

Why creating leadership positions for women in tourism is important

The Unisa Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL) in partnership with The Department of Tourism (DOT) and the Gauteng Tourism Authority (GTA) recently presented the The Executive Development Programme (EDP) for Women in Tourism (WiT) leadership talk to discuss strategies to increase the number of women in strategic leadership positions in the industry.



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The EDP for Women in Tourism is an initiative programme presented by Unisa SBL, in collaboration with the Unisa College of Economic and Management Sciences' Department of Entrepreneurship, Supply Chain, Transport, Tourism and Logistics Management (ESTTL) and is endorsed by the National Department of Tourism (NDT).

Bruce Tracey from Cornell University in the United States shared his insights on addressing the most significant barriers to women achieving leadership roles in the hospitality sector. "Driving more support from male colleagues and superiors, providing effective mentoring opportunities and enriching job assignments and career planning are the main factors that many organisations should address as a solution to the challenges that women face. They need to make a real commitment to develop, grow and empower women leaders," said Tracey.

A panel of experts including the Culture, Art, Tourism, Hospitality, and Sport Sector Education and Training Authority's (CATHSSETA) acting CEO Keitumetse Lebaka, chair: Tourism B-BBEE Charter Council, Dr Vuyo Mahlathi and general manager of Tsogo Sun, Zukiswa Quagrainie, was facilitated by UNISA Business Tourism facilitator and researcher Professor Nellie Swart.

Maylene Broderick, the National Department of Tourism's chief director said: "The demand for executive education continues to grow, and we are proud of the partnership with SBL where a curriculum was carefully crafted to allow the development of women executives to manage and lead tourism organisations in strategic decision-making at corporate level and in a global context."

Mahlathi said: "Men focus on the job specification, while women tend to focus more on change. Women are drivers of change. Change is good; however, we must remain focused on what is expected from us and strive to be the most important piece of the puzzle."

"One of our mandates as CATHSSETA is the monitoring of education and training. Executive education and training are very critical in 'planting a seed' and helping leaders equip themselves with the skills and knowledge to empower and lead," said Lebaka.

"Research indicates that while there is a high participation at lower and entry level, the percentage of women at board and executive management levels in the tourism industry remains low. This is partly due to the unavailability of women managers with the required profile within the tourism industry," said Swart

"Our Executive Development Programme, which equips graduates with management skills, is a response to this. We have seen great success since 2016 with graduates being promoted or developing the skills and confidence to grow their own tourism businesses."

Swart assured the NDT of Unisa SBL's commitment to a project that resonates with the business school's purpose which is to turn people's dreams and aspirations into reality. In addition, Unisa SBL and ESTTL will continue to ensure that the country's public and private sector management structures reflect the diversity of South Africa.

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