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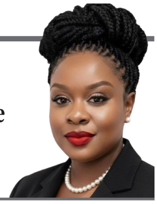
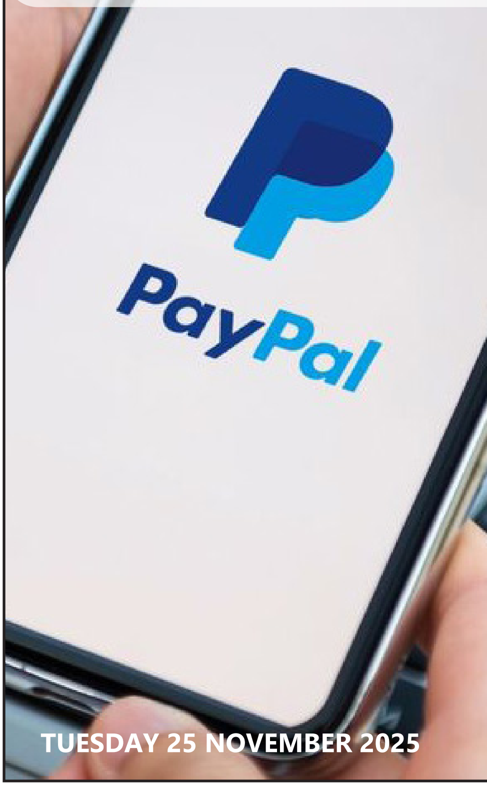


THE BRIEF
News Worth Knowing

Selcom secures PayPal and Mastercard approval to enable digital payments in Namibia



TUESDAY 25 NOVEMBER 2025

MAIN STORY

Selcom secures PayPal and Mastercard approval to enable digital payments in Namibia

A local entity, Selcom Namibia, says it has received approval from both PayPal and Mastercard to enable digital payments in Namibia.

According to documents seen by The Brief, the move will allow local activation of PayPal accounts, support wallet-to-

Crucial Dates

- **Bank of Namibia Monetary Policy announcement date:**
  * 3 December 2025

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wallet transactions, and enable cash-out settlements directly into Namibian bank accounts.

"This represents a major step forward for the country's digital economy—particularly for the creative industry, which has long faced challenges in receiving international payments for digital content, freelancing, and creative exports," Selcom noted.

The company said it intends to engage the Bank of Namibia to determine how the service could be implemented under existing regulations and licensing conditions.

"Given the significance of this opportunity, we wish to engage the Bank of Namibia to understand the regulatory and licensing requirements for accommodating these services under Selcom's existing Payment Service Provider (PSP) licence," the document reads.

Selcom added that ongoing discussions with PayPal and Mastercard aim to position the company as PayPal's local activator in Namibia, enabling both wallet and bank-account settlement capabilities.

"This will create new revenue and inclusion pathways for Namibia's creative sector, SMEs and digital entrepreneurs. Depending on the Bank's guidance, we would appreciate the opportunity to schedule a meeting next week to present the framework and explore how we can proceed within the national payments ecosystem," the company said.

Selcom also confirmed parallel engagements to enable Apple Pay and Google Pay in Namibia, which it describes as a complementary step in modernising digital payments and aligning the country with global standards.

"We believe this initiative can play a pivotal role in positioning Namibia as a digital and creative export hub, expanding financial inclusion while supporting government priorities under Vision 2030 and the Digital Namibia Strategy," the company noted.

The development comes as the Ministry of Information and Communication Technology and the Bank of Namibia have been pushing for wider access to global digital payment platforms, including YouTube monetisation.

Deputy Minister of Education, Innovation, Youth, Sports and Culture, Dino Ballotti, recently stated that although Namibian creatives produce content with international appeal, many are still unable to receive cross-border digital payments.

He said this restricts their ability to monetise their work, grow small enterprises and participate in global value chains.

UAE firm invests N$500m in Namibia date project creating 1,500 jobs

Warifo Investment, a company based in the United Arab Emirates, has invested N$500 million in the GAIDIP Oasis Agricultural Project in the //Kharas Region, which is expected to employ 1,500 people during its first phase.

Speaking at the inauguration, Prime Minister Tjitunga Elijah Ngurare said the project aims to produce 5,000 metric tonnes of dates annually, positioning Warifo as Namibia's leading date palm producer and placing the country in competition with established growers in Chile and Peru.

"We note with appreciation that N$500 million was invested in this project. Over 1,500 people will be employed in the first phase, increasing to about 3,000 employees at full production. This collaboration between the government and the private sector on job creation is highly welcomed," he said.

Ngurare said about 60,000 palm trees will be planted under the project, with the intention to expand to 600,000 palm trees through its own offshoots over a five-year period.

"With this investment in agriculture, Warifo is set to produce reliable, high-quality and significant volumes of local vegetables such as potatoes, onions, butternut, sweetcorn, pomegranate and various varieties of dates," he said.

The Prime Minister stressed the importance of food security, stating that no nation is fully sovereign if it cannot feed itself.

"A nation that cannot feed itself lives at the whims of nations that feed it and can hardly take sovereign decisions without upsetting global geopolitical formations. After all, he who feeds you calls the shots," he said.

He commended the United Arab Emirates' National Food Security Strategy 2051, which aims to make the country a global leader in food security by enhancing local production through technology, diversifying imports and reducing waste.

Ngurare added that the project activates key economic drivers through modern irrigation systems, renewable energy, export-led growth and local value chains, contributing to a more resilient and self-sufficient Namibian economy.

"The project introduces climate-smart agricultural technologies, including state-of-the-art automated irrigation systems, directly contributing to the ambitions of NDP6 to modernise Namibia's agricultural sector, increase productivity and ensure long-term food and water security," he said.

He expressed confidence that these advanced irrigation systems could be replicated along other perennial rivers such as the Kunene, Kavango and Zambezi.

"Through this project, Warifo Investments has demonstrated bold leadership by mobilising private capital for rural development and high-value production. Their mission to position Namibia as a competitive exporter of premium dates and grapes strengthens our presence in regional and international markets, boosts national revenue and drives economic growth," he said.

Ngurare added that by empowering local communities and creating sustainable jobs, the investment supports the social and economic priorities of NDP6.

"This project has come at the right time, as Namibia works to reduce import dependency, enhance national self-sufficiency and strengthen food security," he said.

He concluded that strong public-private partnerships will remain central to the country's economic transformation.

"These partnerships reduce the burden on the national budget, create jobs, attract investment and enhance long-term sustainability," he said.

December will finish you, unless you finish your investment plan first

By Erry Iipumbu

Instead of waiting until January resolutions start gathering real information now.

December in Namibia has a special kind of magic. The year winds down, Windhoek empties out, and everyone is either travelling home, planning a Christmas party, or plotting a beach braai.

The festive excitement is real and so is the spending. Every year in December, without fail, we spend with the confidence of overnight millionaires, then enter January staring at our bank balances full of regret, "I should have/not".

Even the most disciplined among us end up humbled, confused, and very prayerful.

But this year must not follow that tired script. Before we travel for the festive season, take out time to set up our investment accounts, review your annual targets and performances of your money.

In this article, I will show you exactly where to find trustworthy information on retail collective investments, what to consider when choosing the right fund, and how to finally stop touching your investments every time life sneezes at you.

I know, yes, I know, nobody wants to talk about investments this time. Yet this is exactly when most people make money mistakes.

Instead of waiting until January resolutions start gathering real information now. One of the most accessible places to begin is Unit Trusts, a collective investment schemes that give retail investors exposure to diversified portfolios managed by professionals like me.

If you visit the NASIA (Namibia Savings and Investment Association) website under "Collective Investment Schemes," you will find licensed funds with their performance histories, fees, and categories.

It is basically one clean page where you can compare what you are buying, how much you are paying, and how those funds have behaved over time. Think of it as window shopping for your future wealth, a catalogue worth browsing for something that fits your goals.

Here is a snapshot of the Money Market category as of 24 November 2025,

Source: NaSIA https://data.nasia.org.na/

If you open your account now, by the time the fireworks go off on New Year's Eve you will already have momentum for 2026. Many people plan to invest at the beginning of the year. Very few actually take the first step.

And then there is the big one: people keep touching their investments. Someone will proudly say, "I'm investing to buy my house, in 10 years" but come December, a birthday, a family event, or a new-phone fever, and that investment gets withdrawn quicker than you can say "compounding interest." The real issue, most people don't have an emergency fund.

They mix long-term goals with short-term problems. If you are investing for something 10 years away but withdraw every time you are short, that is not investing, that is a confused savings bucket disguised as ambition.

Namibians also carry a unique financial load. High unemployment means one salaried person often supports four or five others. Relatedly, when I drive north for the holidays, I arrive as a provider.

In that reality, long-term investing might start feeling like luxury. But no one is coming to rescue your financial future. It starts with you, even if it's just N$1,000 a month into a solid balanced fund with a 5–7-year horizon.

Youth investors hear me gently: money

> High unemployment means one salaried person often supports four or five others.

market funds are safe, but safety alone will build long-term wealth. For years, balanced funds and other growth-focused options have outperformed money market products over the long run. If you have time on your side, start considering funds with strong growth potential.

As the year winds down, I will be deep in numbers, screening, stress-testing scenarios, and building opportunity-driven strategies for portfolios. While I am doing that, I want you, the retail investor, to prepare too. Enjoy December, spoil your people responsibly, but take one hour to secure the future version of you who will say, "Thank you, self."

Erry Iipumbu is an Investment Analyst at Sanlam Allianz Investments Namibia. This article was written in her personal capacity and does not reflect the views of her employer. Connect with her on LinkedIn: Erry Iipumbu.

Capespan to expand Orange River grape production to 825 hectares

Capespan says its farms along the Orange River will soon represent 825 hectares of table grapes under production, once current upgrades and expansion projects are completed.

Speaking during President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah's visit to the Namibia Grape Company (NGC) farm in Aussenkehr, Capespan Group Managing Director Charl du Bois said the company manages six table-grape farms located along the Orange River in Namibia and South Africa.

He said all farms have undergone significant investment to boost output and infrastructure standards.

"Capespan Farms manages six table-grape farms along the banks of the Orange River in both South Africa and Namibia. All these farms have invested significantly in quality infrastructure improvements as well as additional production developments. Following all the completed and pending developments, these units will represent 825 hectares of table grapes under production," du Bois said.

Also at the event, NGC Board Chairperson Richwell Lukonga said the partnership between NGC and Capespan has strengthened Namibia's grape industry, calling it a "well-structured, locally anchored, globally connected" model that delivers economic value, jobs and community upliftment.

Lukonga said the partnership has increased earnings for NamRA, NAMPORT and the Road Fund Administration (RFA) through improved logistics and export growth, while enabling greater participation of Namibian companies in the value chain.

"The Namibia Grape Company, together with its strategic partner Capespan, has demonstrated that a well-structured, locally anchored, globally connected partnership can deliver national economic impact, community upliftment, natural resource beneficiation, value addition, job creation and sustainable returns to the State," he said.

He added that reforms implemented since 2023 have proven the partnership's strength and scalability.

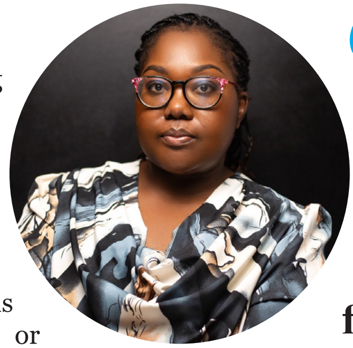
The comments come as NGC recently announced expansion and reinvestment plans. In July, the company confirmed a N$24 million capital investment programme to replant aging vineyards and upgrade core farm infrastructure as part of a five-year growth strategy to maintain competitiveness in global grape markets.

NGC reported stronger performance during the 2024/25 season, exporting 548 containers of grapes through the Port of Walvis Bay, a 43% increase on the previous season. The company is also a major employer in the ǁKaras Region, hiring more than 1,200 workers during peak harvest.

NGC last year raised and fully repaid a N$130 million capital facility from Standard Bank, which it said supports its reinvestment capacity and long-term sustainability.

Why 'safe to fail cultures' strengthen organisational growth and risk management

By Chaze Nalisa-Jagger



"The only way to improve is through informed trial, continuous feedback, and adaptation.

The cost of avoiding all failure is often higher than the cost of failing wisely. Failure is frequently seen as a problem to eliminate.

In many organisations, it is linked to breakdowns in performance, planning, or oversight.

This view leads to cultures built on caution, where deviation from the expected path is discouraged and risks are seen as threats rather than opportunities.

Yet failure, when approached with the right mindset and structures, can be a powerful learning mechanism. In what is called a safe to fail culture, employees are given the psychological safety to explore, question, and experiment, within clear boundaries.

These are not environments where anything goes, but workplaces where people are trusted to take intelligent risks and are supported when outcomes do not go according to plan.

Rather than standing in opposition to risk management, the safe to fail approach complements and strengthens it.

By encouraging small, controlled experiments, organisations can identify weaknesses early, build resilience, and improve decision-making, without putting the entire system at risk.

The High Cost of a Fear-Based Culture

Organisations that punish failure or use it as a proxy for incompetence create environments where people retreat into safe behaviour. In such cultures:

- Innovation stalls because staff fear proposing untested ideas.
- Problems go unreported because people avoid blame.
- Valuable learning is lost because failure is hidden or denied.
- Over time, this results in stagnation.
- Systems become efficient but brittle, unprepared to adapt to complexity, volatility, or change.

Redefining Failure in Context

A safe to fail culture does not treat all failure equally. It recognises the difference between: failure caused by negligence, which requires accountability and failure caused by experimentation, which is part of learning.

This distinction is critical. In complex systems, whether in healthcare, education, finance, or logistics, certainty is often elusive. Many outcomes are unpredictable.

The only way to improve is through informed trial, continuous feedback, and adaptation. Organisations that embrace this reality become more agile. They do not eliminate risk; they manage it better.

Safe to Fail and Risk Management:

Natural Partners

Traditional risk management often focuses on prevention, identifying what could go wrong and putting systems in place to avoid it. This remains essential in all sectors, especially where risk has serious consequences.

However, traditional models sometimes fall short in dynamic, fast-changing environments where not all risks can be predicted in advance. This is where safe to fail thinking strengthens risk management. Rather than aiming to avoid failure entirely, it focuses on designing for containment and learning.

In this model: Risks are decentralised into smaller, manageable parts, failures are designed to be non-catastrophic and lessons are captured and fed back into the system.

This is similar to scenario planning or stress testing, where simulated failures are used to build preparedness. In practice, this might look like pilot projects, staged rollouts, or test environments where ideas can be trialled safely.

Embedding Risk-Aware Learning

To apply safe to fail principles in a way that aligns with sound risk management, organisations can take the following steps:

1. Establish Clear Boundaries

Set the parameters within which failure is acceptable. These boundaries might include:

- Legal and regulatory compliance
- Ethical standards
- Financial controls
- Health and safety protocols

Within those boundaries, encourage experimentation. The goal is not to remove all constraints, but to be explicit about where flexibility exists.

2. Encourage Small-Scale Experimentation

Encourage teams to test ideas on a small scale before full implementation. This limits exposure while increasing insight. In risk management terms, this is the equivalent of limiting the blast radius, if something fails, it does so without compromising the entire operation.

3. Use Feedback Loops to Improve Systems

After every trial or setback, gather feedback and review. Ask: what went as expected? What surprised us? What will we do differently next time?

This loop transforms every failure into data that improves planning and strategy. It aligns with continuous improvement models used in risk-aware operations.

4. Encourage Conversations About Uncertainty

Make it acceptable and even expected, for teams to speak about uncertainty, doubt, and risk. This creates a transparent culture where hidden risks are more likely to surface before they escalate.

5. Train Leaders to Support Reflection

Leaders play a critical role. Their response to failure will determine whether learning continues or shuts down. Train them to respond with inquiry, not accusation. This builds psychological safety, which is essential for both innovation and risk awareness.

The Benefits of Alignment

When safe to fail thinking is embedded alongside structured risk management, the benefits are significant:

- Faster identification of systemic weaknesses; by allowing controlled failure, problems are uncovered earlier and in safer conditions.
- Greater adaptability; teams that regularly test and learn can pivot more quickly in response to change.
- Enhanced accountability; safe to fail does not mean no accountability, it means learning is tracked, documented, and applied.
- More informed decision-making; when lessons from failure are captured, future decisions are based on evidence, not assumptions.
- Increased employee engagement; staff feel empowered to contribute when they know they will be supported, not punished, if things do not go as planned.

From Blame to Reflection

Blame is a short-term fix. It provides a sense of closure but rarely improves performance.

Reflection, on the other hand, is ongoing. It builds capacity. It strengthens systems. Creating a culture that supports safe failure is not about being soft.

It is about being strategic.

Failure, when it is acknowledged and examined, becomes a competitive advantage. Safe to fail cultures are not the opposite of risk-aware cultures, they are an evolution of them. They offer a more dynamic, responsive approach to uncertainty.

They allow organisations to move forward with courage, not recklessness. With structure, not chaos. When organisations integrate safe to fail principles with robust risk management, they create systems that are not only safer, but smarter. Systems that adapt. Systems that endure. Systems that grow. Such organisation recognise that learning is a strategic asset.

Chaze Nalisa-Jagger is the Head of Human Resources at IntraHealth Namibia. You can connect with Chaze on LinkedIn (search Chaze Nalisa-Jagger)

Risk aversion is limiting wealth creation in Namibia

Namibians remain overly risk-averse when it comes to investing, a trend that could limit long-term wealth creation, particularly among young professionals.

Speaking during a panel discussion hosted by the Young Investment Professionals Club, Cirrus Fund Managers Portfolio Manager Amy Walters said many young earners continue to favour low-risk, low-return products such as money market accounts, even when their investment horizons allow for greater exposure to growth assets.

According to Walters, this cautious attitude is driven largely by limited financial literacy, cultural pressures, and a fear of losing money.

She said many investors confuse market volatility with actual financial risk, which causes them to avoid equities despite decades of evidence showing strong returns for long-

term investors.

"One of the key things I've observed about Namibians – and I'm sure many of you here will relate – is that we really don't like taking risks. The moment we hear there's even a chance of losing money, we panic. As a result, most people default to putting their money in a money market account. But in many cases, that fear prevents us from benefitting from higher-growth investment options that are more suitable for long-term goals," she said.

Also speaking at the event, FNB's Head of Investments, Ziggy Muinjo, said time is the most powerful risk-management tool. He noted that investing consistently over time helps smooth out market fluctuations and reduces the impact of short-term volatility. Muinjo emphasised that portfolio diversification across equities, bonds, offshore markets and currency exposure is essential for balancing risk and return.

"Another important element is diversification. Your portfolio should include offshore exposure, global accounts for currency diversification, government bonds, and equities. When one market underperforms, another may perform better, which stabilises your overall returns," he said.

Another panellist, Old Mutual Wealth Manager Christopher Freygang, cautioned against confusing gambling with investing, pointing to the increasing popularity of sports betting among young people. He explained that unlike betting, equity investing is based on data, economic fundamentals and long-term performance trends.

"You cannot time the market, but historically, investments follow trends and respond to economic fundamentals. That's very different from betting on Arsenal or Manchester United. The ball is round – anything can happen in sports," he said.

Fintech disruption: Why your market share is yesterday's victory

By Chisom Obiudo

> **"Artificial intelligence has democratised capabilities that once required large engineering teams and decades of institutional knowledge.**

For many established financial institutions, complacency sounds like this: "We have the largest market share. We're trusted. We're regulated."

This mindset could be your most significant blind spot.

Market dominance is a lagging indicator. It shows where you've been, not where you're going. In Namibia's financial landscape, the assumptions that built today's empires are being systematically dismantled by a force more powerful than any competitor: the regulator itself.

The Illusion of the Regulatory Moat

It is natural to view Namibia's high regulatory standards as a barrier to competition. Licensing requirements, capital rules, and compliance costs created high barriers to entry. The logic was simple: Obtaining a banking license is cumbersome; therefore, competing with us is hard.

But digital finance is changing the narrative. Customers no longer compare you to "the bank across the street." They compare you to the last seamless app they used. Payments, lending, savings, and even wealth tools can now be broken down into specialised digital services.

Cloud-native players can ship, iterate, and scale products in cycles your legacy core systems weren't designed for.

In this environment, your protective "shield" of regulation is being reinterpreted. Not removed but redeployed.

Large banks operate through committee approvals, cross-divisional sign-offs, and risk frameworks designed to safeguard existing assets. Every new initiative requires business cases, compliance reviews, and stakeholder agreement across departments with conflicting priorities. A three-person fintech startup can redesign its entire product in just a weekend.

The strategic error? Assuming your current market position allows unlimited time to adapt. In financial services, the gap between "we should probably look at this" and "our customers have already moved" is closing faster than most executives realise.

The Regulator's Mandate Is Expanding

The Bank of Namibia (BON) recently launched the FinTech Youth Programme and hosted the Fintech Thought Leadership Forum under the theme "Unlocking Youth Potential Through Financial Technology Innovation."

For decades, central banks concentrated on stability, supervision, and consumer protection. This mission fostered a predictable regulatory environment. Incumbents understood the rules. Compliance was costly but manageable. Traditionally, high regulatory requirements created barriers to entry that protected market positions. However, that protection is waning as the Bank of Namibia has incorporated job creation and youth economic participation into its strategic vision through fintech innovation.

This directly addresses Namibia's youth unemployment crisis, which threatens economic growth and social stability. The regulator is preparing to train, legitimise, and enable your future competitors.

Through the FinTech Youth Programme, the BON will provide aspiring fintech entrepreneurs with technical training in financial technology, direct guidance on regulatory requirements and compliance pathways, credibility through formal central bank endorsement, and access to the formal financial sector through structured forums.

AI Is Lowering the Barriers to Entry

Artificial intelligence has democratised capabilities that once required large engineering teams and decades of institutional knowledge. A fintech startup can now deploy credit scoring models, fraud detection systems, and personalised financial advice using pre-trained AI tools available through cloud platforms.

What took traditional banks years and millions in R&D investment, fintechs can now prototype in weeks. The competitive advantage of owning proprietary algorithms and data science teams is shrinking rapidly. Speed of implementation matters more than the size of the budget.

Nokia had a 40% Market Share in 2007

In 2007, Nokia dominated the global mobile phone market with 40% market share, whilst BlackBerry owned the enterprise communications market. Both had powerful brands, superior engineering, and loyal customers, yet both failed spectacularly as they optimised for yesterday's competition.

Nokia measured success through hardware metrics: unit sales, manufacturing efficiency, and device durability. They built governance structures, incentive systems, and strategic plans around being the best at making phones. They missed that the market had shifted to software platforms and ecosystem economics.

By the time Nokia's leadership recognised that phones were becoming platforms, their organisational structure made it impossible to pivot. Committees debated while Apple and Android shipped. Risk processes designed to protect hardware margins actively prevented the software investments needed for survival.

Apple didn't succeed by making better phones. Apple won by redefining what a phone could be: a platform for apps, music, photos, and eventually, payments. The iPhone launched without basic features like copy-paste or MMS messaging. Nokia's devices were technically superior. But Apple controlled the ecosystem, and that changed everything. Within five years, Nokia's market dominance had completely collapsed.

Namibian Banks Face the Same Pattern Playing Out in Financial Services

Traditional banks optimise for physical presence. They measure success through branches opened, ATM deployments, and relationship manager productivity. Although most banks have introduced digital platforms and mobile banking services, their core infrastructure and decision-making processes remain anchored to physical distribution models.

Fintechs compete on different terms: distribution through mobile apps and APIs, infrastructure via cloud platforms, customer acquisition through seamless digital experiences, and product launches measured in weeks.

By the time you see the revenue impact, you're already too late. Customer migration happens silently. They don't close their accounts. They use them less. Until one day you realise your most valuable customers now view your bank as their backup account.

What Survival Requires Now

Partner with BON's Fintech Cohorts Immediately

The entrepreneurs participating in the Bank of Namibia's FinTech Youth Programme will be trained, vetted, and regulator-endorsed innovators who understand customer pain points your organisation has become blind to. Establish a formal partnership track with clear commercial terms, fast decision timelines, and real budget allocation. Not a six-month "evaluation process" that kills momentum. Not an innovation challenge that produces a press release and nothing else. Create a 90-day plan from your initial meeting through the launch of a pilot project. If you can't move with speed, your competitors will. Become the first choice these entrepreneurs make when they're ready to scale, not the legacy institution they're aiming to disrupt.

Change What You Measure

Your current dashboard likely tracks yesterday's success: market share, branch profitability, loan growth, and cost-to-income ratios. These metrics tell you nothing about whether you're building capabilities for tomorrow's competition.

Add three forward-looking metrics to your executive dashboard:

1. Measure time-to-market for digital products. How many days from concept to customer launch? If this number isn't decreasing dramatically quarter over quarter, your organisation isn't adapting.

2. Measure API integration speed. How quickly can you connect to external platforms? Modern banking is platform-

based. If your integration timeline takes months while competitors accomplish it in days, your architecture is outdated.

3. Measure the speed of customer problem resolution. How quickly can you resolve issues that were unsolvable last quarter? This indicates whether your organisation is learning or stagnating. If your time-to-market is 18 months while fintech competitors operate on six-week cycles, your current market share becomes irrelevant. Customer expectations change faster than slow organisations can respond.

The Choice That Defines Your Future

Market share celebrates the past. It doesn't guarantee the future. The banks that will lead Namibia's financial sector in 2030 won't necessarily be the ones dominating in 2025. They will be the ones who recognised that when the central bank begins training your competitors, your strategic assumptions need to change immediately.

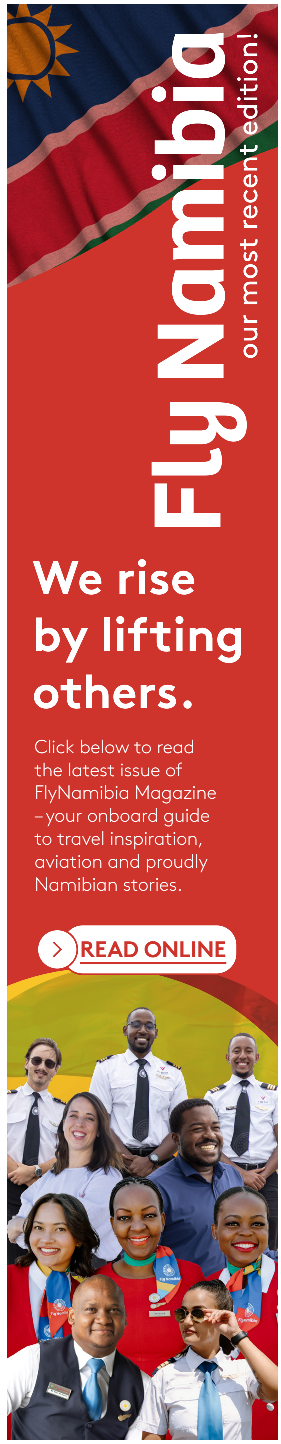
The Bank of Namibia has clearly stated that innovation is a top priority for the country's economy. The regulator has opted to support new entrants because existing players haven't addressed the key issues crucial for Namibia's future.

You can protect what you have, optimise current operations, and assume your size and regulatory relationships provide adequate protection. Or you can recognise that the competitive environment has fundamentally shifted and that speed now beats size.

The question is whether you'll lead the change or become a cautionary tale about what happens when organisations confuse current success with future relevance.

The institutions that answer correctly will define Namibian banking's next chapter; the others will be studied in business schools as examples of how market dominance became market irrelevance whilst leadership teams held meetings and competitors shipped products.

Chisom Obiudo is an admitted legal practitioner of the High Court of Namibia and a Chief Legal Officer at the Namibian Law Reform and Development Commission. She serves as a member of the National Artificial Intelligence Technical Advisory Committee on law and governance. Chisom holds a master's degree in Corporate Governance and professional certificates in Non-Executive Directorship, AI Governance, and Legislative Drafting. She writes in her personal capacity.



Namibia's hotel occupancy drops to 61.65% in October

Namibia's national hotel occupancy fell to 61.65% in October 2025, down from 66.60% in September, according to the Hospitality Association of Namibia (HAN).

Simonis Storm Economist Almandro Jansen said the latest figure is around 8% below pre-pandemic averages and 3% lower than the 65.15% recorded in October 2024.

He noted that although the peak tourism season ended on a softer outcome, the sector remains largely stable.

"The moderation reflects the natural tapering of international inflows as the high season concludes. However, underlying performance remains broadly positive, supported by strong European arrivals that continue to exceed 2019 levels," he said.

According to Jansen, as international demand cools, momentum is expected to shift towards domestic and regional travellers during the festive period.

The Coastal Region delivered the strongest performance, closing October with the highest occupancy rate nationwide at 73.52%, up from 65.71% in September.

"This is the region's highest level since September 2024 and marks a return above the 70% threshold, supported by continued demand from long-haul markets," he said.

Visitors from Germany, Austria and Switzerland were the most dominant, accounting for 45.29% of recorded arrivals to the coast.

The economist added that the region also benefited from strengthened business travel linked to ongoing oil and gas activity in Walvis Bay and Arandis, along with project work related to Namport's infrastructure upgrades, helping sustain mid-week occupancy.

In the Northern Region, occupancy stood at 63.84%, slightly lower than 65.73% in September and well below the 72.38% recorded in October 2024. Year-to-date occupancy in the region reached 53.09%, trailing the 2024 benchmark of 54.93%.

“Nonetheless, arrivals were supported by demand for wildlife and nature-based travel, particularly to Etosha National Park, the Okavango River and the wider Kunene landscape, which traditionally attract international visitors during October,” Jansen said.

The Southern Region recorded 58.19% occupancy, down from 63.37% in September and slightly below the 60.37% posted in October 2024. Leisure travel remained the main driver, with Sossusvlei continuing to anchor demand.

Lüderitz is also emerging as a secondary business destination due to growing economic activity and rising investment interest, helping to steady occupancy despite the seasonal slowdown.

The Central Region recorded the weakest performance, with occupancy dropping to 49.27% from 78.86% in September and falling below the 55.00% reported in October 2024.

“The decline reflects a slowdown in conference-related travel, reduced government and corporate activity in Windhoek during October, and a seasonal shift in visitor flows towards coastal and wildlife destinations,” Jansen said.

Visitor-purpose data showed that leisure tourism dominated across the country. In October, 98.08% of arrivals were leisure-driven, concentrated mostly in the coastal and northern regions.

Business travel accounted for 1.92%, while conference-related visitation registered 0.00%, in line with seasonal trends.

“Overall, despite a month-on-month cooling, the tourism sector continues to demonstrate strong international appeal. The outlook now shifts towards domestic-led travel as the country enters the festive season,” Jansen said.

More than 300 MSMEs trained to boost access to finance in Namibia

More than 300 micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) across Namibia have been trained in inclusive financial solutions under a national initiative implemented by GIZ Namibia through the ProBATS II framework.

The programme, delivered in partnership with CEFE International and local implementer NIFA Academy, also engaged over 40 financial service providers, including regulators, banks, development financiers and fintech companies.

"Over the past six months, a groundbreaking national initiative has reshaped the landscape of access to finance for Namibia's MSMEs," said Arinze Okafor, CEO of NIFA.

He said the initiative did not simply train businesses or financial institutions in isolation, but rather built a connection between them.

"We addressed both sides of the financial equation: giving MSMEs a voice and equipping FSPs with the tools to listen, innovate and rebuild trust," Okafor added.

According to Okafor, the training equipped MSMEs with practical tools to strengthen their access to finance.

It included modules on psychometric and cash flow-based credit assessments, alternative collateral and de-risking frameworks, digital onboarding processes, inclusive product design labs and capacity building for credit teams and product developers.

The initiative is described as a significant step towards practical, market-based financial inclusion, complementing government support mechanisms such as the National Youth Fund, the Credit Guarantee Scheme and the National Venture Capital Fund.

"Over the past six months, this programme has trained more than 300 MSMEs across the country, engaged over 40 financial institutions and facilitated powerful insights into the realities facing youth-led, rural and informal businesses," said Dr Michael Humavindu, Executive Director at the Ministry of Finance

Humavindu said financial inclusion "is not just a buzzword, it is an enabler of economic participation, job creation and dignity for our citizens".

He added that the programme was implemented across all 14 regions of Namibia and sought to link MSMEs with financial service providers to develop products that respond to real market needs.

By doing so, he noted, the initiative aimed to remove long-standing barriers that have limited the participation of rural, youth-led and informal enterprises in the financial system.

"Let us use today not only to reflect on what has been achieved but to ask difficult questions: Are our products truly fit for purpose? Are we collectively moving towards a financial system that works for all, not just the few?" Humavindu said.

Over 573 women trained under Katuka Mentorship Programme

Over 573 Namibian women have been trained through the Katuka Mentorship Programme to date, as the initiative celebrated its 2025 graduates and introduced the 2026 cohort during a ceremony in Windhoek.

Bank Windhoek, the main sponsor of the Programme for the past six years, said it continues to support the initiative to strengthen women's participation in business leadership. Bronwyn Moody, Head of Strategic Partnerships and Corporate Social Responsibility at the bank, said the Programme's purpose is rooted in building genuine professional relationships.

"The Programme is about building trust between mentor and mentee and understanding what each needs to move forward and make an impact as Namibian women in business," she said.

She added that the bank views its involvement as an investment in the country's development.

"Moments like these manifest that Bank Windhoek is a genuine relationship bank, a conduit for young women and their dreams to deliver genuine value for Namibians and their future," Moody said.

Programme Founder and Director Deseré Lundon-Muller said the initiative's foundation is women supporting one another through shared skills and

> The Programme is about building trust between mentor and mentee and understanding what each needs to move forward and make an impact as Namibian women in business.

experience.

"What makes Katuka special is not the structure or the timetable. It is the heart. It is the willingness of experienced women to open their doors to others. It is the courage of younger women to stretch themselves, to learn, to ask questions, to rise," she said.

Lundon-Muller acknowledged the backing of Bank Windhoek and the guidance of the Programme's Patron, Dr Inge Zaamwani-Kamwi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Land Reform.

The Programme received 84 mentee applications and 34 mentor applications for the next intake, with 55 pairs selected for the 2026 cycle. Orientation is scheduled for February, followed by training sessions in April and August 2026. The event also featured remarks by 2025 mentee Maria Ndazapo and mentor Abena Tambrescu, who both shared how mentorship has shaped their professional growth.

As certificates were presented to this year's graduates, Lundon-Muller reminded participants that mentorship is the beginning of continued responsibility.

"Tonight is not the end. It is the opening chapter of something bigger. Your success will not come from luck; it will come from preparation, confidence and your willingness to take opportunities when they appear," she said.

Founded in 2001, the Katuka Mentorship Programme continues to expand its reach and remains focused on fostering leadership, confidence and professional advancement among Namibian women.