

Stakeholders' Perspectives of Domestic Tourism Revival in Namibia Amidst the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

The study is premised on the notion that a systematic comprehension of stakeholders' perspectives on domestic tourism is crucial in developing a sustainable and resilient tourism sector in sub-Saharan Africa. The focus of this paper is on stakeholders in the tourism industry in the Khomas region of Namibia located in the central highlands of the country. The study aimed to gather stakeholders' views on how the domestic tourism industry can be revived in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. Semi-structured interviews were done with 35 purposively sampled tourism stakeholders in the Khomas region. The results of the study showed that Namibia focuses attention mostly on international tourism neglecting the domestic market. The locals feel excluded from tourism and prices of tourism products are generally viewed as exorbitant by domestic tourists. As a result, this leads to resentment towards tourism operators by the locals. The study also concludes that several structural issues are hindering effective collaboration among key stakeholders in the Namibian tourism industry.

Keywords: Domestic tourism; stakeholder collaboration; stakeholder perspectives; Covid-19 pandemic; Namibia

Introduction

Tourism is one of the key pillars of the Namibian economy with the potential to contribute to the country's fiscal growth, create employment, alleviate poverty and generate foreign earnings (Green, 2022; Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (METF), 2019; Muchapondwa & Stage, 2013; Suich, 2002). The main tourism products in Namibia include nature, culture and landscape (Nyakunu & Rogerson, 2014). The Namibia Tourist Statistical Report (2019) highlights steady annual growth in foreign tourist arrivals in Namibia since independence in 1990, with the highest recorded figure of 1.6 million tourists reached in 2019. To this end, tourism contributes significantly to the economic growth of Namibia making it the third largest sector (Namibia Tourism Board, 2016). The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) reported that in 2019 the tourism industry in Namibia contributed 14.7% to GDP and 15.5% to the total employment in the country (WTTC, 2019).

A report by Namibian Adventures (2019) established that the tourism industry in Namibia is fixated primarily on overseas markets such as Europe, America and Asia. The outbreak of Covid-19 disrupted the movement of international tourists adversely affecting the markets, livelihoods, government services and prospects of tourism growth not only in Namibia but the world over (Green, 2022). The Covid-19 restrictions reduced the number of tourist inflows into Namibia as well as limited the movements of people within the country (Lendellvo & Sullivan, 2020). In the year 2020 tourist arrivals in Namibia declined by 89% as a result of



the Covid-19 pandemic (MEFT, 2021). Consequently, the tourism industry suffered serious losses and recorded massive job cuts (Vos, 2020).

The heavy reliance on international tourists in Namibia proved to be unsustainable during Covid-19, hence the need to promote and revive domestic tourism as an alternative. Kwoba (2018) observes that domestic tourism contributes significantly to the resilience of the tourism industry. More so, domestic tourism is said to be resilient to external shocks such as pandemics, political crises and natural disasters among others (Nyikana & Bama, 2023; Shereni et al., 2023). Regardless, the focus of the tourism industry in Namibia has not been on the domestic market (Nakale, 2017). According to Mena (2018), emerging destinations such as Namibia and other developing countries tend to give more attention to inbound tourism rather than outbound tourism. Namibian people lack the culture of travelling, with the majority preferring to spend holidays in rural areas, on farms and travelling for Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) (Green, 2022; Nakale, 2017). Tourist arrivals in Namibia are dominated by international tourists and upper-class Namibians resulting in many locals feeling excluded from travelling (Moseley et al., 2007). Also, the inequalities caused by colonial legacies reduce the willingness and propensity of many Namibians to participate in domestic tourism (Ndlovu et al., 2010). That being said, the significance and potential of domestic tourism in Namibia is not known as there are no recent studies done to measure its magnitude (Green, 2022).

This study sets out to investigate the main reasons why locals may not be earnestly partaking in domestic tourism activities in the country. By exploring stakeholders' perspectives on the issue of domestic tourism, this paper not only addresses a gap in the tourism literature from which the voice of the Namibian people has been absent but will also contribute to the quest for an amplified, inclusive understanding of what tourism means to Namibia's inhabitants as tourists. The study contributes to the theoretical advancements relating to existing and future pandemics, how they can be managed and the implications they bring to the tourism industry, particularly from a Namibian outlook. This area of focus has largely been neglected in the past and, as such, findings from this current study contribute to the literature in this regard.

Literature review

Tourism stakeholders

Yoon (2019) defines tourism stakeholders as any individual or group of persons impacted by tourism enterprises within a particular marketplace, or any local resident who has a passion and interest in the planning and policymaking on tourism businesses' outcomes. Stakeholders can be classified in different ways including by demographics, geographical location or proximity to the destination (Ali et al., 2017). Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2017) assert that tourism stakeholders involve the suppliers, small and medium enterprises, educational institutions, tourism organisations and tour operators, the tourism ministry (government), residents (communities) and existing tourists. The role of stakeholders in tourism development has been emphasised widely in the academic literature especially the role of the local community (Ali et al., 2017). Tourism stakeholders are highly heterogeneous and have different interests making stakeholder collaboration difficult and critical for the resilience of a destination (Pyke et al., 2018).

Nyikana and Bama (2023) stress the need for the involvement of both the private sector and the public sector, especially in the recovery of the tourism industry from the COVID-19 pandemic. Nunkoo and Ramkissoon (2017) assert that the private sector comprises tourism businesses, local residents and existing tourists. Local tourists ought to command power in policymaking processes that will guarantee a hospitable and friendly population. From the Namibian context, private tourism players such as Gondwana Collection, Sense of Africa, Wilderness Safaris Namibia and Pack Safari, have taken up strategic roles in the provision of



products and services for domestic tourists in Namibia's hospitality industry (Simson, 2018). Therefore, these stakeholders, along with locals, possess a wider array of knowledge in relation to domestic tourism management. However, the government, in support of its tourism entities, is tasked with important roles in creating and maintaining a holistic environment centred on marketing, revival, partnership and product development for the domestic industry (Van Niekerk, 2018).

Stakeholder collaboration overview in tourism

Tourism has more formal and informal partnerships than any other economic sector. The integration of different stakeholders in tourism development is mainly highlighted in the sustainable tourism discourse as it helps to minimize the negative impacts of tourism (Ali et al., 2017). Stakeholder involvement and collaboration in tourism development is critical for domestic tourism's success (Caffyn, 2017). The level of backing from different stakeholders will eventually build a destination's competitiveness (Azzopardi, 2018). Robinson (2018) defines collaboration in this context as shared decision-making between key tourism stakeholders to resolve problems in the domain and/or to manage issues related to the domain.

The mainstream definitions of collaboration presented in the literature elaborate on the involvement of independent or semi-independent stakeholders in joint decision-making and planning for mutual benefits (Thomson et al., 2017). According to Jamal and Stronza (2019), collaboration or partnerships are commonly used to define collaborative efforts, and the definition of collaboration extends beyond inter-organisational relations and the business arena. Gray (2019) agrees that collaborating with an inter-organisational perspective seems to be more efficient when it comes to resolving a problem or issue that is hard to manage personally.

Hardy and Beeton (2018) view collaboration as forming alliances with partner organisations to maximise strategic values by leveraging available resources that are critical for the development of tourism since it improves destination branding, impact management, benefit distribution, community cohesion and visitor experiences. Additionally, collaboration enables the development of more appropriate development plans, which aid in responding quickly to the needs, ambitions and sensitivities of local stakeholders (Canavan, 2017). Conversely, collaborative effort partners such as Namibia Tourism Board (NTB), Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Tourism (MEFT), Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN), Tour and Safari Association of Namibia (TASA) Namibia Wildlife Resort (NWR), Emerging Tourism Enterprises Association (ETEA) and others share the same common purpose, that is to achieve targeted objectives through consensus, shared knowledge and information (Martinez, 2016). The nature and extent of stakeholder participation in collaboration will be deeply affected by the convenience of time, resources and leadership (Byrd, 2007; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2013).

Emmet et al. (2004) reiterate that the absence of tourism awareness that subsists among residents concerning the significance and purpose of tourism is detrimental to the accomplishment of the industry. It was this lack of tourism awareness that led the Windhoek Municipality to institute numerous awareness campaigns for the revival of domestic tourism. The Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) programme was another method used by the municipality to help boost both domestic and international tourism (Friedman, 2004). The BEE programme integrates the previously excluded black entrepreneurs into the economy thereby increasing the role played by locals in tourism development (Harilal & Nyikana, 2019). The City of Windhoek as a stakeholder played an integral role in its efforts to successfully develop domestic tourism and tourists' experiences in a destination. Therefore, to accomplish this, it is



vital to engage local residents (communities), the government (through its governmental control and guidelines) and business groups (tour operators/travel agencies) (Boora, 2017).

Challenges facing tourism stakeholders in Namibia

Despite the City of Windhoek's previous endeavour to develop domestic tourism, a lack of awareness about the relevance and purpose of tourism thrives among native Namibians (Emmet et al., 2004). This coupled with the centralized administration of tourism development makes it difficult for government and its agencies to deal with issues emanating at a local level (Green, 2022). Shereni and Saarinen (2021) argue that centralized administration in tourism development negatively impacts the locals who are in most cases left out in decision-making. Decisions made using the top-down approach are perceived by the locals as not reflective of their interests (Byrd, 2007). This said, the Namibian government as a key stakeholder faces challenges in coming up with a framework that decentralizes decision-making to local levels. Friedman (2014) argues that the influence of foreign-owned companies and marketing aimed at European countries has created a void in the Namibian tourism sector, such that domestic tourism has become neglected. Shikongo (2021) in the New Era Newspaper states that the aim is to make the industry more inclusive by empowering local and upcoming Namibian tourism businesses. Emmet et al. (2004) extrapolate that as the number of non-Namibian companies supporting the tourism industry grows, opportunities for local Namibians are diminishing.

Similarly, the legacies of German colonisation and apartheid skewed Namibia's modern society and significantly influenced the state of the tourism industry (Weaver & Lawton, 2013). Furthermore, the German colonisation left an indelible mark on Namibian architecture, monuments, language, and heritage (Emmet et al., 2004). In addition, Weaver and Lawton (2013) argue there has been an element of segregation experienced in some parts of the industry as most enterprises are white-owned, while the bulk of tourists are foreign or affluent Namibians. As a result, the balance of the economy is negatively impacted by this discrimination (Weaver & Lawton 2013). The racial disproportions in Namibia due to apartheid and colonization are still entrenched in this contemporary tourism sector. The same can be noted in the South African context where apartheid policies excluded the majority of the black populace from participating in the tourism economy (Harilal & Nyikana, 2019).

Emmet et al. (2004) point out that the large tourism companies are almost exclusively white-owned, which has led to limited opportunities for black Namibians to completely fit into the industry due to a perceived lack of expertise in the industry, training and limited access to financial resources. This fact is likely to prompt resentment and an unwillingness among residents to travel and appreciate the benefits of the industry. Again, Emmet et al. (2004) posit that some tourists are unevenly treated when they visit restaurants, hotels and other service providers in the sense that the level of respect afforded to black travellers is not the same as that given to white tourists and as a consequence, is creating differences in valuing the services rendered.

Affordability is one of the major issues excluding domestic tourists in Namibia from participating in the tourism economy. According to Tjaronda (2020), Khomas residents recognized that visiting scenic attractions and staying in hotels is inordinately expensive for local travellers. For domestic tourism to progress, it is essential to explore the leading pricing criteria of the industry and ascertain where developments in terms of prices can be improved to entice local tourists through the affordability of services and products to embrace local tourism (Friedman, 2014). Shereni et al. (2023) argue that if tourism products are priced beyond the reach of the domestic market locals will find it difficult to travel.



Stakeholder theory

Cognisant of the importance of stakeholders in the tourism industry, the research study applied the Stakeholder Theory by Freeman to discern the impact of stakeholders' perspectives in the revival of domestic tourism in Namibia (Freeman, 2014). According to Paskaleva-Shapira (2017), different leadership, organisational structures, operation strategies, and personalities can have a significant impact on what stakeholders perceive to be important and how their needs are perceived. Tourism professionals such as travel agents, tour operators and tour guides are among the stakeholders, according to (UNWTO, 2015). Rogerson and Letsie (2007) proclaim that the involvement of stakeholders in tourism can provide a framework within which communities can receive sustainable tourism development as a result of their collaborative efforts. The theory has proven to be a helpful tool for identifying various challenges that may impede communication and collaboration between various stakeholders (Timur, 2017). The formation of collaborative partnerships could be hampered by a host of problems, such as action problems and discrepancies in accountability benchmarks among organisations, which burden established collective domestic developments (Thomson et al., 2017).

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), stakeholders in tourism development are divided into three major categories: (1) the tourism industry, (2) environmental support, and (3) local community/government (Timur, 2017). Furthermore, Timur (2017) states that companies provide every product and service that is focused on the requirements of tourists. That also means that distributors bear the large task of satisfying and enhancing vacationers' gratification and perspectives. In summary, a tourism destination's stakeholders consist of 5 groups, namely: the public sector, the private sector, community organisations, local residents and tourists as depicted in Figure 1.

According to Gunn (2014), the residents contribute to the building of the destination's picture thanks to variations in hospitality, customs and behaviour patterns, which in turn boosts tourist satisfaction and experiences. Conversely, applying the Stakeholder Theory in domestic tourism development means it needs the support of all the tourism stakeholders at large. Friedman (2014) maintains that the public sector is in charge of developing plans and policies and also establishing and enforcing standards for amenities and services. The private sector plays a vital role in the preparation of space, activities and products. Gunn (2014) supports the opinion that in the tourism industry, it is in the interests of the public sector to raise tourist satisfaction, develop destinations' businesses and economic development that are sustainable, as well as ensure the preservation of existing assets and the preservation of community integration.

Notwithstanding, the use of the Stakeholder Theory affirms that the major elements that shape possibilities for reviving domestic tourism include a great alliance and collaborative working initiatives among all tourism industry and non-tourism interested parties (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2013). The role of local governments cannot be overlooked when it comes to strategies and policies towards domestic tourism in Namibia. Thus, the subject of collaboration is discussed and grounded by the leading theories and guidelines of collaborative efforts and stakeholder collaboration. Goeldner and Ritchie (2013) further reiterate that collaboration is perceived as one of the matters that is lacking among tourism stakeholders, so it is critical to comprehend what collaboration stands for, and what its purposes, benefits, problems, and possible achievements and applications in the tourism arena might be (Jamal & Stronza, 2019).



According to the Namibia Statistics Agency (2019), the Khomas region, which is home to the capital city of Windhoek, has an estimated population of 268,132 residents, while the current population of Namibia as a whole is estimated at 2,567,421. The NSA (2021) stated that the Khomas region is the most populated in Namibia accounting for 24.02% of Namibia's population. In this study, however, the tourism stakeholders' perspectives were only limited to the Khomas region since the region is the country's main economic hub and where all stakeholders' administration offices are located, hence the convenience to conduct the study.

Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative research design to determine stakeholders' perspectives on reviving domestic tourism in Namibia. According to Holloway and Wheeler (2017), the qualitative researcher seeks to understand human thought and behaviour and its interpretation, while Morse (2016) asserts that in qualitative research a holistic angle to the phenomena of interest is considered by including the underlying values and the context as part of the phenomena. This study purposively sampled 35 key informants from NTB (3), NWR (2), HAN (1), FENATA (2), ETEA (2), MEFT (3), TASA (2) and Khomas residents (20). The fieldwork was conducted in February 2022 and the researchers used face-to-face in-depth interviews to gather information on the perspective of Khomas residents and other tourism stakeholders towards the revival of domestic tourism in Namibia. An interview guide with questions soliciting respondents' views of domestic tourism revival in Namibia amidst the Covid-19 pandemic was used. Thematic analysis was done to identify recurring themes from the interview process.

Results

Four themes were identified as aligned to the research questions and emerged from respondents' narratives which are 1) The impact of COVID-19 on tourism developments in Namibia, 2) Strategies for promoting domestic tourism in Namibia, 3) Residents' perspectives on influencing intentions to travel and re-visit local destinations post the Covid-19 pandemic and 4) effectiveness of collaboration and integrated planning between tourism stakeholders in Namibia.

Theme 1: The impact of COVID-19 on tourism developments in Namibia

The study sought to establish the effects of Covid-19 on tourism developments in Namibia particularly implications on domestic tourism. The responses from the stakeholders interviewed were unanimous on the detrimental effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on the various facets of tourism developments. The respondents indicated that Covid-19 affected international tourism expenditure, resulted in loss of jobs, affected negatively livelihoods of people employed in the tourism industry, and restricted the movement of people within the country. Some of the sentiments gathered from the interviewees are stated below:

...the decline in visitors had an outsized impact on tourism spending, as international travellers spent significantly more than their local counterparts. (Female respondent from NTB)

...the closure of businesses and loss of jobs and livelihoods of most people in the area, especially in tourist areas such as Swakopmund and Walvis Bay and those in the hospitality industry, was devastating. (Female respondent from HAN)

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused significant disruptions in domestic tourism as people were restricted from travelling" (Male respondent from Khomas residents).



Further, the respondents reveal that the collapse of the steady stream of international arrivals to Namibia has highlighted the need for a diversification of markets by extensively promoting domestic tourism to build resilience to any related crisis that may occur in the future. Some of the respondents interviewed agreed and conceded that domestic tourism is the primary measure to resuscitate Namibia's tourism business post-Covid-19. This is evidenced by the following participants' sentiments:

While the Covid-19 pandemic has negatively affected domestic tourism, plans have been put in place to create Tourism Regional Forms that comprise all stakeholders in the Namibian regions to try to mitigate the detrimental effects of the pandemic" (Male respondent from MEFT).

Tour operators in the country are looking at domestic tourism to limit reliability on international tourism" (Male respondent from TASA).

In line with the findings from this study, Canvan (2017) claimed that the Covid-19 cases as well as the implementation of various phases of movement control measures (travel bans/restrictions, social distance, and quarantines) impeded international and domestic tourism. Matiza (2020) further argues that the decline in international tourists confirms the need for diversification which has prompted numerous countries to develop resilient domestic tourism during times of crises. In this regard, it is clear that domestic tourism is widely recognised as an outstanding 'crisis shock-absorber that offsets the vulnerability of international tourism to internal and external factors such as poor infrastructure, insecurity, political and instabilities (Mazimhaka, 2020; Mzobe et al., 2023; Shereni et al., 2023; Woyo, 2021).

Theme 2: Strategies for promoting domestic tourism in Namibia

The theme on strategies adopted to promote domestic tourism reveals that domestic tourism is not well promoted and Namibia's tourism marketing strategies give more focus to international tourism. However, the Covid-19 pandemic exposed the weakness in this strategy and raised the urgency to come up with strategies to promote domestic tourism. This is reflected in the following sentiment by one of the interviewees:

...Probably 90% of NTB's marketing strategy is focused on the international and 10% on the domestic market. The gap is so huge and as a result, you find locals opting to spend their holidays outside Namibia as little effort is in place to promote destination Namibia to its people. (Male respondent from TASA)

Travel and trade shows were observed to be effective platforms to market not only international tourism but also domestic tourism. There is need to strike a balance in promoting both markets taking into consideration the significance of domestic tourism for the survival of the tourism industry in times of crisis. The sentiments below support this theme:

...In our marketing strategies, we target both domestic and international tourism, we have international tradeshows and we have domestic tradeshows. The reality is that domestic tourism is more important to sustain the tourism industry regardless of the high international tourism spending patterns, so we are balancing both of them. (Female respondent from NTB)

Another important issue raised by respondents was providing discounted prices targeted at domestic tourists. The pricing mechanism for tourism in Namibia is said to suit the local



affluent Namibians and international tourists. This then alienates the majority of Namibians who fail to travel because the exclusive pricing structure is not informed by research. The need to come up with a pricing framework customized for the domestic tourist is illustrated as follows:

Tourism companies should introduce local rates that are comparatively lower in the SADC region as compared to international markets as part of the tourism strategy (Male respondent from ETEA).

Discounted packages on offer are not informed by market research on what the locals really want. It is purely what suppliers can offer. Even those discounted packages offered by tourism operators will end up not being consumed by the local market as it does not appeal to them (Female respondent from Khomas region).

Evidence from literature suggests that the tourism sector and the research community place much emphasis on international tourism over domestic tourism (Eijgelaar et al., 2008). However, domestic tourism has several advantages including generating fiscal revenue, creating employment opportunities, building pride in one's own country and solidarity and improving societal travel culture which results in consistent tourism growth and economic development (Pierret, 2011). Furthermore, domestic tourism does not require big investments or imported commodities which might be an important basis for the long-term growth of both the national and local economies (Seckelmann, 2002). According to Canvan (2017), efforts to promote domestic tourism in developing countries remain insignificant and tourism destinations in these countries are not adequately advertised and marketed to potential tourists. In light of the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic that makes it difficult to attract international tourists, it becomes important to come up with broad strategies that help to develop the domestic tourism market (Rogerson, 2015; Shereni et al., 2023).

Theme 3: Khomas residents' perspectives on influencing intentions to travel and re-visit local destinations post the Covid-19 pandemic

The Khomas residents were asked for their opinion on factors that influence them to travel and re-visit local destinations post-Covid-19 pandemic. Various issues raised include historical legacy, mismatch of tourism products offered in the domestic and international market, pricing of tourism products and knowledge and awareness about tourism in Namibia. On historical legacy, some respondents made reference to the past apartheid laws which originated from South Africa and passed on to Namibia being a major hindering factor towards the growth of domestic tourism in Namibia. The participant reiterated that the apartheid era embedded an undecorated constraint on the development of the tourism industry in Namibia. Tourism in Namibia is seen as a preserve for the elite Namibians, especially the white community. Such views are expressed in the following "the local tourists perceive tourism as catering to the predominantly white upper and middle classes" (Male respondent from ETEA). If domestic tourism is to be promoted efforts have to be made to deal with such perceptions and make domestic tourism inclusive of a broader population from all social and economic classes.

Another issue highlighted that affect the intention to visit local destinations by the locals is the mismatch of tourism products offered in the domestic and international market. According to the participants, most tourism products are tailored to the tastes and preferences of international travellers. When international travelling is depressed due to a pandemic like Covid-19 it becomes difficult to offer the same products to the domestic market. Tourism operators need to introduce requirements and preferences tailor-made for the local visitors in a unique way to persuade more local tourists to travel. This is exemplified in the following:



The greatest barrier is that some private sector (tourism suppliers) are not keen to diversify and tailor-make products that suit the local market to make it affordable for the locals (Female respondent from FENATA).

They are not conducting enough domestic marketing because domestic tourists are perceived to be lower spenders than international tourists” (Male respondent from ETEA).

In addition, the comparatively high price of tourism products remains one of the biggest challenges facing Namibia’s domestic tourism industry to this day. Participants expressed concern that hotel, service, and product owners hike their prices during peak season, making it difficult for domestic travellers to afford their services. Domestic tourists are hesitant to pay high prices at some leisure and recreational places making them unwilling to visit local tourist destinations. In relation to the above statement on high prices, one of the participants mentioned that:

The pricing strategies are not for the general Namibian market (Female respondent from FENATA).

These costs are too high and during the peak season, many product owners (accommodation establishments) triple the price, making domestic tourism impossible to pay and as a result, forcing travellers to sleep at family or friends’ homes (Female respondent from MEFT).

According to the participants interviewed, the issue of expensive prices will have a long-term impact on domestic tourism possibly leading to a situation where domestic travellers will not use hotels, bed and breakfasts, guest houses and other types of accommodation since they are too expensive, thus resulting in them to rely on family and friends instead for lodging. Participants also underlined that the other factor that influences the intention of residents to visit local destinations is the lack of knowledge and awareness about tourism in Namibia. They believe that there is inadequate information about tourism in the country. This points to a lack of promotion of Namibia tourism offerings especially in local media outlets that are accessible to the locals. The following was said in this regard:

Travelling is also unappealing to locals due to lack of promotion. A majority of consumers are unaware of the appealing incentives made available by tourism providers (Female respondent from NTB).

There is lack of interest among local residents to visit local tourism destinations which is related to lack of information on domestic tourism concerns (Female respondent from NWR).

To sum up this sub-theme, Khomas residents show little interest in visiting tourism destinations, this is as a result of a lack of understanding and promotion of domestic tourism characteristics. In line with the findings in this section, Woyo (2021) argues that the affordability of tourism products is a critical issue that needs to be looked at to promote domestic tourism. Domestic tourists are unwilling to pay a premium price which should prompt destination managers to offer discounts and other incentives (*ibid*). From a South African perspective, under apartheid the segment of the leisure market was dominated by the white locals, relegating the local black population to the VFR type of tourism (Rogerson, 2015). Also, the lack of a travelling culture, coupled with the lack of awareness of tourism developments by the locals is hugely blamed for a depressed domestic tourism market (Green, 2022; Nakale, 2017; Zhou, 2016).



Theme 4: Effectiveness of collaboration and integrated planning between tourism stakeholders in Namibia

The key participants interviewed were asked to give their views on the effectiveness of collaboration and integrated planning among tourism stakeholders in Namibia. A majority of participants revealed that collaboration among tourism stakeholders in Namibia is visible but highlighted numerous factors impeding effective collaboration. The key issues raised are delays in the consultation process, racial discernment among some tourism stakeholders and conflict of interest. On delays in the consultation process, the stakeholders commented the frequent meetings held by the authorities to discuss stakeholders' concerns. However, bureaucratic tendencies in the consultation process result in delays in coming up with resolutions. This is seen as detrimental to the effectiveness of collaboration efforts by the stakeholders. The following was said in this regard:

Collaboration is very good and authorities meet on a quarterly basis to discuss issues that are brought by the stakeholders. Although there are challenges of collaboration that include that the consultation process cannot justify or endorse ideas, the process takes time and resolutions also take time before they are approved (Male respondent from MEFT).

Racial discernment among some tourism stakeholders in Namibia was noted to be one of the key factors hindering the effectiveness of stakeholder collaboration and integrated planning. Some respondents stated that efforts at collaboration received negative feedback from stakeholders and some tourism stakeholders alluded to racial tensions and indifferences within the tourism organisations. In turn, this is said to result in negative attitudes that are destined to generate ineffectiveness when stakeholders harbour mistrust and resentment against each other. Some of the sentiments from the stakeholders are as follows:

The Namibian forum feels that there are racial connotations to tourism and people feel left out. There are conflicts between [..... (key stakeholders)] and aspects of reconciliation have not been fully realized (Male respondent from MEFT).

In addition, conflict of interest was pointed out to be a major issue affecting tourism stakeholders' collaboration in Namibia. Different stakeholders have divergent interests and reconciling such differences can be a futile exercise. Also, unequal power relations result in the interests of the weak stakeholders being suppressed.

There are differences in opinions and conflicts of interest among stakeholders can also be barriers to stakeholders' participation in tourism development as a result of the absence of a shared vision (Male respondent from MEFT).

...Some tourism stakeholders possess more resources such as economic wealth, specialist knowledge or powerful government official positions and are able to exert more power over resource management and decision making more than others (Male respondent from ETEA).

With regard to these findings, Timur (2014) highlights that to realise the benefits of collaborative actions, several challenges that obstruct such benefits should be identified so that they can be easily mitigated. Moreover, approaches that foster collaboration and methods for overcoming obstacles should also be developed effectively. However, the stakeholder theory



has revealed valuable methods for identifying various obstacles that hinder efficient collaboration and communication among stakeholders (Freidman, 2014). Although the participation of all stakeholders in the decision-making process does not have to be equal, all parties' interests must be addressed and understood (Byrd, 2007). Swarbrooke (2018) corroborates the above sentiment by declaring that many conflicting interests and motivations are rooted in diverse perspectives and visions of various stakeholders, and the trend towards the idea of collaboration and partnerships among stakeholders, rather than continuing with the antiquated tourism models which each part works independently to achieve the same goal.

Conclusion

The study examines stakeholders' perspectives of domestic tourism revival in Namibia amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. The results of this study will inform policymakers on how domestic tourism can be used as a strategy for a resilient tourism industry post-Covid-19. The findings in this study revealed that like many tourist destinations in the Global South, the Covid-19 pandemic affected international tourism in Namibia which forms the backbone for many tourist destinations. Attention was shifted to domestic tourism for survival in the absence of the international tourism market. However, in most cases, the transition was not smooth as the domestic tourism market had been neglected for a very long time. In the Namibian context, numerous challenges were encountered in making domestic tourism a sustainable and viable alternative to international tourism. Such challenges include a lack of awareness of tourism developments by the locals, unfavourable pricing structure, barriers from historical colonial legacies as well as structural weaknesses in stakeholders' collaboration.

In this regard, policymakers need to focus attention on promoting tourist destinations to the locals, come up with a customized tourism product affordable for the domestic market as well as dispel the myth that travelling is only for the wealthy and the affluent members of society. Furthermore, there is a need to relook into structural barriers imposed by colonial historical legacies to make travelling inclusive to the generality of the Namibian populace. That being said, stakeholder collaboration and integrated planning should be encouraged for the development of a sustainable domestic tourism product. This study is limited in that it was carried out during the pandemic, and stakeholders' perceptions are likely to change as the crisis unfolds and as the tourism industry adjusts to post-Covid-19 realities. In addition, the findings of this study are reflective of opinions held by Namibian stakeholders, hence caution should be exercised when generalizing these findings to a different context. Future studies should focus on gathering post-Covid-19 stakeholders' perspectives on domestic tourism in Namibia. The findings of such studies can be compared with the findings of this study to better understand how a resilient domestic tourism market can be developed post-Covid-19.

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