

Tourism SMMEs and Policy Formulation: Recent Evidence from Namibia

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Abstract

Despite the importance of SMMEs for tourism development across sub-Saharan Africa and for pro-poor impacts, research on tourism SMMEs in developing countries (including sub-Saharan Africa) remains embryonic. One knowledge gap relates to the neglect of tourism SMMEs in scholarship on tourism policy in African countries. Although some useful studies have appeared on tourism policy so far there has been little systematic examination of the particular contribution and position of SMMEs in national tourism policies. The aim in this article is to investigate the role of SMMEs in tourism policy development in Namibia, which is one of Africa's most rapidly growing destinations for international tourism. The results from detailed interviews reveal that SMMEs are essentially marginalised in policy formulation processes.

Keywords: Tourism policy; SMMEs; Namibia; Southern Africa

1. Introduction and AIM

There is mounting evidence that the tourism sector in Africa can contribute towards the goals of promoting economic growth and sustainability (Christie & Crompton, 2001; Rogerson & Visser, 2004; Mitchell & Ashley, 2006; Rogerson, 2007a; Spenceley, 2008; Christie et al, 2013; Pandey & Rogerson, 2013; Rogerson, 2013a). However, one of the key challenges for African tourism development is to ensure that tourism is a source of not only sustainable economic growth but also of 'inclusive' or 'shared growth'. Necessarily some of the benefits of tourism growth must flow to the segment of small, medium and micro-sized tourism enterprises (SMMEs) which represent at least 90 percent of all African tourism enterprises (Rogerson, 2005, 2008). Dieke (2003) identifies upgrading the role of SMMEs as one of the major tourism challenges facing African governments.

Despite their importance for tourism development across sub-Saharan Africa and an upturn in attention within the framework of pro-poor tourism (Rogerson, 2006), it is observed that "research focusing on tourism SMMEs in developing countries – including sub-Saharan Africa – remains at an embryonic stage" (Cloquet, 2013: 650). This point is confirmed by the findings of recent reviews of research trends in African tourism (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2011; Rogerson & Visser, 2011; Rogerson, 2012). The most notable exception is the South African case which has attracted a number of investigations (Rogerson, 2005, 2007b, 2013b). One critical aspect of investigatory neglect of tourism SMMEs is in relation to scholarship on tourism policy in African countries. Pioneer contributions to the study of tourism policy in Africa were made during the 1990s in works by Dieke (1991, 1992, 1993) dealing with the cases of Kenya and The Gambia. More recently, Hall (2009:52) highlights the need for more nuanced analysis of tourism policy making in Southern Africa. In the case of South Africa the issue of niche tourism policy has been scrutinized (Rogerson, 2011). Although some useful studies have appeared on tourism policy in the region, most notably those by Janis (2009, 2011), so far there has been little systematic examination of the particular contribution and position of SMMEs in national tourism policies. It is against this background that the purpose of this article is to interrogate the role of SMMEs in tourism policy development in the case of Namibia, which represents one of Africa's most rapidly growing destinations for international tourism (Rogerson, 2007; Lapeyre, 2011; Christie et al. 2013).

2. Context and Methods

Among others Scott (2011) draws attention to the significance for tourism scholars of understanding tourism policy. Although the definition of tourism policy is contested it is viewed as affording a framework to guide tourism development actions and a strategic declaration of government's intent as to the directions that tourism is expected to evolve. Arguably, tourism policy is seen as often messy and best understood as a complex adaptive system (Scott, 2011).

Moreover, the role of government within the tourism policy process varies from one country to the other depending on a range of variables that include the values influencing policy approaches (Christie et al. 2013). None the less, the central point is that governments have the power to determine pathways for tourism development within countries. In particular, national governments can shape whether the trajectory of tourism development is one dictated primarily by foreign interests and capital or whether it might seek to promote the economic benefits of local people as well as preservation of social, cultural and environmental assets. Much existing scholarship on tourism policy concentrates on issues relating to developed countries and gives little attention to the often complex and different realities of emerging tourism destinations, such as those in sub-Saharan Africa.

In Southern Africa one distinctive aspect of tourism policy relates to uplifting the status of previously disadvantaged communities in the tourism industry. Initiatives for Black Economic Empowerment in South African tourism provide one example with parallel policies applied also in Botswana and Namibia (Rogerson & Visser, 2004; Hall, 2009; Lapeyre, 2011). It is argued that although the level of conceptualization and implementation of these programmes for expanding local citizen involvement varies from country to country, their common objective has been to address the economic dispossession and marginalisation of local citizens from tourism product development that occurred during colonial and apartheid periods (Nyakunu & Rogerson, 2014). As has been shown, the overwhelming majority of these emerging enterprises which have been established by members of disadvantaged communities fall into the category of tourism SMMEs (Rogerson, 2005, 2008).

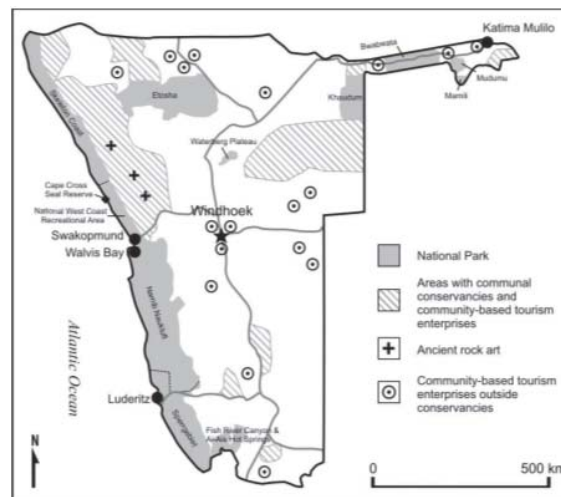


Figure 1: Location of main tourist attractions in Namibia

Namibia is a rising African tourism destination with a range of tourism assets, most of which focus on nature tourism, spectacular scenery and the country's cultural assets. The geography of tourism attractions in the country reveals a widespread distribution of tourism assets with the nature attractions of Etosha park the major focus for international tourists. (Fig. 1). In terms of research approach this study is qualitative in design and adopted purposive sampling. In total 40 stakeholders drawn from different segments of the tourism policy community and across different geographical regions of Namibia were interviewed (Nyakunu, 2014). A questionnaire comprising both open-ended and closed questions was utilised to obtain information from respondents. Key issues that were scrutinized related to how participants conceptualized and understood the participation of SMMEs in tourism policy formulation in Namibia. The study population comprised representatives both from the public sector, the private sector and NGOs. From the public sector five core interviews were secured with officials variously from the office of the Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET) and local government. A total of 30 interviews was undertaken with the private sector with representatives of tourism business associations and tourism entrepreneurs, including tourism SMMEs. Of this group of interviews five interviews were conducted with large tourism operators and 25 were with SMMEs. Finally, five interviews were undertaken with donors or non-governmental organisations active in the Namibian tourism economy.

All respondents were selected on the basis of their involvement (past and present) in the tourism industry of Namibia. In terms of location of interviewees a deliberate effort was made to capture responses from tourism enterprises which were based outside of Namibia's major urban centres of Windhoek, Swakopmund and Walvis Bay. In total, these

three centres represented 47 percent of respondents the remainder were spread widely throughout the rest of Namibia, including Otjiwarango, Katima Mulilo, Oshakati, Luderitz, Gobabis and Keetmanshoop (Nyakunu, 2014).

3. Results

The study yielded information on a range of different issues relating to the participation of SMMEs in tourism policy formulation in Namibia. The material is organized here in terms of the following four overlapping themes. First, is the involvement of SMMEs in the formulation of tourism policy. Second, concerns the awareness and perceptions towards tourism policies in Namibia. Third, relates to questions around dialogue and attitudes towards SMME involvement. Finally, discussion focuses on recommendations to enhance SMME involvement in policy processes.

3.1 Involvement of SMMEs in the formulation of tourism policies

Participants were questioned whether SMMEs were involved in the formulation of tourism policies. The findings disclose that the majority of participants consider that SMME involvement in tourism policy development in Namibia is minimal (Table 1).

Table 1: Perceptions of Respondents About SMME Involvement in Policy Formulation

	Do not agree	Agree	Agree to an extent	Strongly agree
Public Sector Officials	2	2	1	
Private sector	2	2	1	
SMEs	22	0	1	1
Donors & NGOs	2	1	1	1
Total	28	5	5	2

Source: Survey

A variety of reasons were offered by respondents as to why SMMEs were perceived as uninvolved in the policy formulation process. First, SMMEs are disparate entities that are not organized and lack a platform from which to articulate the critical issues that affect them. In addition, they lack resources, lobbying and advocacy skills. As a result they are too weak to influence policy agenda setting. Second, SMME respondents pointed out that many government officials did not understand the operational realities which affect their tourism business. Hence their inputs tended to undermine rather than to strengthen the position of SMMEs. Some respondents even voiced the opinion that certain government officials seemed to fear empowerment of SMMEs. Third, it was argued by many stakeholders that when policies were formulated SMMEs were relatively hidden and had low recognition. This said other respondents indicated a degree of SMME involvement in policy formulation through consultative workshops which had been held by government during the formulation of the policies. Moreover, they pointed out that access to committee meetings was facilitated and discussions were transparent.

Reasons given above for the lack of effective participation of SMEs in tourism policy formulation can be viewed as determinants of participation. They determine the readiness of the SMMEs to engage in the process of policy formulation and be effective. These factors can be considered in different ways and analysed from different perspectives. They can be viewed as preconditions that have a potential to contribute towards cooperative interaction by SMMEs in policy formulation. This applies for certain preconditions such as leadership attitudes, communication, competency and resources. The aforementioned reasons can also be viewed as factors crucial for successful development of SMME participation. Among the key characteristics for successful SMME participation are a strong leadership, organizational / operational issues, competent personnel, flexibility of procedures (where and when meetings are organized) as well as support from government.

The results revealed, however, that the majority of the SMME respondents had not been involved nor consulted on tourism policy issues. Indeed, SMME respondents recalled participating in workshops hosted for skills development. Those that had participated had not done so consistently. As one respondent indicated "it had been on an ad hoc basis". The interviewees were also unfamiliar with the 'rules of the game' of policy formulation. In other words, they were not aware of the formal procedures of decision making and informal rules and routines of interaction among the various stakeholders. Knowledge of the rules of the game is important because rules shape the boundaries within which policy

formulation occurs. The international experience is that tourism SMMEs have high rates of failure due to the many hurdles that they face and absence of a support system. The majority of the respondent SMMEs indicated that they had been in operation for less than 4 years and none had been in operation for more than 10 years. Due to their status as newcomers they lacked a sound level of knowledge and resources to handle competently competing and conflicting interests, which reduced their capacity to participate effectively in policy formulation. For some respondents the reason for not participating was because of their location in remote areas far from Windhoek, Namibia's capital and major locus for policymaking. Other respondents were unaware of what the policy process actually entailed. A handful considered that even had they been invited to participate they would not have done so because they lacked the knowledge or skills required for making a meaningful contribution.

One respondent involved in the tourism industry for at least eight years opined that generally small operators are uninvolved simply because authorities prefer to work with associations and large businesses in the capital city. Indeed, the extensive involvement of donors, NGOs and large enterprises in the tourism policy process was confirmed by other respondents. It was evident that those participants drawn from the public sector, associations and non-government organizations had been involved in tourism for over 15 years and affirmed that they had been involved in the policy formulation process as representatives of their respective organizations. During interviews they discussed confidently the discourses related to their involvement in policy formulation and were able to address the storylines or narratives about the concrete policy issues at stake and possible options.

An important dimension for understanding tourism policy formulation is the availability of knowledge to actors to make a useful policy contribution. The research sought to find out whether respondents were aware of policies other than the National Tourism Policy that impact upon SMME activities and their development. The majority of the respondents (95%) identified the National Tourism Policy of 2008 (MET, 2008) but only the large private sector, public sector and NGO respondents could identify a range of other policies which crucially impact upon tourism development in Namibia. In a situation where stakeholders fail to grasp the local tourism policy discourses that affect them directly it is clear that they are unlikely to participate effectively. The general finding was that the level of knowledge among tourism SMMEs about the national tourism policy and tourism-related policies was inadequate. Responses that participants gave during interviews reflected that they did not have a sound understanding of the objectives of the tourism policy.

Overall, the results reveal clearly that most SMME respondents had not participated in the tourism policy formulation process. Although participation is an important condition for SMMEs ownership of the policy formulation process, mainly they expressed ignorance of the process of formulating a tourism policy. Tourism SMMEs are therefore outsiders in the policy formulation process in Namibia. The responses of the participants revealed the nature of the representative stakeholders and how they influence or, as in the case of SMMEs, are unable to influence the different elements of the tourism policy formulation in Namibia. Current structures do not guarantee effective SMME participation in tourism policy formulation processes.

3.1 Perceptions of respondents regarding current policies

In the interviews respondents were asked to indicate which interests they thought were catered for most strongly in the current tourism policies. The majority of SMME respondents as shown in the Table 2 below considered that the current policies served mainly the interests of large tourism enterprises, many of which are foreign-owned and operated enterprises.

Table 2. Respondents' perception of interests catered for in current policies

	Foreign-owned companies interest	Large Tourism companies interest	Local communities interest	SMME interests
Public Sector Officials	0	0	3	2
Private sector	0	2	2	1
SMMEs	15	8	1	1
Donors & NGOs	0	0	4	1
Total	15	10	10	5

Source: Survey

Many respondents, especially SMMEs, argued that because the tourism sector enjoyed a priority status and large tourism business operators were accorded privileges this did not mean that small businesses shared such privileges. Asked to explain how current policies favour large business one the respondent reasoned that "The big players have the bigger market share and it is not easy for beginners to penetrate". Another respondent gave a historical perspective to this perception. It was noted that: "History dominates my decision. You will note that due to history a German tourist from Germany flies Lufthansa and then is picked up by SWA Safaris. He stays in one of the German owned private lodges near the National Park and then departs with Lufthansa. All facilities are owned by foreigners". This perception was widespread among SMME participants. They argued that the inequalities of resources and power relations were "stacked against" SMMEs, especially the less well-resourced black owned small tourism enterprises. It was considered that the previously advantaged communities systematically derived power which resulted in favourable policy outcomes for their businesses. By contrast, however, public sector respondents and NGOs often highlighted that policies did favour local communities and SMMEs. For example, a representative of one sectoral association explained that: "Since independence, there has been an intense drive to expand the tourism industry to be more inclusive and reach out to local communities hence MET concessions policy promote joint ventures between the private sector and conservancies and improved land rights have been granted to over 70 conservancies since 1990".

Recognizing that stakeholders in a policy arena can have varying amounts of power which, in turn, can have a disproportionate influence on tourism policy outcomes, respondents were given an opportunity to identify what they perceived as driving the tourism policy agenda in Namibia. The majority indicated that the tourism policy agenda was driven usually by political ideology with public sector participants and NGOs pointing out that government was keen to empower local communities and ensure that through joint ventures they become part of the mainstream tourism. Nevertheless, others were sceptical and felt that the policy agenda was driven by the fact that government "sees tourism as a cash cow to milk and fill government coffers". A significant number of respondents were of the view that the policy agenda is driven by NGOs and donors. Their argument was that the majority of tourism projects and most of the conservancies are sponsored by NGOs and international aid agencies. There is currently no funding from these agencies set aside for SMEs specifically. As one respondent put it "he who pays the piper calls the tune". Another respondent explained that the policy agenda was being driven by ideology because the representations in the committees that address major tourism policy issues were dominated by government officials. Legitimate concerns that are raised by other stakeholders are generally treated with suspicion and rarely examined on their own merits.

Of note was the fact that a number of participants had a limited understanding of government's role. While virtually all participants recognized that government had a decisive role in guiding development there was little understanding about the types and kinds of role(s) government can play and the interrelationship between these roles. In particular, SMMEs could not understand how the other roles of government such as operator (provider of infrastructure), investment stimulator (grants financial incentives), promoter (allocates resources for international promotion), coordinator (of different activities of a variety of departments) and educator (establishes education institutions and programs) could enhance SMME participation in policy formulation.

3.2 Dialogue and Attitudes Towards SMME Involvement

Policy formulation analysis often focuses on the decision-making phase, namely, the overt exercise of power. In order to understand the role played by various stakeholders it is important to go beyond the narrow confines of decision making and to address the less conspicuous yet more crucial issue of setting and legitimizing the political agenda. The surveyed respondents were therefore asked to indicate and explain briefly how they characterised the existing dialogue between SMMEs and policy makers. The responses are shown in Table.3.

Table 3 Respondents characterisation of current dialogue between SMEs and policy makers

	Non existent	Ad hoc	Less effective	Effective	Very Effective
Public Sector Officials	0	2	2	1	0
Private sector	2	1	2	0	0
SMMEs	23	0	2	0	0
Donors & NGOs	3	0	2	0	0
Total	28	3	8	1	0

Source: Survey

The majority of the respondents (70%) felt that dialogue between SMMEs and policymakers was “non-existent” or at best might be described as “ad hoc”. Participants who characterised the state of dialogue between SMMEs and policy makers as non-existent felt so because they had observed that SMMEs that had been approached were only a small fraction of the general SMME population. Indeed, it was suspected that the inputs that these few SMMEs had provided were either biased in their favour or that they had provided scanty information. Another opinion was that the dialogue was ad hoc because the community of SMMEs are disparate and unorganized.

In further analysis, participants were asked to indicate SMMEs attitude towards their involvement in policy formulation. Virtually all respondents felt that the attitude of SMMEs was reactive (Table 4). Most respondents explained that tourism SMMEs in Namibia are preoccupied with survival hence their participation in policy formulation processes is a luxury that they often can ill afford. In other words, the economic survival of their tourism business takes precedence over getting involved in policy formulation. This situation results in a situation of apathy that most SMMEs are content merely to respond to policy debates rather than push topics onto the agenda.

Table 4. Respondents’ perceptions of attitude of associations towards SMME involvement in policy formulation

	Positive	Reactive	Negative
Public Sector Officials	2	2	1
Private sector	2	3	0
SMMEs	2	19	4
Donors & NGOs	1	3	1
Total	7	27	6

Source: Survey

It is evident from Table 4 that the overwhelming majority of respondents (68%) characterised the tourism associations’ attitude towards SMME involvement in policy formulation as being reactive. Most respondents indicated that few initiatives had been pursued by the tourism associations to advance issues pertaining to SMMEs. The situation was exacerbated by the absence of a single organisation to represent the interests of tourism SMMEs in Namibia instead there had occurred fragmentation and the existence of a number of competing associations with narrow interests. As one interviewee remarked: “there is a considerable degree of mistrust and certainly if you have got associations which are similar, they are naturally wary of each other”. Cooperation was made difficult because of the different approaches of these associations towards participation in the policy process. This fragmentation makes it harder for tourism SMMEs to form a strong lobby to influence the formulation of policies in their interest. Accordingly, low levels of trust and reluctance to associate with other members hinders the participation of SMMEs in processes of policy formulation. In the case of Namibia this situation is compounded by local authorities’ insufficient knowledge and experience of how to manage the policy formulation process and of how to coordinate the various roles of the policy actors. The consequence has been a perceived distance between the SMMEs and authorities – a division between “us” and “them”.

Collectively the group of emerging SMMEs operates at a disadvantage with respect to both the enormous resource and relational power enjoyed by large foreign-owned tourism enterprises and the advantages of economic, social and cultural capital enjoyed by established SMMEs. The competition offered by established tourism businesses – both large and small – clearly functions as a core constraint upon the influence of emerging businesses. Furthermore, a sharp distinction exists in Namibia between urban-based and rural tourism SMMEs. Emerging (black-owned) SMMEs are confined mainly by geography to the specialized niche of ‘township tourism’ and thus do not attract the wider mix of business and leisure tourists who visit the accommodation establishments as operated by established (mainly white) small entrepreneurs. In urban areas black-owned, emerging small-scale enterprises are confined spatially in their operations to the so-termed former designated townships. Although this distinctive geography offers some opportunities, it simultaneously imposes considerable limits on the growth of these establishments. In rural areas the opportunities for successful tourism entrepreneurship are severely reduced also by problems of infrastructural deficiencies for tourism development in terms of both human and physical resources. These entrepreneurs face such an enormous weight of problems that much of emerging rural tourism entrepreneurship functions at bare survival levels.

Participants were asked whether the difference between well-resourced white SMMEs and less well-resourced black SMMEs impeded the effective participation of SMMEs in the tourism policy formulation. The majority of respondents felt that well-resourced white SMMEs had ‘an edge’ over the less well-resourced black SMMEs (see Table 5)

Table 5 Perceptions regarding inequalities in resources between SMMEs

	Yes	No
Public Sector Officials	2	3
Private sector	2	3
SMMEs	24	1
Donors & NGOs	4	1
Total	32	8

Source: Survey

The majority of respondents (80%) felt that the white SMMEs had greater access to the policy makers whereas the less well-resourced black –owned SMMEs lacked such access. One interviewee pointed out that information regarding meetings to discuss policy issues usually reached the white SMMEs more readily than the community of black-owned SMMEs. This information gap is reflected clearly in attendance at policy meetings where generally there are more white entrepreneurs than black attendees. Some respondents forwarded the view that white SMMEs had the skills and knowledge to leverage while most black SMME entrepreneurs did not comprehend the importance of participating in the process. One interviewee was adamant that white-owned SMMEs were more united and supportive of each other as compared to the black-owned businesses which tended to struggle in an unsupportive environment.

Respondents were asked to express their views regarding the leadership of SMEs in the policy arena. They were requested to indicate whether they considered the leadership to be ‘non-existent’, ‘weak’, and ‘reactive’, ‘proactive’ or ‘very effective’. The results are shown in Table 6.

Table 6 Perceptions regarding leadership

	Non existent	Weak	Reactive	Proactive	Very effective
Public Sector Officials	1	2	2	0	0
Private sector	1	1	1	2	0
SMMEs	5	15	3	2	0
Donors & NGOs	1	3	1	0	0
Total	8	21	7	4	0

Source: Survey

It is shown that the majority of the respondents (53%) considered the leadership of the SMMEs in the policy arena to be weak. The prevalent reason that was given in support of this view was the absence of any effective formal association with shared common goals on the issues that affect SMMEs. Second, whatever leadership exists, it is not playing an active role by holding awareness campaigns regarding SMME challenges and issues or engaging relevant authorities and agencies. Third, there is no advocacy or a strategy in place to address challenges affecting SMMEs including participation in the policy process. In other words, as one respondent put it “they wait till they are prompted rather than being proactive as they are supposed to be”. Fourth, within the associations there are no coordinated efforts or even consensus on how to place issues on the policy agenda. Finally, participation in policy discourse is usually poor and when it occurs it is during those instances only when a problem has arisen. Even in these instances such participation has not resulted in positive outcomes.

Many of the causes of the leadership failure relate to personal abilities such as personal / interpersonal qualities, vision, active listening and ability to engage other stakeholders. These personal factors are the core focus of interest for Lemmetyinen & Go (2009) who propose four key capabilities which are required for managing partnerships in a tourist destination. The first is an ability to develop and implement informational, interpersonal and /or decisional roles that require specific leadership talents. The second is an ability to orchestrate a vision and way forward in a manner that draws membership and strengthens the actors’ commitment to participation for the institution’s interests. The third is an ability to create joint knowledge and absorptive capacity, receptive capacity and dialogic transparency. The last is a strong partnering capability which ensures that efforts are effective, efficient and sustainable.

Participants were asked whether they perceived any gaps in the policy formulation process. Respondents were unanimous in their identification of a lack of support by MET. Responses tended to highlight the instruments that

government in Namibia can use to improve their performance such as easing of the burden of regulation, reduction of taxation, increased training opportunities and more resources to support SMME marketing efforts. Respondents from NGOs and associations were keen to highlight that though initially tourism had not been considered as a priority this situation was shifting. Several respondents suggested that the policy process needed to be more inclusive and argued that only a handful of politically and economically well-connected SMMEs currently are co-opted into the process.

3.3 Recommendations for Enhancing SMME Involvement in Policy Formulation

Finally, in interviews respondents were requested to suggest potential interventions that could enhance the participation of SMMEs in Namibian policy formulation. The findings are recorded on Table 7.

Table 7: Recommendations for SME involvement in policy formulation

	Public officials	Private sector	SMMEs	NGOs	Total
Nation-wide consultation	1	1	2	1	5
Classification of SMMEs	0	0	2	1	3
Establishment of an institution to promote SMMEs	3	3	18	2	26
Creation of policy networks	1	1	2	1	6

Source: Survey

It is apparent that a significant number of participants suggested there should be a nationwide consultation in order to enhance understanding of the motivations and challenges facing tourism SMMEs. Platforms should be created or an educational campaign carried out to enhance mobilization, capacity and to equip SMMEs with advocacy skills, especially through their associations and networks. There were also some participants who advocated for a dedicated tourism SMME policy. Those who advocated for this considered that the current national SMME policy was too generic and did not give tourism SMMEs the attention they deserved more especially given the priority of tourism for national economic development in Namibia.

4. Conclusion

Tourism policy research has generally eschewed analysis of the role of SMMEs in policy processes. As has been argued, given the imperative for promoting inclusive development in tourism this oversight is regrettable given the overwhelming numerical dominance of SMMEs in African economies. It is contended that there is a need for tourism policies to ensure that SMMEs are beneficiaries of tourism development processes and this in turn requires an examination of their role in tourism policy processes.

This article scrutinized the role of SMMEs in tourism policy processes in one rapidly expanding African tourism destination, the example of Namibia. The findings from detailed interviews reveal that SMMEs are essentially marginalised in policy formulation processes. Several issues were highlighted in terms of explanations for their marginal role relating to tourism policy processes in Namibia. It was revealed that most SMME respondents perceive the current policies as serving the interests of large tourism companies. They argued that previously advantaged communities had systematically derived power which is resulting in policy outcomes that are favourable to them. The inequalities of resources and power relations are 'stacked' against SMMEs.

This analysis of policy development confirms that a policy disconnect emerges between the aims of increasing the participation of Namibians – particularly from disadvantaged groups – and of building tourism competitiveness through welcoming foreign investors into the country's tourism industry. Essentially, the construction of tourism policy in Namibia is based mainly in support of the leading interest groups in the country's tourism economy, namely large local and private sector enterprises. Correspondingly, the current involvement and role of small firms which constitute the largest segment of tourism firms in Namibia, in policy processes is weak and limited.

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