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# Partnerships Lead Tourism

*'A win-win relationship between the Tourism Enterprise Programme, Department of Economic Development and Tourism, Southern African Tourism Services Association, the Destination Marketing Organisation and the Cape Craft Design Institute in the Western Cape is facilitating real development of entrepreneurs in the region.'*

In 2001 the Provincial Coordinator of the TEP approached the private sector trade association (WC chapter of SATSA) and the provincial government (Department of Economic Development and Tourism) to agree to meet on a regular basis. The basis of this informal collaboration would be to share ideas, exchange information and hopefully identify areas of cooperation. Without making it too onerous on anyone attending, TEP volunteered to provide basic secretariat

produce sustainable businesses. The emphasis has not been about producing large numbers of projects, but in adding value and support to the Forum partners. One of the immediate gains has been a clearer understanding of the roles and responsibilities of each partner's activities. Given the diversity of interests and agendas, the collaboration has allowed partners the space and opportunity to express constituency interests in a frank and open manner.



services to ensure that partners were notified and meetings held. It was decided at the outset to focus on a single area of common interest, i.e. the growth and development of entrepreneurship. In this unassuming way, the Tourism Business Forum was initiated.

The Tourism Business Forum is principally about developing relationships, which engender trust, commitment, and sharing amongst partners. It demands an understanding of the needs of our clients – the entrepreneurs – and finding creative, cost effective solutions to

Whilst a healthy tension exists, there is the old adage that a 'problem shared is a problem solved' and so some problem areas have been turned into opportunities.

"A government led – private sector driven" approach has enabled the provincial tourism development and marketing arms to make the DEAT catchphrase a reality. Entrepreneurial needs are articulated from both the market and supply aspects. Government departments depend upon the partners (TEP, DMO, SATSA, CCDI)

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who work directly with entrepreneurs to articulate gaps and opportunities. Once an initial concept has been agreed upon it is expanded, collectively, into a project. Discussions are not limited to who will fund a project, but rather, revolve around:

- How can the tourism entrepreneur derive maximum benefit from the initiative?
- How can the project tap into the additional resources of the Forum partners (networks, skills, information, funds)?

Once a project is underway, all Forum partners provide ongoing strategic input. The success of the projects, e.g. Cape Tourism Showcase, now in its third year, demonstrate a commitment to entrepreneurship development and the ability to think outside of one's box. The Forum has enabled SATSA to pin its flag firmly to the transformation mast while changing its provincial membership profile. Emerging enterprises have been able to join SATSA through cost-sharing of membership fees with TEP. The wealth of technical experience,

comprehensive national and global networks and material resources of SATSA members are increasingly being shared with emerging entrepreneurs through Forum projects, e.g. the Tourism Mentorship Programme (in its second year) and the Cape Tourism Showcase. Resources such as venues for meetings, prizes for the TEP awards, providing mentors for mentorship programmes, are some of these valued resources. These initiatives have impressed colleagues and similar projects have been implemented, e.g. the Gauteng Tourism Showcase held earlier this year; and the DCA funded entrepreneurship training programme, an initiative of our Tourism Business Forum (TBF). The Tourism Business Forum, while constantly evolving to meet the needs of enterprises in the province, would be further enriched by the opportunity to share ideas, information, networks and projects with similar forums across the country.

- S. P.

## Transformation Sharing the Responsibility

**T**here are a few key success factors for transforming the tourism ownership base in the Western Cape:

- Understanding that no one entity can achieve this mammoth task alone. It needs to be shared, through a common vision for all stakeholders
- Creating a climate that is conducive to change
- Establishing a comprehensive support system for emerging enterprises
- Providing some successful examples – a sneak preview into a prosperous future

### A Common vision for all stakeholders

To build a strong foundation from which emerging entrepreneurs can develop and thrive requires a shared vision for all those who have the power and influence to make transformation a reality. The partners of the Tourism Business Forum share the vision and responsibility of transforming the ownership base in the tourism industry, by way of greater representation of successful black-owned tourism businesses.

### Creating a climate that is conducive to change

Experience teaches us that to achieve our vision, one needs to ensure that all the participants do believe in the vision and want to be involved in the process, rather than have to be involved in the process against their will. Through the Tourism Business Forum, we are striving towards the scenario where our partners and their affiliates want to be part of enhancing tourism in the Western Cape for all to benefit.

### The Role of Marketing

Our objectives can only be reached if the marketing of our destination and its service providers supports the develop-





ment of our destination and its service providers. This entails:

- supporting entrepreneurs by creating marketing platforms for emerging product
- enabling entrepreneurs to derive optimal benefit from marketing platforms provided.
- identifying new markets for emerging product (new source markets or new markets within existing source markets)
- advising entrepreneurs at the product conceptualisation stage about which experiences or tourism products are being sought

Through the Tourism Business Forum, the planning of marketing and development is being aligned so that the programmes of marketing and development can take place hand in hand.

#### *The Role of Private Sector*

Development cannot take place optimally if private sector holds a conservative stance to transformation, or if they are involved because they feel forced to. To arrive at an enhanced industry that operates for the benefit for all stakeholders, we require private sector to realise that transformation, as difficult as it may seem right now, is in the long-term interests of the industry. Only by creating a stable industry, where all stakeholders benefit, can the industry continue to grow sustainably. With SATSA as one of the partners of the Tourism Business Forum, we are well on our way to ensuring that private sector is a willing role player in tourism transformation. Not only are they inviting change, but they are also willing to help find solutions of how to expedite the process. Their enthusiasm has been displayed in the Cape Tourism Showcase and the Tourism Mentorship Programme, and wherever they can share their experience and expertise. We are working towards a fluid and accepting environment and building a foundation for cooperation, for a healthy tourism industry. There is of course healthy tension, but these differences are not brewing under the

surface. They come to the fore and are discussed and incorporated into the shared programmes to ensure that they are acceptable to all involved. This will bode well in the future not only for emerging tourism businesses, but also for communities with tourism potential and for employees in the tourism sector and other previously neglected interest groups.

### **A Comprehensive Business Support System**

Through this strategic partnership a number of successful programmes have taken root, and others that were proving difficult to get off the ground have been given the support needed to get going. These programmes are far from ad-hoc. They each form part of a comprehensive support system for emerging tourism businesses. The strategy of the Tourism Business Forum has been to take a tiered approach to Tourism Business Support. There are several black-owned tourism businesses in the Western Cape, and they are all at different stages of business development. Hence their support needs differ, based on which stage of development their business is at. The Tourism Business Forum has segmented the market of tourism entrepreneurs into the following four broad categories:

- Considering – individuals considering entering the industry
- Beginners – entrepreneurs taking the decision to start their tourism business
- Infancy – enterprises struggling to make a profit
- Established – enterprises which have reached break even, but are now hitting the glass ceiling in attempting to enter the mainstream

Programmes have been put in place in order to support tourism businesses at each stage with the intention of facilitating their passage through to the next level. This ranges from basic information, training programmes, incentives, marketing platforms, basic and advanced mentorship support to, in some cases, even finance.

Different partners of the Tourism Business Forum take the lead for different programmes as is determined by their area of expertise, but strategic input and required resources and drawn from all the other Forum members. For example, the Mentorship Programme, while funded and driven by government, has mentors supplied by SATSA, who also administers the fund. The DMO grants preferential market exposure to the carefully selected mentees and TEP also contributes by way of the cost sharing of further business development required by the candidates to transform them into globally competitive enterprises.

Another example is the preparations around Indaba, which draw very heavily on this network of assistance. Decisions about who to attend Indaba are made by the DMO, Government and TEP. Training and preparing the participants to make the best of this opportunity, a shared responsibility of the DMO and Government, is supported also by SATSA, who provides members who share their expertise in areas such as costing and networking. The Cape Craft and Design Institute (CCDI) shares their expertise in the area of using craft to create an ambience around your

product, and enhancing your stand design.

The Indaba exhibitors are further supported by TEP. TEP enjoys a wealth of experience and understanding of why some companies benefit from tradeshows like Indaba and why others don't. They have passed on some key insights through an 'Objective and Activity Plan' which offers the exhibitors a structured approach to drawing up what they expect to achieve through Indaba and how they plan to realise these expectations. This plan goes on to assist in evaluating the approach taken in preparation for future marketing and networking efforts.

### Are we starting to see a glimmer of success?

Out of our successful programmes a small group of discerning, successful tourism business people have emerged who are succeeding in breaking into the mainstream of the industry. We hope that through the constant refinement and improvement of our cooperation and the programmes put in place that more entrepreneurs will be drawn through the ranks and steadily start changing the face of tourism in the Western Cape.

- Y. F.

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