

Jurni to transform SA's travel and tourism industry

South Africa's Tourism Minister, Derek Hanekom recently launched Jurni, an innovative public-private venture that will revolutionise and transform South Africa's travel and tourism industry.



Dr. Nbmuselelo Songelwa, CEO of Jurni

A first-of-its-kind Travel and Tourism Data Management Company, Jurni will deliver unbiased, consolidated and comprehensive tourism data that will equip tourism businesses with valuable insights to inform their business strategies.

At the same time, Jurni will develop a booking tool that will improve access of small and medium tourism enterprises to the global market as well as a visitor portal that will better showcase the South African tourism product.

“Tourism data and information sources in South Africa are disparate and do not provide intelligence at a granular level to inform South Africa’s travel and tourism sector. With the launch of Jurni, existing data sources will be consolidated, as well as digital platforms developed to harness missing data and plug data gaps identified by the tourism sector.

“These data sources will be merged into one comprehensive, consolidated and unbiased tourism data hub for the benefit of the entire tourism sector,” explains Dr. Nomvuselelo Songelwa, CEO of Jurni.

Digital platforms that will be developed with the tourism sector’s input over the coming months include:

- A mobile-optimised and affordable SMME booking tool that will empower all tourism businesses, including the smaller SMMEs, to access the global market and increase the visibility of South Africa’s ‘hidden’ tourism attractions and establishments.
- A visitor app and information portal that will provide travellers to South Africa with a wealth of useful real-time travel information including, among others, GEO-location and mapping of South African experiences, access to a tourist safety tool, a helpline and social media sharing.

The data generated through these new digital platforms will be consolidated with existing data sources into a tourism data hub that will equip South Africa’s tourism businesses with improved insights to inform their business strategies and decision-making – the core focus for Jurni, explains Dr. Songelwa.

The importance of tourism data

At the launch of Jurni, Hanekom highlighted the importance of tourism data and intelligence in giving the industry insights into every aspect of how South Africa’s tourism sector is performing.

“Through meaningful data, we can monitor changes, make forecasts, devise strategies and policies, determine whether these have been successful and if we are indeed achieving the goals we set out as a sector,” says Hanekom.

“Jurni will be a pioneer when it comes to giving our industry access to accurate and centralised tourism data in South Africa, which will empower us to make significant and informed decisions for the benefit of our sector”.

The initiative – a first of its kind through an innovative collaboration between the private sector and the Department of Tourism – will seek to address some of the gaps identified by the National Tourism Sector Strategy:

- Developing a national tourism information system to provide critical tourism information for decision-makers.
- Developing a fuller picture of the size, nature and characteristics of the tourism sector, particularly the extent and variety offerings and businesses, as one of the priorities of the government.

Says Minister Hanekom, “We are raising the level of debate on the importance of tourism as a key economic and social driver. Tourism intelligence, meaningful tourism data that is consolidated into an independent data hub like Jurni, helps us to strengthen this debate. Together, we can exponentially increase the value that tourism brings by collaborating to make tourism work for everyone.”

NTVIS rebranded

Jurni is the official rebranding of the National Tourism Visitor Information System (NTVIS) initiative, which was launched by Amadeus IT in conjunction with the South African Department of Tourism and the Thebe Tourism Group at Indaba last year.

The investment by Amadeus was intended to respond to the real needs of South Africa’s travel and tourism industry. As such, the participation of private and public sector in the initiative was key, explains Andy Hedley, MD Amadeus Southern Africa.

“Amadeus felt that an industry alliance including key stakeholders such as South Africa’s Department of Tourism would

ensure this overarching goal is met. We are pleased that Jurni also enjoys the support of leading private-sector tourism associations.”

Amadeus IT Group, says Hedley, is committed to transformational, sustainable and inclusive growth of the global travel and tourism sector.

“As an invested partner of South Africa’s travel and tourism sector, we see the NTVIS, and Jurni – its Travel and Tourism Data Management Company – as fundamental to achieving this growth here.”

Dr. Songelwa further explains that Jurni is not only an online booking tool or a mobile app.

“We are a ground-breaking data management company, driven to provide intelligence by connecting people and spaces in the travel and tourism sector. The digital platforms we are developing with industry input are merely the mechanisms through which to generate missing data that the industry needs to make better decisions, reach the visitor more effectively and connect SMMEs to the global market.”

“As we continue on our journey to deliver on our vision to create South Africa’s first-ever consolidated tourism data hub, we look forward to further enhancing the collaboration with our partners at Amadeus and the private sector, as well as the National Department of Tourism, to enable the tourism sector to achieve its great potential.”

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