



***Sustainable Tourism Certification Alliance (the "Alliance") case study on Mashovela – "a place where the drums beat"...***

***About the Alliance***

The Alliance is a network of sustainable tourism certification stakeholders in Africa, with an initial focus on southern and East Africa, aiming to enable an integrated approach to sustainable tourism certification throughout the African continent.

The Alliance's overall objectives are to: build regional capacity to reduce poverty, improve livelihoods, and promote resource efficiency through sustainable tourism management practices; and facilitate an integrated approach to sustainable tourism standards-setting and certification that will achieve higher levels of market and developmental impact, as opposed to certification schemes operating in isolation of each other.



Membership categories include: certification scheme owners and certification bodies based in Africa; international and/or regional certification scheme owners and certification bodies involved in tourism certification in Africa; business development service providers in Africa providing services to tourism business and/or certification schemes; tourism boards and tourism ministries responsible for creating an enabling environment for sustainable tourism certification / seeking to passion their responsible tourism destinations in the market place; and regionally focussed organisations with a stake in sustainable tourism.

***Aim and context of the case study***

Various Alliance member certification scheme owners and certification bodies are at different levels of operation. They do, however, face similar challenges – including the challenge of increasing update of certification by tourism products. This has resulted in the imperative to demonstrate the value of responsible tourism product certification to businesses located within the geographic scope of their operations.

This case study seeks to demonstrate the positive impact and value derived from responsible tourism within the South African context, specifically in relation to a tourism business certified by Fair Trade Tourism – a leading southern African responsible tourism non-profit organisation. It is one of a series of case studies conducted by the Alliance.



## **MASHOVELA: “a place where the drums beat”**



### **Business and awards overview**

Mashovela Lodge, categorised as a Small Enterprise (11 – 25 staff), lies in the Morning Sun Nature Reserve, which is part of a natural heritage site situated in the heart of the Soutpansberg Mountains in Limpopo Province. The Venda styled lodge opened in 2009, and is recognised for its eco-friendly accommodation, its strong local community benefits through its employment of lodge staff and dancers, its educational initiatives as well as its support of local community arts and crafts.

Mashovela Lodge has been certified by Fair Trade Tourism (FTT)<sup>1</sup>, a globally recognised<sup>2</sup> and groundbreaking responsible tourism certification programme since 2012. FTT-certification of the lodge signifies the businesses' commitment to fair and responsible tourism. This includes fair wages and working conditions, fair purchasing and operations, equitable distribution of benefits and respect for human rights, culture and the environment. Other accolades include being one of the three Gold Leaf Award recipients from the Wilderness Foundation<sup>3</sup> for their eco-friendly accommodation, which caters for tourists ranging from small eco-conscious groups to self-driven sustainably-conscious groups, and receipt of the Imvelo Award in 2010 for their Best Single Resource Management Programme<sup>4</sup>.

### **Mashovela's initial situation – prior to FTT certification**

Although 2011 ended on a positive note for Mashovela, holding promises of a bright future in 2012, 2011 was a year full of challenges for the business due to the global economic crisis, which had a profound effect on tourism in southern Africa.

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.fairtrade.travel/content/page/becoming-certified>. (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

<sup>2</sup> FTT was the first African certification programme to achieve formal Recognition status by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) in 2011. The GSTC is the international body for fostering increased knowledge and understanding of sustainable tourism practices, promoting the adoption of universal sustainable tourism principles and building demand for sustainable travel. GSTC Recognition means that a sustainable tourism standard has been reviewed by GSTC technical experts and the GSTC Accreditation Panel and deemed equivalent to the GSTC Criteria for sustainable tourism and is administered by a standard owner that meets GSTC requirements. For more information visit: [www.gstccouncil.org](http://www.gstccouncil.org). (Last accessed on 11 April 2014).

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.wildernessfoundation.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_projects&view=project&id=21%3Agreen-leaf&Itemid=3](http://www.wildernessfoundation.co.za/index.php?option=com_projects&view=project&id=21%3Agreen-leaf&Itemid=3). (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.imveloawards.co.za/aboutus.html>. (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

The lodge responded to challenges faced in 2011 with increased efforts to improve the value of services offered, adapting its product range to changes in guest preferences, offering its guests wider choices to meet their respective budget limitations<sup>5</sup> and applying for FTT certification.

The business had a variety of expectations in relation to the Return On Investment (ROI) regarding FTT-certification including:

- 🚩 Improved operations as a result of ethically and economically sound business practice; and
- 🚩 Increased 'sales' as a result of exposure to travel retailers and wholesalers working in important source markets for South Africa that are a part of FTT's networks.

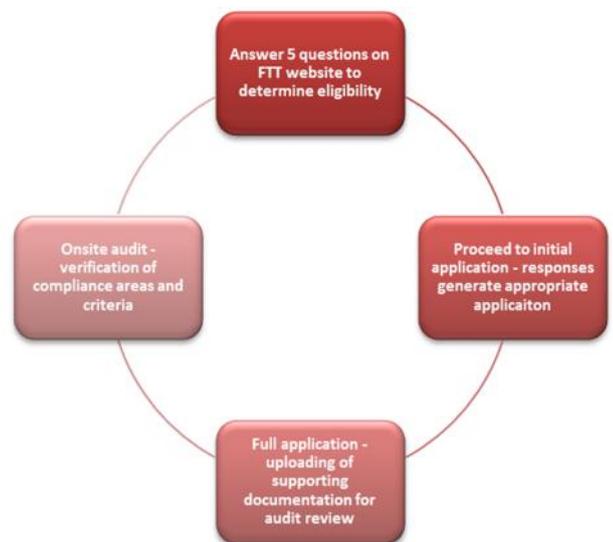
### The certification process

Mashovela Lodge underwent an intensive audit process subsequent to which the lodge achieved FTT certification in 2012. Review areas as well as a summary of the process as a whole are indicated in the diagrams below.

**Review areas**



**Certification Process**



### Changes that took place

A number of strengths were identified across all audit review areas, validating a number of positive business practices by the lodge, such as exemplary labour standards and a high level of cultural sensitivity. A number of well-received recommendations for improvement with respect to all these areas were also identified, particularly in relation to skills development imperatives and how these could be linked to the businesses performance management system. Although Mashovela met required legal compliance regulations, a few recommendations for improvements stemmed from the audit. Overall, the audit process and steps taken by the business to ensure compliance against FTT requirements demonstrated the positive role of the programme in 'getting your house in order' and ensuring a more engaged and happier staff complement.

### Impacts of certification

Over and above assurance of its 'house being in order', Mashovela Lodge has acquired detailed information on understanding responsible tourism markets in Germany, Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden and the United Kingdom as a result of research facilitated by FTT during the first quarter of 2014.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.mashovhela.com/home/news/136-entering-the-year-2012.html>. (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

The lodge has also benefited significantly from market exposure as a direct result of FTT's network of travel retailers and wholesalers as well as FTT's relationships with the Swiss Import Promotion Programme (SIPPO)<sup>6</sup> and South African Tourism<sup>7</sup> particularly during 2013. Details are provided in subsequent sections below.

### SIPPO Trade Mission to German Speaking Europe, October 2013



The SIPPO Trade Mission to German Speaking Europe (Zurich, Munich, Frankfurt and Vienna) in 2013 was aimed at providing smaller tourism businesses from South Africa with a solid platform to access European tourism markets. The trade mission was an efficient platform for Mashovela Lodge to present itself in front of a selected group of tour operators and travel agencies and to meet with them in one-on-one discussions.

The trade mission is organized by SIPPO, an initiative of Switzerland Global Enterprise, and supported by its partners including South African Tourism, Tourism Enterprise Partnership TEP, Fair Trade Tourism and the South African Embassy in Berne. FTT-certified products in South Africa are prioritised for inclusion in the mission. Against this backdrop, Mashovela Lodge was able to benefit from this intervention – minimum investment – maximum output!

Although Mashovela was only required to contribute **CHF1,000**, the package it was positioned to benefit from included:

- ✚ An international flight from Johannesburg to Zurich;
- ✚ Preparatory capacity building workshops in Johannesburg and at SIPPO's Head Office;
- ✚ Speed marketing session in Zurich with tour operators;
- ✚ Speed marketing session in Zurich with travel agents;
- ✚ Exhibiting on a South Africa Pavilion at the Swiss Travel Trade Workshop (TTW)<sup>8</sup>;
- ✚ Speed marketing session in Vienna;
- ✚ Speed marketing session in Frankfurt; and
- ✚ Speed marketing session in Munich.

All European travel costs (inclusive of accommodation) were covered in the package awarded by SIPPO. Total estimated ROI amounted to **CHF10,400**<sup>9</sup>. Results of the trade mission include those highlighted in the adjacent diagram.



<sup>6</sup> [www.s-ge.com/global/export](http://www.s-ge.com/global/export). (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

<sup>7</sup> [www.southafrica.net](http://www.southafrica.net). (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

<sup>8</sup> The TTW German-speaking Switzerland 2014 takes place in the Kongresshaus Zurich the 30 October 2014. TTW is the Swiss platform for the global travel industry. For more information visit: [www.ttw.ch](http://www.ttw.ch). (Last accessed on 4 April 2014)

<sup>9</sup> ROI is calculated based on cost invested by the business vs actual cost of the mission.

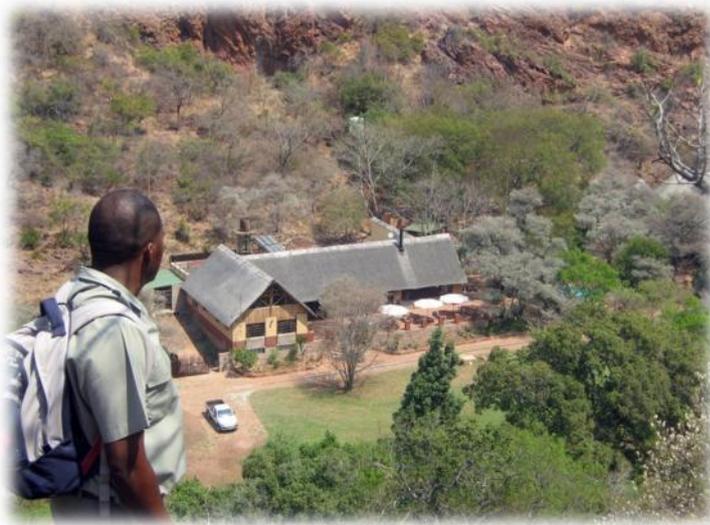
### South African Tourism Netherland Road Show, October 2013

In October 2013 Mashovela Lodge was afforded the opportunity to participate in a South African Tourism Netherlands Road Show as a direct result of its FTT-certification status.

Mashovela participated in speed marketing sessions in Amsterdam (50 travel agents), Breda (80 travel agents), Zwolle (40 travel agents) and Utrecht (40 tour operators). The total ROI for Mashovela is calculated at approximately **EUR2,250<sup>10</sup>**.

The outcomes of both trade missions are yet to be translated into increased sales due to the recent nature of both activities.

### Lessons learned...



*“FTT has definitely created a support structure for us as we are now able to collaborate with like-minded businesses to leverage a unique selling point, obtain advice in order to assist us with getting our house in order AND gain exposure to the German-speaking market for South Africa.” (Ingrid Hahn, Mashovela Lodge)*

The expectations of Mashovela have been met in relation to operational improvements and opportunities for improved/enhanced market access opportunities. The ROI in relation to how this has translated into cost savings and increased ‘sales’ will be reviewed by the business during 2014 – 2015 with the support from FTT.

### Acknowledgements

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<sup>10</sup> ROI is calculated based on cost invested by the business vs actual cost of the mission.