

WTM GLOBAL TRENDS REPORT: FAIR DEAL WANTED



The United Nations is being urged to introduce an international registration system to power Fairtrade Tourism to new levels in sub-Saharan Africa.

A recognised authenticated trademark, similar to the one that has boosted the sale of agricultural products, could give a massive lift to this emerging holiday region.

"It needs the gravitas of a body such as the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) to reassure travellers that fairtrade claims are genuine," says the WTM Global Trends Report, in association with Euromonitor International, the leading global market intelligence company. World Travel Market is in London from November 10-13.

"This would encourage major tour operators and travel agencies to broaden appeal, development and distribution of fairtrade trips beyond the niche market", said Fiona Jeffery, chairman of World Travel Market.

"And that combined influence can inspire and replicate the boom that came after supermarkets put fairtrade branded items on their shelves. The world has embraced that policy and sales of such products have mushroomed steadily over the past five years, spiralling by 47 per cent growth last year to reach a value of \$US3.6billion."

Jeffery added, "There is evidence to suggest a much wider audience is available for tourism. Certification would hasten an upsurge in ethical travel that benefits local communities and cultures, environment and wildlife.

"It can transform the labour force's economic lifestyle and tourists are increasingly seeking real-life experiences. They are conscious of conservation issues and want to spread financial spin-offs from leisure stays in locally-owned lodges and game reserve guided tours and adventures."

Commenting on the report's findings, Caroline Bremner, Head of Travel and Tourism Research at Euromonitor International said, "The current trends resonating with travellers across all regions include the desire for environmental responsibility, social interaction, authentic travel experiences and fair trade practices. In the current economic climate, those companies that adapt and integrate such business practices into their offering will be best placed for survival".

There is enormous scope for Africa to build on the potential. The fairtrade movement first began in Europe during the Sixties but it was launched by South Africa in 2001 when they saw its significance for tourism - and fair play.

The Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa trademark has been awarded to 30 companies adhering to criteria including decent wages and respect for human rights. Twenty-five international tour operators carry the logo in their catalogues. The FTTSA example may expand into Mozambique and Botswana.

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