



**environment
& tourism**

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Building a Service Excellence Culture and Partnerships in Tourism for 2010 and beyond.

An Accenture report released in 2007, titled **Leadership in Customer Service** has ranked South Africa's service delivery standard as the lowest in the World. The lack of customer service is **not on processes** but on soft skills such as business etiquette, customer care, and service attitude. This prompted the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism together with role players in the tourism sector to converge at the Emperors Palace today to examine how South Africa can Build a Service Excellence Culture and Partnerships for 2010 and beyond.

Addressing delegates at the conference through a recorded message, Deputy President, Baleka Mbete, said, "Service quality is paramount to the success of our economy, but we are not simply rising to the occasion. The essential skills needed for good customer care and service should be introduced as part of every tourism qualification".

Service Quality was declared a national priority by the Office of the former Deputy President in 2007 during the launch of a multifaceted programme called the "South African Experiment". Tourism was highlighted as a primary focus of service quality. Amongst others the South African Experiment aims to position South Africa as a world class quality service destination to attract tourists while growing the economy through partnerships between the private and public sectors. **Service Excellence** is a key ingredient in ensuring tourism growth and customer satisfaction.

A draft Service Excellence Strategic Framework has been developed and it looks at the transformation of South Africa into a globally competitive service economy and world destination of choice. It addresses

- skills supply, public awareness and education on minimum standards to demand, measurement of standards and efficient public feedback system to encourage improvement of standards
- Emphasis on behaviour and attitude alignment, beyond technical skills
- World-class solutions and best practices to be customised to SA's unique environment

As hosts of the 2010 FIFA Soccer World Cup, South Africa is expected to elevate service standards to world standards as well as to leverage tourism support towards the ASGISA initiative whose electoral mandate is to halve poverty and unemployment by 2014 and grow the economy by 6% by 2010 – 2014.

A Service Excellence Pledge was launched where stakeholders in the tourism value chain, committed to providing world class service for South Africa's clients locally and internationally during 2010 and beyond.

International speakers shared best practices on service excellence citing examples from their country of origin. They include Germany which hosted the World Cup in 2006, Singapore, Malaysia and Disney.

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