

Financial Management and service delivery challenges in SA

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Abstract: This article focused on the importance of that South African National Parks, specifically Kruger National Park. It looked at the rationale for focusing on a public entity (SANParks) and covered the organisation's current financial challenges and how they affect service delivery. It addressed the state of service delivery in South Africa, a synopsis of the Legislative Framework, main public financial management practices introduced under the PFMA, budgeting and processes, and procurement challenges in the public sector, zooming in on irregular expenditure and lack of effective internal controls.

Keywords: Service delivery, South Africa, service quality, tourism

Introduction

Government and service delivery in South Africa are discussed in this subsection, including the history of service delivery and current service-delivery dynamics in the nation. Service delivery can be understood as the government's commitment to providing quality community services (Reddy, 2016:1-8). The notion of service delivery from a governance viewpoint can be comprehended as the incentives, accountability measures and rules which determine those vital stakeholders, such as the public sector organisation itself and its employees, are held accountable for their actions and their capacity to provide quality, sustainable service delivery (Molina et al., 2017:462-499; Mathebula et al., 2016:70-85). Service delivery, as outlined by the South African government, is a constitutional responsibility that is mandated to be provisioned in a way that promotes equality and fairness (Ndebele &Lavhelani, 2017:340-356).

Service delivery in South Africa

Based on the constitution of South Africa, 1996, equitable delivery of basic amenities to the public is a social obligation of the public sector. This basically means that public sector organisations such as SANParks are mandated to meet their legal, political and economic obligations (Ndevu& Muller, 2017:13-24). It is of paramount importance that public service delivery is comprehended as a mechanism or a procedure for public sector organisations to fulfil their obligations to the public as mandated by the constitution (Maloba, 2015:50-61).

Reddy (2016:1-8) noted that after the 1994 democratic dispensation, the South African government chose a robust local government structure, which was constitutionalized. The researcher sought to explore the origins and culmination of politicization, find the conducive local political arrangements for well-organized and operative service delivery, and, more importantly, enable upright and prudent governance. The researcher suggested that such enquiries have to take cognizance of the fact that South Africa is a '*struggle democracy*' and progress has to focus on previously underprivileged parts, where amenities have been meagre or inadequate (Reddy, 2016: 1-8). Given that the fight for a self-governing South Africa was fought at the local community level, it is important to have an upgraded quality of life for local societies. Therefore, the researcher noted that sound political arrangements are paramount to improving community service delivery and judicious local governance (Reddy, 2016: 1-8; Pires &Fidélis, 2015:289-300).

With the arrival of autonomous privileges in 1994, the South African government devoted itself to provisioning free basic communal amenities to the black populace who were previously sidelined (Reddy, 2016:1-8; Sithole &Mathonsi, 2015:5-30). Nevertheless, significant challenges are still prevalent despite noteworthy accomplishments in delivering service to such societies. Consequently, there has been a significant increase in demonstrations against poor service delivery across the country (Chikulo, 2016:51-60; Reddy, 2016:1-8; Sithole &Mathonsi, 2015:5-30).

Chikulo (2016: 51-60) also reviewed the root causes of the demonstrations and concluded that the chaotic demonstrations are illustrative of a lack of inclusivity at the local administration level. The researcher recommended that the government adopt a participatory approach where local people are included in the planning processes to address such problems. This will ensure effective engagement with the community, which will go a long way in ironing out some of the most prevalent service delivery issues.

Measuring Service Quality

Literature shows that service quality and customer satisfaction are often used interchangeably. It is important to note that a very thin line exists between quality-service delivery and client satisfaction. Following, Chihwaiet al. (2019), in this study, perceived service quality is viewed as a precursor of customer satisfaction. According to researchers such as Kasiriet al. (2017:91-97), service quality and satisfaction are key concepts regarding customers. These researchers further point out that even though the concepts of service quality and customer satisfaction are depicted as dissimilar, several studies have suggested that both constructs are more similar than different and are significantly correlated (Gera et al., 2017:1-20). Joudeh&Dandis (2018:108-120) view service quality as the magnitude and direction of incongruity between clients' perceptions and anticipation. Lien et al. (2017:403-410) proposed that supposed quality is the product of a proportional assessment procedure as mirrored in the variances between anticipated and perceived service.

Puri & Singh (2018; 745-751) suggest that service quality can be understood as a determinant of client satisfaction. The SERVQUAL model postulates that the quality of service is a determinant of client satisfaction and, consequently, the aspects of the five components of the SERVQUAL model of service quality. The components of the model are reliability, empathy, staff competency, and tangible factors. These aspects have the most significant influence on customer satisfaction (Ali & Raza, 2017:559-577).

Numerous scholars recognise the mutual resemblance between service quality and satisfaction (Kasiri et al., 2017:91-97). These scholars agree that the magnitude and degree of service quality delivered by the service providers influence client satisfaction. In other words, the concepts of satisfaction and service quality have many similarities; nonetheless, satisfaction is normally a wider notion, while service quality concentrates more on the construct of service (Puri & Singh, 2018; 745-751).

Tourism and its economic contributions in Africa

Tourism is a big sector and is an important contributor to the economy of most nations (Comerio&Strozzi, 2019:109-131). That is why it is imperative to focus on the necessity to improve tourists' satisfaction so as to enhance the general performance of tourist service providers such as Kruger National Park. The Gross Domestic Product of most countries in Africa and the world over is significantly affected by changes and fluctuations in their tourism activities. Tourism has become one of the main determinants of economic growth in most developing countries, contributing huge chunks to nations' economies (Butler & Rogerson, 2016:264-281). For example, the tourism sector is Kenya's second biggest economic sector after only the agricultural sector, contributing approximately twelve per cent of the nation's GDP (Sindiga, 2018).

Owing to the general deterioration in global tourists' entrances into South Africa, the researcher realizes a necessity to explore some of the fundamental aspects responsible for causing such trends. One of the factors that can contribute to this decline in international tourism arrivals is poor service delivery emanating from poor financial administration (Tichaawa&Kimbu, 2019:179-196). It is also the opinion of the researcher that there is poor comprehension of holidaymakers' needs by resort management which, in the end, leads to poor service delivery.

The key role played by tourism in economic growth has seen the formation of Tourism organizations which has brought about the development of tourism in Africa (Comerio&Strozzi, 2019:109-131). Tourism is a key contributor to government coffers and an enabler of economic growth. It creates jobs, is key to conservation initiatives, significantly contributes to the well-being of a nation and alleviates poverty (Sindiga, 2018; Butler & Rogerson, 2016:264-281).

For instance, the tourism industry in Kenya contributes 40% of the gross domestic product (Mulwa & Owiyo, 2018). This informs that tourist service providers should strive for business excellence through prudent financial management coupled with a client-centric approach that aims to satisfy visitors by delivering quality service.

This literature review further shows the contribution of tourism to national economies; for example, Anderson (2015:208-224) believes that global travellers' entrances into Tanzania have significantly improved and now generate over \$1.2 billion in earnings per year. The tourism industry contributes to the nation's coffers more than any other sector except agriculture, which accounts for 15% of the country's economy (Anderson & Sanga, 2019:34-48).

There is a descending trend in travellers' entrances relative to previous statistics (Statistics South Africa, 2015). Approximately 85% of visitors to KNP, which is the biggest portion, are home-grown holidaymakers, and overseas holidaymakers constitute only a smaller portion. There is a need to adopt strategies meant to increase the number of guests to KNP to improve income, with foreign visitors bringing the much-needed foreign currency. This reinforces the notion that Kruger National Park needs to strive for business excellence to improve service quality and visitors' satisfaction.

The overall contribution of Travel & Tourism to job creation, including jobs downstream that indirectly depend on the sector, is approximately ten percent of overall employment. This is estimated to rise by approximately 2.1% per annum by 2024. Following the same trend, Travel & Tourism investments are expected to grow and become a major contributor to total investment (Sofronov, 2018:123-137).

Table 1 Contributions of travel and tourism to Gross Domestic Product in 2019 (in percentage)

Country	The proportion of GDP (in percentage)
Madagascar	16.1
Zimbabwe	6.5
Lesotho	16.2
Kenya	8.8
Tanzania	11.7
Botswana	13.1
South Africa	8.7
Namibia	10.9
Zambia	7.3
Swaziland	5.9

Source: (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2014)

Table 2 Contribution of travel and tourism to employment in 2019 (in percentage)

Country	The proportion of GDP (in percentage)
South Africa	4.3
Lesotho	15.4
Madagascar	13.5
Botswana	8.9
Namibia	5.3
Kenya	8.5
Tanzania	4.1
Zimbabwe	3.7
Swaziland	1.9
Zambia	4.9

Source: (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2019)

It can thus be argued that if the relevant stakeholders do not continuously improve tourism services in South Africa, their significantly important contributions to Gross Domestic Product will start to decline, and through the negative multiplier effect, this decline can spill over into different parts of the economy (Rogerson & Rogerson, 2017:193-211). This will make it significantly difficult to achieve the country’s projected Gross Domestic Product contributions from the tourism sector.

Non-financial aspects that influence the quality of service

According to Chihwalet *al.* (2019), security and safety, perceptions about the resort, and sanitation are important factors determining tourists’ satisfaction levels. Such factors have been cited as some of the key aspects that are taken into consideration by holidaymakers when visiting tourist resorts. Besides Covid-19 and ensuing lockdowns, other significant contributors are disease outbreaks such as swine flu and Ebola (Novelli et al., 2018:76-87). Terrorism and high crime rates have also resulted in tourists cancelling trips to affected countries, predominantly in central and East Africa. Extremism, ethnic wars and crime targeting visitors have also previously negatively impacted tourism in Southern and East African nations (Garg, 2015).

Security and safety are arguably one of the most important aspects considered by tourists when deciding to visit a country. This was evidenced by developments in East Africa after the terrorist attacks. Negative perception by tourists of Kenya and ensuing al-Shabab attacks in the country negatively affected tourism leading to a sudden fall in foreign travellers’ arrivals (Mulwa & Owiyo, 2018; Brondoni&Rizzi, 2017:1-10).

Safety and security concerns are major concerns for tourists that plan to visit South Africa. For instance, following xenophobic attacks on foreigners in recent years, the South African tourist industry was negatively affected when some foreign visitors became worried and sceptical about visiting the country (ShahabiSorman Abadi et al., 2021:1-23).

Tour guide service quality

The quality of customer service provided by tour guides also significantly contributes to tourists' satisfaction (Chihwai et al., 2019:50-61). According to Mei-Lan Lin and Yi-Cheng Chen (2017), tourists' perceptions of the service quality of tour guides are significantly influenced by tour guides' professional competencies. Singing from the same hymn, Chen *et al.* (2011), Hoarau (2014), and Mao and Wang (2015) also recognised tour guides as key stakeholders in delivering quality services to visitors through their professional capabilities in showcasing extensive tourism knowledge and possessing customer service skills.

According to Mei-Lan Lin and Yi-Cheng Chen (2017), tour guides' professional capabilities and skills are influencers of tourist satisfaction. Higher service quality leads to higher tourist satisfaction, holding other things constant. Tour guides' service quality massively affects tourist satisfaction in South African National parks. Developing tour guides' professional aptitudes, their knowledge and skills will enhance positive perceptions of service quality by tourists (Mei-Lan Lin & Yi-Cheng Chen, 2017).

Safety and Security challenges in the tourism sector

The influence of damaging publicity can never be overemphasized; however, it is important to point out that there are other vital factors that are important to tourists. Such factors are taken into consideration by tourists when considering visiting a resort, and in the end, they determine visitors' level of satisfaction with the provisioned service. Safety and security issues, swift and timely service provisioning, customer services, sanitation issues and efficient communication are vital in the views of guests who visit KNP (Chihwai et al., 2019:50-61; Garg, 2015).

The availability of security and protection greatly influences the magnitude of tourists' satisfaction with the service delivered. Personal protection and welfare are the top issues that prospective visitors to Africa consider because of the lack of availability of factual information about the continent, which is sometimes perceived as unsafe and dangerous (Ghaderi et al., 2017:552-565).

The literature review suggests that holidaymakers value security and protection. The threat of violence and high delinquency levels induces anxiety in prospective holidaymakers, making security and general safety key determinants of success in the tourism segment. South Africa is viewed as a nation with relatively higher delinquency levels and violence in comparison with neighbouring nations, which emphasises the need for the South African tourism sector to come up with strategies to improve service quality by ensuring safety to maintain a sustainable and competitive advantage (Santana-Gallego et al., 2016:1-28).

According to Brondoni (2017:7-16), security and safety are key features that need to be considered in attaining service-quality standards in the tourism segment. Problems surrounding safety and general security, and related anxiety have the potential to scare tourists. This will result in a significant fall in the number of international tourist arrivals, negatively affecting tourism sector income (Santana-Gallego et al., 2016:1-28).

Government and service delivery

All governments have an obligation to provide basic services to their people. According to Johnson (2004:77), the services have to be provisioned "... at the highest level of responsiveness and efficiency". Governments worldwide, including the South African government, are confronted by service delivery problems (Mpehle, 2012:213-227).

Good policies and guidelines for dealing with corruption are prerequisites for good public sector performance. Policies and guidelines alone, however, do not ensure quality service delivery. Proper application of those policies and guidelines and monitoring and evaluation is needed to ensure good service delivery (Moyo, 2016:7- 44). It is the mandate of the government to ensure that policies and guidelines are in place and implemented properly to discourage and stop public sector officials from engaging in corruption activities. (Mpehle, 2012:213-227; Sangweni and Balia, 1999:11). Corruption, if left unchecked, can spiral out of control and develop into a culture that consumes entire organisations and hamper quality service delivery (Lloyd & Mey, 2005:1; Munzhedzi, 2016:1-8).

Abd Aziz *et al.* (2015:163-169) outlined the essentials of good practices that can ensure accountability, integrity, and good governance in the public sector services provisioning:

- Accountability, ensuring that public administrators are held accountable for their actions.
- Predictability of the legal frameworks enables clarity of guidelines and regulations and an independent judiciary system.
- Availability of timely information and transparency to encourage open discussion and a participatory approach to governance.

The State of service delivery in South Africa

The current South African government took over a public sector with service delivery backlogs from the previous government that deprived most of the people (Reddy, 2016:1-8; Twala, 2014:159-167). This posed difficulties in transformation efforts aimed at reversing apartheid-era policies. Approximately 72% of the people considered poor live in the countryside and have little or no service delivery access; 8 million do not have clean water and basic health care (Naidoo & Kuye, 2005:619-632). Some provinces in South Africa, such as the Eastern Cape, are estimated to have most of their populations living with no electricity and tap water (Masuku & Jili, 2019:790-801; Mpehle, 2012:213-227; World Bank Group, 2018; United Nations Survey, 2002).

Residents that receive services feel that generally, the services are poor and not up to standards; sometimes are not available to all people, especially the poor and the disadvantaged (Masuku & Nzewi., 2021: 59-71). Some scholars believe that the government is failing the citizens in service delivery. They point out recent surveys that have indicated that out of the 284 municipalities, approximately more than half of them cannot adequately and timely collect refuse from most homes. In the same vein, over fifty per cent fail to provide water to most of its people (Masuku & Jili, 2019:790-801). This paints a gloomy picture of the general service-delivery situation in South Africa.

Hadley *et al.* (2020) synthesized the outcomes of a study focusing on the issues of healthcare service delivery and public financial management from different viewpoints. The review found that efficient and prudent governance is highly likely to result in good financial management, leading to effective and satisfactory service delivery. The research employed several measures of good governance and government efficiency metrics, such as proper financial management. The associations between particular public financial management metrics, such as public expenditure and financial accountability and other organisational evaluation metrics, including healthcare deliverables, were found to be inconclusive. Corruption indicators were found to exert a negative effect on healthcare outcomes. Accountability and transparency in public financial management were found to have a significant positive impact on healthcare deliverables. The research also found mutual public financial management-related issues affecting health service delivery, namely (a) the general availability of resources and the fairness of distribution; (b) lack of efficiency in the movement of allocated resources between government segments; (c) poor internal control and inefficient utilisation of resource.

Conclusion

The South African government is devoted to service delivery provisioning by ratifying several legislative frameworks and creating a conducive environment for service delivery. The legislative frameworks were ratified at both local and national levels and included: The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1196, The Public Service Act 103 of 1994, the White Paper on Batho Pele of 1998, the Municipal System Act 32 of 2000 and the Municipal Structure Act of 1998 (Reddy, 2018:710-725).

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