

# Tourists, transumers crucial to growing SA's tourism economy

Visitors to South African shores are increasingly choosing to spend money on locally produced products over imported mass-produced goods, as a means of benefitting regional businesses and communities. A growing number of partnerships between local retailers and manufacturers are helping to fuel this demand, while channelling revenue to regional upliftment and job-creation causes.



Image source: [Gallo/Getty](#)

Allison Graham, CEO at Tourvest Destination Retail says that this shift to purchasing locally produced items is evidence of increased social and economic awareness among overseas visitors and transumers. "Visitors to South Africa and other parts of the continent fundamentally want to know about where a product comes from - who makes it, how it's made, what it's made of and if they are making some sort of difference to an ordinary person's life by buying it," says Graham.

"Consequently, Tourvest Destination Retail has raised millions of rands for local causes and job creation, simply through the sale of handmade beaded bracelets by Relate."

Since 2010, Tourvest has worked in partnership with 100% not-for-profit social enterprise Relate Bracelets - a partnership which has provided tourists and transumers alike with the opportunity to purchase and contribute to lasting legacies in South Africa. Since their partnership began, Tourvest has sold in excess of 579,000 bracelets and raised over R10m.

"We're constantly looking to support worthy causes through established and reputable organisations such as Relate, which in turn enables our international customers to shop with the confidence that their purchasing power is making a difference in the lives of countless South Africans," adds Graham.

Relate bracelets sold in Tourvest stores have supported vital causes, including the Endangered Wildlife Trust, mothers2mothers, the Nelson Mandela School Library Project and United Against Malaria.

## **Boosting South African SMEs and businesses**

According to the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO), tourism generates R47bn worth of spending each day, globally, and is responsible for the creation of one-tenth of the world's jobs. UNWTO's long-term forecast indicates that there will be 1.8 billion travellers contributing to the tourism industry by 2030.

Tourvest's global research indicates that tourists travelling from core markets, such as Europe, North America and Asia, are keen to leave a positive footprint by boosting South African SMEs and businesses.

Relate CEO Neil Robinson is confident that the bracelet maker's partnership will continue to go from strength to strength and is hopeful that additional retailers will embrace the incentive presented by socially and environmentally conscious transomers, by employing and manufacturing locally.

"Very often, items that are meant to symbolise or epitomise South Africa are produced in another country entirely," Robinson points out. "When you purchase a bracelet made by Relate, it is possible to trace every single bracelet back to its South African maker. Each purchase contributes to job creation - namely, the senior citizens who thread the beads, the young staff members who are being upskilled as well as various development initiatives."

Senior citizen and Khayelitsha resident Nozibonelo Mayekiso has been making bracelets for Relate through Ikamva Labantu seniors' clubs. She receives a regular wage for the beaded crafts she produces, which supplements her meagre state pension of R1,780 per month.

"The money I get for making Relate bracelets makes such a big difference to me and my family. It is good that tourists want to help by buying these bracelets. The money goes a long way towards helping our communities to help themselves. I hope that Tourvest will keep selling my bracelets in their shops," says Mayekiso.

One of the younger generations of bracelet makers Thanduxolo Soga says: "Our bracelets are a simple and effective product, that creates jobs and uplifts South Africans. The fact that we've raised more than R10-million with Tourvest sales shows what a big difference these bracelets make to our people. The visitors who buy them are leaving a lasting legacy in our country."

According to the latest figures by StatsSA, one in every 22 working South Africans are employed in the tourism sector with 10% of tourist expenditure going towards tourism-connected products.

"With so much interest in South Africa from overseas visitors and a drought of overseas corporate investment, our industries and products need to be strategically aligned, so that communities, local businesses and the economy as a whole, can reap the benefits. With transumer numbers set to increase globally, we, as a nation of SMEs, have a golden opportunity to channel the commercial goodwill of our overseas guests into sustainable upliftment capital and job creation," concludes Robinson.