

# CONCEPT NOTE ON THE MALAWI INTERNATIONAL TOURISM EXPO 2019

## 1.0 Background

The tourism sector in Malawi is recognized as high growth export sector, capable of making a substantial contribution to the socio economic development of the country if fully developed. The sector has the potential to generate much needed foreign exchange through visitor exports and government revenues through tax and non-tax revenues. Tourism has also got the potential to making a significant contribution to improving livelihoods of Malawians in rural areas as most of the countries tourism attractions are located in rural areas through direct and indirect employment, entrepreneurship and provision of much needed amenities such as electricity, telecommunications, improved road infrastructure among others.

The Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS III) recognizes that Tourism, as one of the priority sectors, is largely nature based, and that culture and other related sectors are also expected to play important roles. In order to ensure that the tourism sector contribution to the socio economic development tourism is optimized the Government has undertaken a number of initiatives whose main objective is to ensure that there is substantial growth in tourism traffic from the main global traveler generating countries, one of them being creating a robust tourism distribution network.

Malawi organized its first Malawi International Tourism Exposition in August 2017 which provided an opportunity for Malawian suppliers of tourism products to interface with a diverse range of buyers from key traveler generating countries like the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, United States of America, Netherlands, Norway, South Africa and China among others. The expo further provided an opportunity for the hosted buyers to have practical destination knowledge of what Malawi has got to offer in terms of tourism.

The Expo is held on an annual basis and brings together hosted buyers and media, local suppliers of tourism products and the general public together in one place for face to face meetings that will translate into long term business relationships. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Malawi International Expo will be held at Bingu wa Mutharika International Conference Centre, Lilongwe from 25-27 April, 2019.

## **2.0 Rationale**

The Expo has provided an avenue for growing and reinforcing Malawi's tourism brand in the country's major traveler generating countries. The fair has also enabled hosted buyers and local suppliers of tourism products to converge in one place and work out business deals that lead to long term business relationships. The small and medium scale operators have had an opportunity to interface with hosted buyers from the across the globe. Ordinarily the SME's might not have had the opportunity to transact business face to face with international buyers outside the country due to budgetary restrictions.

The hosting of buyers from the key traveler generating countries continues to provide opportunities for the international and regional buyers to gain practical experience of what Malawi has got to offer in terms of tourism and other aligned products. The destination knowledge gained provides an invaluable opportunity to experience what their clients would experience when they visit the destination. It enables them make relevant recommendations about Malawi to potential clients and also train travel agents in their respective organizations on How to Sell Malawi. Buyers are the key link between a destination and the market, they are the ones that can grow or break a destination, and a well-informed buyer plays a pivotal role in growing tourism traffic.

During the Expo, the Ministry sources international and regional media who collect and write positive stories on editorial basis about the destination, investment and trade opportunities in Malawi. The awareness generated is

targeted towards consumers who in turn are able to demand for Malawi tourism packages from the buyers of Malawi tourism products.

The Expo continues to provide huge business opportunities for the local population in the areas of Events Management, Stand Construction, decorations, branding and Equipment Hire, Transportation, Printing, Security, food and beverage among others.

The Malawi Expo continues to expose local suppliers with knowledge on meeting the needs of clients in the key travel generating countries especially in areas of market access, service quality, innovation and creativity.

### **3.0 Strategic Goals for Hosting a Tourism Expo**

The Expo is helping Malawi achieve the following strategic goals:

- i) Enhancing and strengthening the country's tourism brand and image as an open and welcoming tourist destination
- ii) Empowering local tourism operators and the general businesses to do business with international companies
- iii) Creating new business employment and business opportunities that would feed off the annual event
- iv) Creating a critical mass of businesses and experts who would prepare the country for competently hosting bigger events
- v) Addressing the issue of economic leakages as more spending is done at local level

### **4.0 Benefits of the holding the Fair**

- It offers a majority of local operators an opportunity to learn from leading operators from Malawi, the region and beyond on how they can market themselves in the comfort of their own destination. That is, exhibit and sell in a cost effective manner because of intra buying and selling as well as those coming in from outside.

- It offers an opportunity for key stakeholders (public and private) to appreciate that travel is only a component of tourism. This sensitization and educational process will include the general public.
- The expo will help build the national tourism brand as it will become an annual event.
- Expos create seasonal jobs and businesses for entrepreneurs as they are involved in the design and construction of stands, branding and decoration among others. This further sharpens expertise in related business.
- The country has an opportunity to showcase her attractions to buyers if the expo is combined with educational trips providing an opportunity to create and receive feedback. This therefore creates an opportunity for a multi-destination marketing by creating bridges with neighboring countries.
- It is a source of revenue for the local service providers and the country in general as participants will pay for their living expenses.

## **5.0 Targeted Stakeholders**

The Expo is not only targeted towards the core tourism sector but also targets aligned public and private sector service providers. Therefore, in addition to accommodation units, Tour Operators, Travel Agents, airlines, car hire companies, tourism training institutions, among others. The following institutions that offer direct or indirect support to the tourism and hospitality sector also exhibit:

### **1. Governments Departments**

- Department of National Parks and Wildlife
- Department of Forestry
- Department of Immigration
- Department of Culture (Museums of Malawi, Karonga Museum)

- Department of Civil Aviation
- Department of Marine Services
- Department of Trade (OVOP, SMEs)
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
- Department of Industry
- Ministry of Health
- Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
- Department of Roads
- National Statistics Office
- Reserve Bank of Malawi
- Ministry of Local Government( Local and City Councils)

## 2. Parastatals

- Malawi Revenue Authority
- Malawi Investment and Trade Centre
- Roads Fund Authority
- Airport Development Limited
- Malawi Catering Services Limited
- National Roads Authority
- Malawi Gaming and Lotteries Board
- Herbarium and Botanical Gardens of Malawi
- LIHACO

## 3. Training Institutions

- Mzuzu University
- TEVETA
- BIU
- MIT
- SOS

- Skyway University
  - MIM
  - Shareworld Open University
4. All Diplomatic missions, United Nations Agencies and the European Union.
  5. NGOs e.g. Mulanje Mountain Conservation Trust, African Parks, WESM, MEET, Lilongwe Wildlife Centre, Music Crossroads, Beautify Malawi Trust, etc
  6. Associations (MTC, Women In Tourism, Youth in Tourism, Mangochi Tourism Association, Tourism Association of Mulanje, Travel Agents Association of Malawi, Car hire Association, Likoma Tourism Associations)
  7. Cultural and Heritage Associations( Mulhakho wa Alhomwe, CHEFO, Mang"anja, Angaliba Association, Ngoni Gomani Maseko,
  8. Media (MBC, ZBS, Times Group, Nation Publications, Capital FM, Power 101etc)
  9. Entertainment (American Pilates Casino, Kairo Casino, Premier Betting, World Star Betting, LGC, BSC, LSC, KASASA SPORTS CLUB, Blue Elephant, Four
  10. Advertising companies( Continental Outdoor, Alliance Media, Roofhouse Olgivy, Mercantile International,)
  11. Local fashion houses / designers (FAME, Lilly Alfonso, etc.)
  12. Internet and Telecommunication Service Providers( Airtel, TNM, Access, MTL, Globe Internet, Skyband, )
  13. Cultural Villages and Community projects( Kungoni Centre for Arts and Culture, Uraha Foundation, Kandewe, Majete, Njovu, Gwirize)
  14. Dance Groups (National Dance Troupe, Zikomo, Chichiri, Dygo, Kwilimbe, Paka Town Band)

15. Event Organizers eg Lake of Stars, BAF, Sand Festival, Sailing Marathon, Porters Race, Impakt Events, Platinum Events, Blackmore Creatives. Etc.
16. Galleries, Arts and Crafts Groups( La Galleria, La Caverna, Central Africana, Blantyre and Lilongwe Curio Sellers Associations)

## **6.0 Venue**

The venue for the Exposition is Bingu Wa Mutharika International Convention Centre (BICC), Lilongwe.

## **7.0 Dates**

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Malawi International Tourism Expo will take place from 25 to 27 April, 2019.

## **8.0 Conclusion**

The Malawi Expo since its inception has provided an opportunity for local suppliers and hosted international buyers to create long term business relationships resulting into an increase in tourism traffic from key traveler generating countries. Buyers who previously did not package Malawi have ended up making decisions to package based on the destination knowledge gained after coming to Malawi as a hosted buyer. A knowledgeable and proactive distribution can play an important role in growing tourism traffic to Malawi through marketing a destination to their clients and making recommendations about holidays to Malawi.

