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Certification in the South African tourism industry: The case of Fair Trade in Tourism

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ABSTRACT

Internationally, certification is playing an increasing role in regulating and monitoring tourism enterprises, and promoting responsible and sustainable tourism development. Certification in the South African tourism industry is relatively new, with schemes being developed to measure product quality (i.e. the Tourism Grading Council star ratings), as well as the environmental (Heritage Environmental Rating Programme) and social and developmental aspects of tourism development (Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa).

Significant international literature and debate exists on the role and importance of tourism certification. Benefits of certification accrue to enterprises themselves, to government, to the local environment and community and to consumers. Critics of certification however argue that there is limited market demand for certified products, and that certification only has a marginal impact on sustainable tourism development.

This report examines the role of certification in the South African tourism industry, utilising one certification scheme, namely Fair Trade in Tourism South Africa (FTTSA) as a case study. FTTSA is positioned within the context of other key tourism initiatives being pursued by government, the private sector and civil society. The contribution of FTTSA to both the attainment of national tourism objectives as well as individual corporate objectives is discussed. Finally, key challenges facing FTTSA are presented.