

Amadeus, SA tourism industry partner to strengthen inclusive transformation

Stakeholders within the South African travel and tourism sector have partnered with Amadeus IT Group and South Africa's Department of Tourism to develop a technology-driven programme focused on strengthening and transforming the public-private sector. Led by its obligation in South Africa's National Industrial Participation Programme, which is managed by the Department of Trade and Industry, Amadeus sought to invest in projects that can contribute to transforming the country's tourism industry.



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The collaboration of industry stakeholders was consolidated through an Advisory Panel comprising representatives on 5 December 2018 and, with two programmes - the National Tourism Visitor Information System (NTVIS) and the Travel and Tourism Excellence Training Academy - starting operations in January 2019.

As announced in May this year at Africa's Travel Indaba, both the NTVIS and the Excellence Training Academy will contribute to the wider national interest of inclusive economic growth and transformation, through Travel and Tourism, one of the world's fastest growing economic sectors.

Tourism is one of the very few sectors in the country where many opportunities can still be developed: the World Travel & Tourism Council forecast growth of the industry's total contribution to the economy in South Africa to be 2.9% in 2018. This growth is expected through both the economic contribution of the sector to GDP, as well as in the creation of direct and indirect jobs (Travel and Tourism: Economic Impact 2018).

Delivering on the new government and industry partnership

The new government and industry partnership is governed through a general assembly of industry stakeholders led by the Advisory Panel, while the actual project development is outsourced by Amadeus to appointed, local economic empowerment companies in South Africa.

Participation of the public sector ensures industry efforts are aligned to the National Tourism Sector Strategy (NTSS), to drive and support transformation and hence the Department of Tourism will act as Deputy Chair of the Advisory Panel.

"The hands-on involvement of the private sector, on the other hand, ensures we leverage existing resources and expertise that NTVIS and the Academy require, to deliver the services, products and skilled professionals that will transform our industry," says Sandile Ntseane, chair of the advisory panel and general manager Southern African Vehicle Rental and Leasing Association.

Projects contributing to inclusive economic growth and job creation

The Thebe Tourism Group, appointed administrator of the NTVIS Programme, has secured the management team to implement NTVIS.

The NTVIS will start project work in three main areas:

- Infrastructure to improve the visitor experience including an industry curated visitor portal and app
- A data hub to equip the sector's businesses with improved insight to inform their business strategies and decision-making
- A booking tool and business application to boost access to the global market of small and medium hospitality enterprises.

Delivery from NTVIS projects will be spread out, with content and functionality made available in phases from as early as May 2019.

"Thebe's involvement allows us to bring so many of South Africa's tourism dreams into practice," explains Jerry Mabena, CEO of Thebe Tourism Group.

"A major goal of the NTVIS initiative is to stimulate business opportunities within the tourism and related sectors among those in rural and peri-urban environments, and this has also been a big focus for us as a business.

"South Africa has such enormous potential for both domestic and international tourism, we must ensure that the benefits reach beyond the iconic well-established destinations and the big industry players, to marginalised communities living on the doorstep of spots that can attract tourists too."

"Businesses in the tourism and related industry sectors can play a huge role in this: they should be giving consideration to their own needs which could be filled through contracting with NTVIS and the businesses that fall within the NTVIS initiative. In doing so, we can have a positive impact on previously disadvantaged people, including women, rural communities, the disabled and the youth," adds Mabena.

The Excellence Training Academy, on the other hand, aligns with the sector's Tourism Human Resource Development

Strategy, to deliver professionals with specific, added skills that business requires. In this way, the academy aims to bridge the gap between what businesses in the travel and tourism industry need in skills and what mainstream academia offers.

Aligning tourism strategies

Appointed administrator of the programme, Economic Development Solutions (EDS), have identified the first set of job opportunities for 495 young people who will be trained in phases over the next two years, in skills areas that businesses have confirmed they are ready to employ from. Training will begin at the end of January 2019 in the Ehlanzeni district in Mpumalanga and in Polokwane, Limpopo.

"We are in the final stages of identifying the first groups of candidates from the target regions required by business, the training content and the training service providers who will deliver the blended training courses - in person and virtually," says Waldo Adams, executive director, EDS.

Commenting on the industry alliance's progress, Svend Leirvaag, VP Industry Affairs, Amadeus IT Group, says:

"Developing and implementing new technologies for the global travel industry is core to Amadeus business. Through NTVIS and the Academy, we want to build the technology and data-driven systems that will contribute to transformation across the industry in South Africa, give small tourism businesses access to the skills and distribution channels that they do not have today and deliver professionals who are uniquely skilled to meet the needs of travellers.



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"It is this type of partnership, which brings together a range of organisations from the public and private sectors that will take South Africa forward.

By maximising the benefits of what the country has to offer for both international and domestic tourists and providing the framework to upskill people previously unable to participate in the economy in meaningful ways, we are bound to see a hugely positive impact among the communities where it is most needed," concludes Leirvaag.

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