

All things considered... do awards still matter?

By [Linsey Schluter](#)

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Industry awards have always been a celebration of outstanding work. They set the bar, recognising talent, creativity and innovation. For smaller companies, awards can raise your profile - putting you on the proverbial map. Love them or hate them, awards equal industry recognition, and who doesn't aspire to be among the best of the best?



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But in a year in which the ground shifted seismically under our feet, where the collective travel industry is focused on survival rather than award show glory, are awards still relevant?

The team at Africa Travel Week believe they are more important than ever. "To say it's been a challenging year, is an understatement," says Megan Oberholzer, Portfolio Director: Travel, Tourism and Creative Industries at Reed Exhibitions. "But the industry is doing incredible work when it comes to navigating the current environment; supporting partners and clients alike; using their resources and facilities to keep us all connected and engaged, and developing new campaigns to promote Africa as a vibrant tourism destination."

Thembi Kunene-Msimang, chief operating officer for Tourvest IME, agrees: "Awards in the tourism sector have always been very important because they contribute towards enhancing the credibility of the organisation or brand in question – be it a hotel, restaurant, or an outdoor experience. An increase in credibility means an increase in consumer or traveller confidence, something we're all striving for right now."

Awards to reignite Africa

"This is an industry committed to making travel happen again," says Oberholzer, "And the WTM Africa Travel & Tourism Awards will recognise those who have made a significant difference in a year that has tested everyone's mettle."

The awards are a much-anticipated component of Africa Travel Week: Connect in the City Live, taking place from 01-03 September in the Host City of Cape Town.

In addition to the awards, the three-day in-person event will also include a travel and tourism conference focussing on the latest industry trends, speed networking sessions, destination training and Fam Tours.

"The Reigniting Africa Award is about recognising those in the African travel and tourism sector who have worked valiantly to address the impacts of Covid-19, creating strong trade or consumer campaigns which bring their African destination to life," explains Oberholzer.

For the Africa Travel Week team, the award is an exciting addition to the mix – and is open to destination marketing companies (DMOs); tourism boards; marketing, PR, communications, branding and advertising firms; marketers; brand experts; digital experts; as well as start-ups and innovators who have executed a campaign between 01 January 2020 and 31 January 2021.

Not all awards are created equal

A previous judge at last year's awards, Kunene-Msimang concedes that not all awards are created equal: "Of course, the type of award, the criteria for qualifying, the judges that make the final decision as well as the publicity around the award ceremony are all critical factors that determine bragging rights.

"My experience as a judge of tourism experiences has taught me to place a premium on a well-run, professional award programme with simple, measurable criteria which can be verified. It is easy to be subjective in this industry, but if your criteria and point system is objective, then it is easy to demonstrate why and how a winner was chosen."

Both Kunene-Msimang and Oberholzer are thrilled that the WTM Africa Travel & Tourism Awards will go ahead. For Oberholzer, it demonstrates that awards have never been more relevant. "We're rewarding excellence in a sector that refuses to rest, that continues to produce fantastic work under exhausting circumstances. And this work deserves recognition."

"Awards can lift morale, set a benchmark for excellence, instil pride, boost morale, reward teams and individuals, celebrate success and share positive, uplifting news. Not to mention raise the profile of organisations – no matter their size – within the travel and tourism industry. And so, in answer to your question, 'do awards still matter?', this one does," concludes Oberholzer.

[More on the awards.](#)

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