

Tourism fastest growing economic sector

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Botswana - World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) programme manager for Botswana, Vanessa Satur says tourism has experienced continued expansion and diversification to become one of the largest and fastest growing economic sectors in the world.



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Speaking during the Tourism Satellite Account (TSA) workshop in Gaborone on Tuesday, 20 February, Satur said international tourist arrivals grew by 7% in 2017 to reach a total of 1,322 million, whilst in 2016 it generated revenues worldwide of \$1,220bn. Satur further said Botswana received nearly two million tourist in 2016 and that the government was keen to further develop the tourism sector after realising its importance to the economy.

Satur continued to say that countries needed a thorough understanding of their tourism sector and its role in the economy in order for them to maintain an impressive tourism development sector in both a sustainable and competitive manner. "This can only be achieved through a reliable and accurate system of tourism information."

Tourism economy, information impact

Satur said information was usually limited to a collection of tourism statistics which measured the flows of foreign travellers to a country combined with hotel occupancy rates. Satur also said information was provided through visitor surveys and estimates of tourist expenditures based on a balance of payments data. "Many countries are now finding a need for more accurate information on types of visitors, the activities they engage in, and their consumption of goods and services."

Satur added that the satellite account should be seen as a means to understand tourism as a basic part of an economy and to describe it as an activity that has important impacts on other activities and sectors.

"A TSA based on a robust system of tourism statistics can become a reliable instrument to monitor and to position public policies on tourism development while serving as a powerful lobbying tool for national tourism administrations to support the cause of tourism," said Satur.

Measuring the economic contribution of tourism

For his part, permanent secretary in the ministry of environment, natural resources conservation and tourism, Jimmy Opelo said TSA was the standard statistical framework developed by UNWTO for measuring the economic contribution of tourism to the economy which was consistent with the way other economic sectors were measured. Opelo said the TSA for 2016 was the third for Botswana after the experimental one in 2006/7, and the second one in 2009.

"The government of Botswana has supported the work of collecting and analysing tourism statistics with a view to improving decision making on strategies and policies for the development of tourism in the country," said Opelo.

Opelo further said tourism has been identified as an important sector in the economy, providing jobs, local incomes and making contributions to government revenues. "Tourism is based on personal service and it is therefore employment-intensive. It is also a major foreign exchange and tax earner which spreads wealth and builds skills."

Opelo further said the key results for the 2016 TSA indicated an improvement in the performance of the sector in comparison with the 2009 results with internal tourism expenditure totalling P14.5bn, an increase from P5.8bn in 2009.

Source: [BOPA](#).