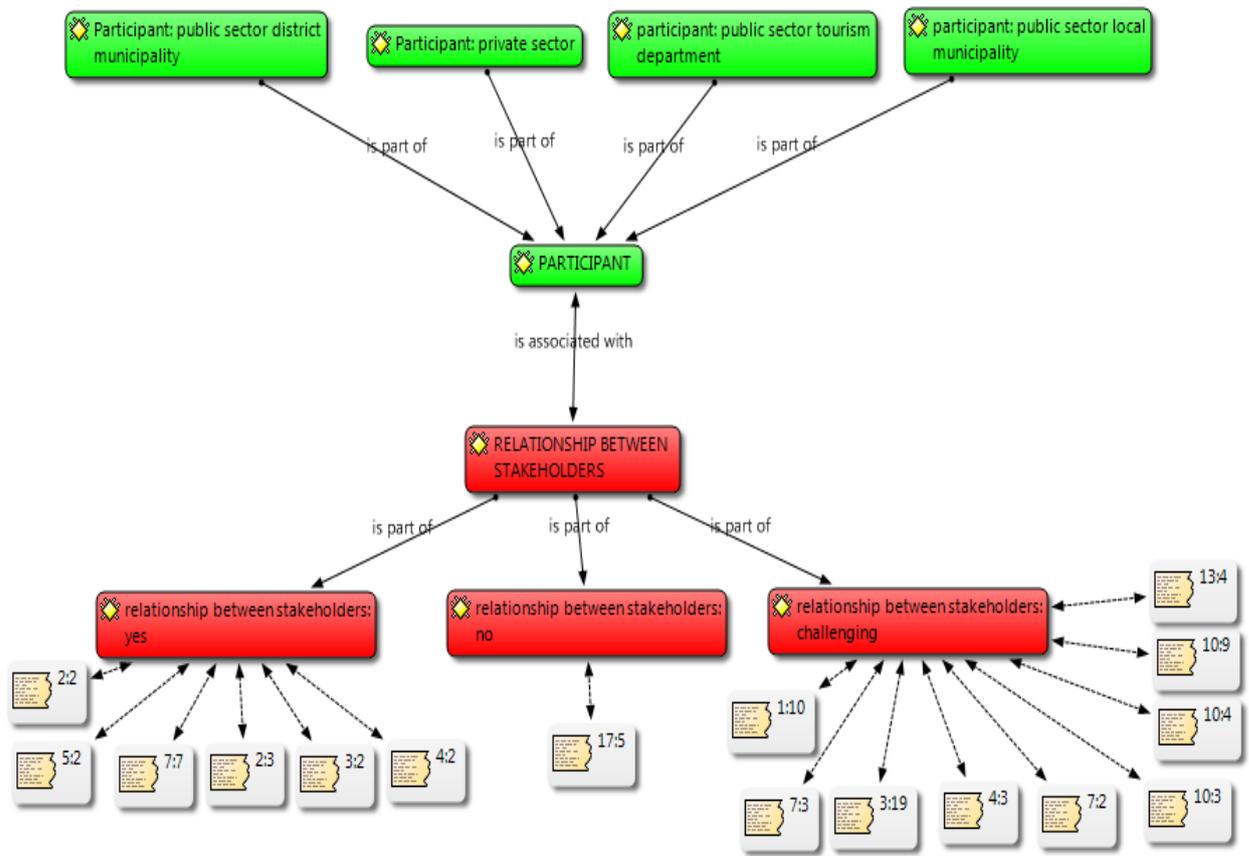
- a) The Codes Concurrence Table function in ATLAS ti was utilised to consider the tourism stakeholder's perspectives from the participants on the engagement status in the industry. Stakeholders' engagements and cooperation within the tourism industry in the Province was analysed to determine factors that attract the tourists in the Province.

- b) Stakeholders' perspectives were categorised using engagement between the tourism stakeholders.
- c) Engagement between tourism stakeholders was used as a basis for determining the whether there is an engagement between the public, private, district and local municipalities.

Although this section followed an instrumental view approach, according to Freeman (1984), an instrumental approach for stakeholder management involves maximising the shareholder value over an uncertain time-frame. Moreover, managers ought to pay attention to key stakeholder engagement because an instrumental view approach pays attention to engagement that can be affected or affects achievements (Freeman, 1984). In this case, one may argue that it can be any action that affects or has an effect on the management and achievement of corporate objectives such as profitability, stability and growth in the Northern Cape.

Managing, formulating and implementing strategic management processes that can satisfy all the stakeholders in the business is not an easy task, due to complex tasks involved. Differences in the actions and perceptions towards having engagements among the key stakeholders were observed. Majority of the respondents indicated that there is an instrumental or an intimate strategic engagement among tourism stakeholders; whilst others indicated that the engagement is challenging as indicated in Figure 3 below.

About five respondents indicated that there is an engagement between the public, private, district and local municipality; however, among them, indicated that although there is an existing engagement it is challenging. Only one indicated that it is not there. Therefore, Figure 3 presents a mixed picture of the connection or a lack of it between the tourism stakeholders.



**Figure 3:** Tourism stakeholders' relationship/ engagement  
Source: Tourism stakeholders' relationship/ engagement using ATLAS.TI)

### Existing relationships / engagements

With reference to engagement, participants indicated through different statements that there are strategic and intimate relationships/ engagement between stakeholders in the Province. Others pointed towards the legislation and structural arrangement of the South African tourism sector as a cause for them to have engagement with other tourism stakeholders. For example Case 2 indicated that:

There is a relationship/ engagement between the Northern Cape Province and SAT given the fact that SAT's mandate is marketing SA as a tourism destination of choice internationally and domestically. Although, part of SAT's business is to monitor and evaluate the performance of the tourism sector in the country, SAT's mandate "excludes the marketing of niche tourism; in this case SAT is not responsible for marketing the Provinces in South Africa, but rather SAT creates and provide the marketing platforms, platforms such as shot left campaigns.....(Quote 2. 2).

Case 2 also makes the point that:

It is up to Provinces to come up with actions to align their activities with such initiatives. For example, the tourism month that was held in the Northern Cape Province in 2014, where by the focus was on the NC, there was joint marketing. SAT has platforms like shot left campaign; it is up to the DMO to take action. Moreover, there has been collaboration with the NCTA and SAT on the issues regarding the unique international events like the World Skateboarding Grand Prix Circuit competition that put the Province on the map. However, the most important stakeholder to SAT is the NDT and other national and international marketing platforms. Within the domestic space, all nine (9) destination marketing organisation (DMO) plays a crucial role. In the Northern Cape Province, NCTA is important in the tourism space. (Quote 2. 2)

Other participants confirmed the existence of strategic or instrumental engagements by stating the real examples such as Respondent 3; Quote 3.2 and Quote 3.19. This suggests that there are instrumental engagements that exist between the tourism stakeholders from the public sector to the private sector. The activities or relations among other tourism stakeholders remain perplexing to some of the participants. Case 3 states that:

There are overlapping issues regarding constitutional mandate through intergovernmental structures, TMP-Marketing Forums. (Quote 3. 19).

This suggests that perhaps there could be overlapping activities such as having similar activities and initiatives that are taking place from the prominent tourism stakeholders. Case 1 indicated that collaboration and partnership are essential, but there seems to be an element of misunderstanding among the stakeholders on the mandate of other prominent tourism stakeholders. For example, Case 1 stated that:

The NDT would like to be informed about what is happening in the tourism sector in the Northern Cape through e-business marketing, social platforms, mobile apps. (Quote 1. 10).

Interestingly, though, Respondent 7; Quote 7.7 confirmed that there are overlapping activities. Although the interviewed stakeholders state that there is an existing relationship/ engagement between stakeholders, others believe otherwise. The next section exposes stakeholders' perspectives who indicated that there was no engagement between tourism stakeholders in the NC.

### A relationship or an engagement between tourism stakeholders does not exist in the Northern Cape

As the discussions in the foregoing sections have concentrated on the existing engagement between the public, private, district and local municipalities in the Northern Cape, this section focuses on the participant who alleged that there was no relationship nor engagement within the area where the organisation is operating in. In his statement, Case 17 stated that:

There is a lack of support from the Provincial office (DEDAT) regarding training and proper signage. There is no cooperation between the private sector and the key role players, this affects communication negatively. The proper information centre is not fully functional. There is a lack of skills audit in the businesses. Customer base is limited (Quote 17. 5).

Boosting partnerships and strengthening regional and interregional support was recommended for the tourism industry as part of the 2009 UNWTO “Roadmap to Recovery” to deal with global volatility (NTSS, 2011). The intention was to ensure resilience for the tourism sector. According to the roadmap to recovery report, one may argue that partnerships within the tourism industry are crucial to deal with global instability to ensure sustainability. Based on the quotation above (Case 17), there seems to be a disjuncture with what is happening in the Northern Cape. It is worth mentioning that there is only one participant who indicated the non-existing engagement between the tourism sector stakeholders in the Province. The next section looks at the challenging engagements.

### **The engagement between tourism stakeholders is challenging in the NC**

The Tourism Bill (SA, 2012), declares that there is fragmentation across the three spheres of government and poor integration of tourism with other sectoral policies. To identify the fraction of fragmentation facing the tourism sector, this section concentrates on the existing engagement among the stakeholders within the tourism sector in the Northern Cape Province. This section highlights the participants’ perspectives on the challenging relationships.

According to Case 3, the most important challenge when it comes to the stakeholder engagement within the tourism sector has to do with the “*Overlapping issues regarding constitutional mandate of intergovernmental structures*” (Quote 3:19).

This point was also emphasised by one of the participants who converged on the political issues. Case 7 indicated that:

The threats to the tourism sector are internal politics regarding tourism benefits in the local area and community fights on who will manage the area. There is a lack of trust issues between the municipalities and the private sector. Access to information remains a problem. (Quote 7:2 and 7:3).

One of the interesting points was highlighted by Case 4 making a contradictory statement indicating that one of the government agencies is not getting the message across to the tourists clearly and explicitly. Nevertheless, there are many reasons for such perspectives. Tourism collaborative networks have been theorised as coordinating mechanisms applicable for management in situations characterised by complexity and overwhelming ambiguity (Wegner, Allison & Tremblay, 2009). One may juxtapose the complexity of the tourism sector as stumbling block towards coordination and collaboration within the Province; hence it becomes easier to blame one another as tourism constituencies. This juxtaposition is mentioned by Case 4 that:

Although the NCTA is a great entity by government, it does not get the marketing message of the Province throughout the tourism constituencies (Quote 4. 3).

This point is emphasised by Case 13 who indicated that:

Even though ..... municipality works well with DEDAT, but the municipality lacks the relationship with other tourism stakeholders. There is a lack of good relationship between the municipality and the private sector. (Quote 13. 4).

Given the narrative stated above, Case 13 indicated that the municipality does not work well with other tourism stakeholders and the private sector. Yet, according to the South African Tourism Planning Toolkit for Local Government (2008) the status of the tourism industry in South Africa is that it is a public-sector led, private-sector driven and follows a community-based approach. In other words, there should be partnership with all the tourism stakeholders ranging from the public, private and the community. One may raise a question that, could it be an issue of structural arrangement that makes a municipality to work well with DEDAT and the private sector or could it be an issue of all stakeholders not observing the principles laid down in the SALGA document indicated above. However, the narrative above suggests that the lack of a relationship with other tourism stakeholders could hamper tourism development in a given area or destination.

Other participants declared their views there by stating issues that are challenging the tourism sector. Case 10 stated that:

Although there is an existing relationship between DEDAT and ..... District municipality, it is deteriorating. DEDAT favours the private sector or NGO's over municipalities, they neglect municipalities and pay more attention to the private sector or NGO's, and this leaves a loop hole that can be negatively exploited (Quote 10:4).

Case 10 continued that:

The threat facing the tourism sector in the district is that the discontinuation of tourism offices in Namakwa, De Aar, Kuruman and Springbok. This has affected the relationship between the district and DEDAT to decline. The withdrawal of the DEDAT staff members that were based in Namakwa region has led to adverse communication. Moreover, there is no local buy in from the implementation and facilitation of the projects by the consultants employed to do tourism projects. Privatisation of the tourism offices in the district is also a threat. Transformation is still neglected because there is no balance from the private sector." (Quote 10: 3)

Despite the issues hindering flourishing tourism stakeholder engagement within the tourism sector, stakeholders revealed that good / engagements existed with some individuals, but not others. One may argue that this was partly attributable to structural changes regarding political appointments and policy updates. A study by Currie, & Falconer (2014) also reveal that the policy relationship between the transportation and tourism sector with many political objectives acting separately from one another as a hindrance to local economic development and destination sustainability. In this study, there was a feeling that stakeholders were not kept well-informed and were either consulted too late in the process for their views to have a meaningful impact or side lined completely. However, these cases indicate that the engagements among the stakeholders do exist.

## **Discussion**

### **Unique selling points of the tourism sector in the NP**

In this paper it has been shown that the sampled province has the unique features that should ideally attract tourists as a competitive tourism destination. The literature indicates that the province possesses numerous tourism related activities that has a

potential of attracting travellers (NCEDA, 2013). Other respondents indicated that the astronomy observatory is one of the “unique endowments” that the Province possesses, with an 11 km long solar park, which is the 2nd largest in the world after Hungary, the powerful weather station that can easily access weather focus throughout the day as well as the Province’s capability to contribute towards sustainability and protection of wild animals like rhinos from poaching. Other stakeholders identified infrastructure (smooth roads), appropriate marketing and collaboration among stakeholders as the competitive advantage of the NCP as a tourism destination.

The results suggest that there is congruence among the perceptions of the tourism stakeholders about Northern Cape’s ability to attract the tourists. This point is emphasised by Najafi and Hamzeh (2015) that the context of structural change and mined area in Kimberley, the use of post-mining potentials, such as tourist sites, including infrastructures and traditions, can improve development options for the regions that have negative reputation and subsequently improve the tourism income for South Africa. As far as cooperation and coordination are concerned, the NCTA is perceived to have improved communication with the key tourism stakeholders in the Province.

Therefore, one may argue that even though the Province has the potential to attract tourists in the area, however, improving accessibility and enhancing and fostering services related to suppliers can contribute towards economic growth whilst providing a platform for small businesses to prosper which can have a direct impact on the destination’s competitiveness and service delivery.

### **Findings on the relationship/ engagement between the public, private, district and local municipality**

The relationships/ engagements among tourism stakeholders were perceived differently across different district municipalities. The interviewed respondents indicated that there were several challenges affecting intimate strategic relationship between the tourism stakeholders in the Province. The tourism businesses that participated in and around Frances Baard, Namakwa and John Taolo Gaetsewe have negative perceptions on partnership with NCTA. The tourism businesses in and around Pixley ka Seme find it easy to do business with the local municipalities. Tourism Businesses in ZF Mgcawu (formerly known as Siyanda) districts indicated that there is a positive relationship, particularly on cooperation with other tourism organisations. The results revealed that there is a lack of communication and cooperation between municipalities and tourism stakeholders. Poor coordination and lack of information sharing among tourism stakeholders with the NCTA in the suggested projects, may hinder tourism development.

The results indicate that there is a relationship that exists among tourism businesses at different levels within the tourism sector; from private sector to the national (SAT, NDT), provincial (NCTA, DEDAT) and the local level (municipalities and tourism businesses) in the NC. Other government departments such as SALGA, DHA, COGTA, DoT, DoL, SANPARKS, ACSA, DIRCO, Gambling Board and private businesses such as Guest House Association, NOCCI also play an important role in achieving success in the tourism sector in the NCP. There is even collaboration and partnership between the NCP, Botswana and Namibia. Such relations stimulate support within the tourism sector and the public sector’s involvement is directly with the tourism or indirectly is essential

for the government to manage tourism flows to meet the policy objective (Cooper *et. al.* 2005: 448).

However, some activities or relations among tourism stakeholders remain unclear and in some cases there seems to be an element of misunderstanding as to the mandate of other prominent tourism stakeholders. The lack of trust in terms of human capital and transparency in stakeholder engagement levels and government goal displacement are major obstacles towards the initiation of an effective destination governance scheme. Interviewed stakeholders indicated that there are overlapping issues regarding constitutional mandate through intergovernmental structures; as a result there is a need to synchronize the national, regional and local level engagements. Moreover, combining the funding from the private sector with that provided by the government to improve the tourism sector under the mandate of the municipality is crucial to ensure beneficitation of the community.

Another identified apparent challenge was that there appears to exist a situation where certain tourism stakeholders in the NC were more favoured than others. For example, the NCTA is perceived as the most important stakeholder followed by SAT then the local information office and the NDT. The businesses within the proximity of the city (Upington and Kimberley) receive more attention and have more benefits than those located further away from the city.

It is also indicated that the district municipalities in Upington and Kimberley areas tend to receive more attention from DEDAT, yet one other municipality indicated that the relationship it has with DEDAT is deteriorating and perceives that the DEDAT favours the private sector or NGO's over municipality (NOCCI, consultants). What came out strongly as a threat facing the tourism sector in the Province is the closure of DEDAT tourism offices in Namaqua, De Aar, Kuruman and Springbok. This decision is perceived to be affecting the relationship between the district and DEDAT negatively. The respondent from Namaqua indicated that "the withdrawal of the DEDAT staff members that were based in Namaqua region has led to adverse communication". As a result, the stakeholders in Namaqua District indicated that "there is no local buy in from the implementation and facilitation of the projects by the consultants employed to do tourism projects". This is also indicated by the number of participants in this research project from local municipalities.

Although working with the private sector is understood to be of benefit to the local tourism stakeholders, however, the respondents perceive "privatisation of the tourism offices in the Namaqua district as a threat especially because transformation is still neglected". The above discussion indicates that there are important challenges regarding the relationship between the public and the private sector in the Province. To better grasp the pressing issues, the following section looks at the critical concerns in the NCP.

## **Conclusion**

The views of the public and the private sector assist in understanding the challenges that lie ahead and which have the potential of hindering the government's agenda in the tourism sector in the Province. Considering the national objectives is of critical importance to stakeholder engagement. In summary, the tourism businesses revealed the range of issues regarding the challenges they face and their affiliation or partnerships or engagement within the tourism fraternity, on the other end, the district municipalities identified NCTA as an important stakeholder.

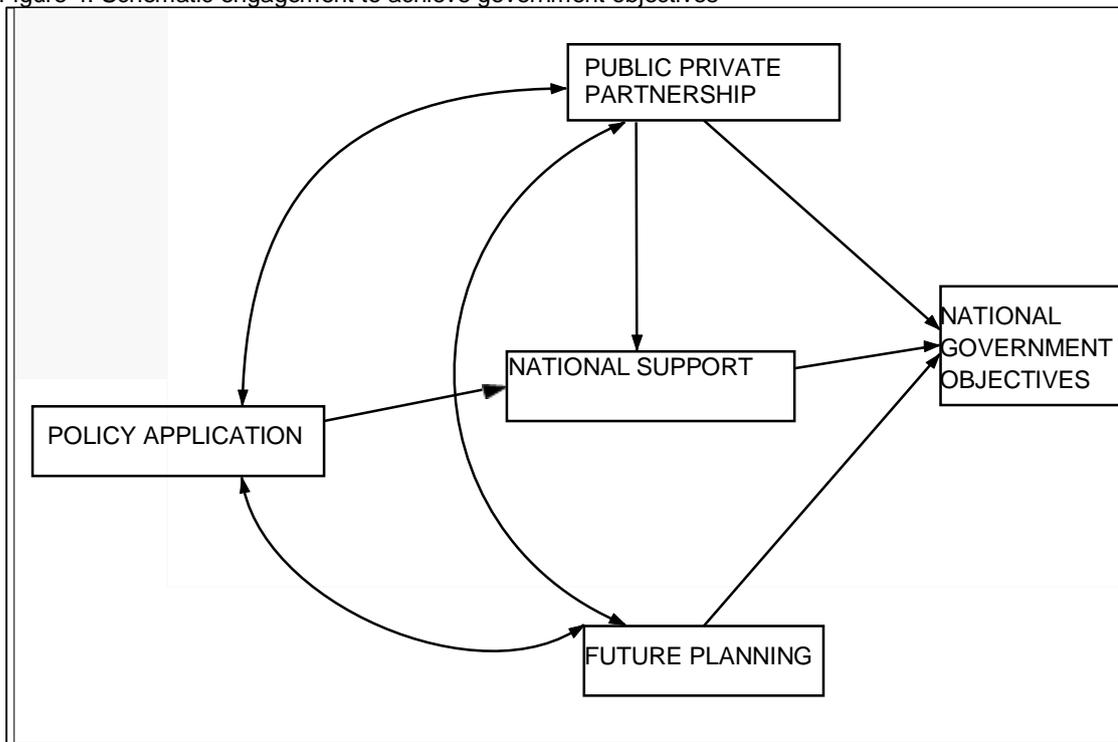
The Rural Tourism strategy and the NTSS were deemed as important strategies by the local and district municipalities in the NC to enhance economic contribution of the tourism

sector in the Province. For example, the influence of policies concerning developmental issues in the Province as rated by tourism businesses is weak, but significant, therefore, building trust, identifying commitment and promoting co-operation amongst tourism stakeholders; there should be proper stakeholder engagement. Both the public and the private sector indicated that financial support is key towards improving the tourism sector in the NC Province. The significant challenges included lack of support from the local communities, lack of finance and attracting both local and international tourists.

The results indicated that future planning is momentous for both public and the private sector; in other words, the lack of proper future planning among the tourism stakeholders in the Northern Cape Province will lead to a lower GDP contribution of the Province, and towards the national output. It is noteworthy that policy application and national support are not highlighted by the participants as significant components for the improvement of the tourism sector in the Northern Cape, even though, they are related. It must be noted that they are not considered by the participants as challenging factors in predicting the positive contribution to the tourism sector.

There are relationships that exist among tourism stakeholders, however, low levels of PPP are associated with lower tourism benefits and sectors performance. Figure 4 below indicates the corroborated stakeholders' perspectives as far as systematic engagement to achieve government objectives is concerned.

Figure 4: Schematic engagement to achieve government objectives



Source: Authors' own

Based on figure 4, although PPP and future planning are interlinked, policy application is necessary and crucial for PPP and future planning to take place. It can be concluded that for effective implementation of PPP, destinations' future planning must be linked to achieve the government objectives. At the same time, PPP, national support and future planning must be in place to achieve government's objectives of utilising the tourism

sector as a springboard for economic development in South Africa, particularly in the NCP. Moreover, it becomes critical to have a policy that deals with PPP to achieve government objectives. This arrangement has the potential of delivering a more streamlined and coordinated approach based on informed guidance and effective PPP within the tourism sector in the Northern Cape.

### **Recommendations**

As a developing country within the African continent, with extreme economic divides; the slow global growth remains a challenge. The tourism industry faces challenges such as deterioration or underutilisation of state owned facilities limits the potential of the tourism products and leisure facilities, as a result the market share gets affected. Therefore, to understand the challenges facing the tourism sector in the Northern Cape Province, direct application to provide structural knowledge for the stakeholders must be clarified. The role of prominent tourism stakeholders must contain accelerating programmes and projects that are aimed at benefitting local communities; prioritising campaigns that target both the lower and higher end of the domestic market; creating a holiday culture and marketing domestic leisure to all major local markets.

There is a dire need for tour operators to promote tourism packages in the Province to engage the entire supply chain to ensure effectiveness of the industry in the Northern Cape Province. These may be achieved through continued partnerships, consultation and implementation of the National Domestic Tourism Growth Strategy, Rural Tourism Strategy and the NTSS. According to Davidson and Maitland, (1997) cited in Rogerson (2001), effective planning and management of tourism at destinations are crucial for overall success in tourism spaces. In destination management, partnerships are essential between public and private sectors. Planning and development of tourism at destinations is seen as far too important to be left solely in the hands of private sector entrepreneurs. Hence, capacity building and skills training for tourism officials and key stakeholders is crucial to ensure sustainability and good governance in the Province. Good cooperative governance promotes integrated decision making for sustainability. Inclusive and collaborative approach with stakeholders can contribute towards progressive tourism strategies, acts and policies that are prepared and readily available for this industry, however, due to poor implementation, the key action plans miss a mark. Therefore, businesses need to continue with the sustainable practices to address awareness, compliance, efficiency and find innovative ways of ensuring sustainability through eco-efficient ways.

Performance specification must be understood by the stakeholders to achieve the set objectives. There should be mutual obligations which must be honoured. The recommendations were made based on the results. In essence there is potential in the NCP for the stakeholders to address the weaknesses in the tourism supply chain to improve competitiveness.

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