

A career in tourism is yours for the taking

By  Sharmila Ragunanan

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A dynamic, fulfilling career in tourism and hospitality awaits young school leavers, graduates and professionals - that is the message myself and the Dream Hotels & Resorts team would like to share with South Africa's youth this Youth Month in June.



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Much like our country's young population, tourism has proved exceptionally resilient in the face of political uncertainty. From the impacts of drought and regulatory changes to an economy that has endured many setbacks, the industry has managed to sustain phenomenal growth, with more than 30,000 new jobs created in 2017 – the highest seen in eight years.

In 2018, Stats SA revealed that the sector employed one in every 22 working South Africans. **Students and young professionals take note.**

With six-million South Africans currently out of work, unemployment is a hot topic. Despite efforts to empower and promote the country's youth, results for the first quarter of 2019 showed the unemployment rate of those between the age of 15 and 34 increased to 55.20%, up from 54.70% in the fourth quarter of last year.

While it is understandable that school leavers want to enter a commercially successful, well-oiled industry, tourism offers an enticing range of career options. That is attractive, not only for our young workforce but for those who might want to change their career path down the line.

The World Economic Forum currently estimates that the direct and indirect jobs associated with the sector in South Africa to be around 1.2-million, and it would be impossible to note all the opportunities in all the different fields and segments young people can pursue.



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In my personal experience, a fully operational hotel can easily have more than 100 different job titles in its team, from event planner to concierge, tour guide and executive chef, or marketing manager, reservations clerk and more. With so many different departments and roles within the sector, there is huge potential for career growth.

If you already have passion for the industry, you will have a very fulfilling career – provided you work hard for it, and despite consistent technological disruptions in the market, tourism remains one of the very few industries that will always require a human touch.

This is particularly true of the hospitality sector, where personalisation is the order of the day. Always an exciting, fast-moving industry, the PWC Hotels Outlook 2018 - 2022 shows an additional 2,900 rooms will be developed over the next five years, with occupancy rates expected to reach 62.5% in 2022. Scheduled hotel openings for 2019 – 2021 include the Radisson Blu Oceans Umhlanga in Durban, the Marriott Johannesburg Melrose Arch, the Marriott Executive Apartments in Johannesburg, and two Hilton Garden Inns – one in Durban and another in Malelane.

Industry leaders and stakeholders have done exceptionally well to help South Africa's labour force, not only by providing valuable employment but by identifying opportunities for skills development and training at both junior and senior level.



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Young people have always played an essential role in the hospitality industry, and the Dream Hotels & Resorts team has had the pleasure of working with so many young and enthusiastic individuals across our 23 properties. We have also seen many budding leaders progress through our Dream Hotel School, a development established in 2015 with Sondela Academy.

There is nothing more inspiring than seeing young South Africans excel in their careers, but it is also exciting to see how the youth perceive travel and are making it part of their lifestyle. According to UNWTO forecasts, in 2020 there will be about 300-million young people who will travel in a year, a \$320b market.

Youth Month is the perfect time to invite the country's aspiring young professionals to enter this dynamic industry, not just because of the many opportunities but because the time for youth in tourism and travel is now.

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