



## **Vendors Express Views on ATA**

**With Seedy Darboe**

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Africa Travel Association (ATA) recently concluded its week-long 35th annual congress held at Sheraton Hotel, The Gambia.

ATA was established as an international travel industry in 1975 with a mission to promote travel and tourism and to strengthen inter-Africa partnership. It comprises a broad range of members within the tourism industry, including tourism ministers, tourism boards, airlines, hoteliers, travel agents among others.

The theme for this year's congress was "discovering African warmth" and was attended by many participants from across the globe.

This was the second time the Gambia is hosting the event, the first being in 1984.

The congress, in addition to the landmark decisions taken is geared toward promoting tourism in Africa, offering Gambians an exclusive opportunity to showcase to the world what they offer as a viable tourism destination.

In this light, vendors of different commodities were lined-up for five days at Sheraton Hotel, during which Tourism anchor Seedy Darboe caught up with most of them and sounded their opinions on their impressions about ATA and the opportunities it availed them.

An Africell Sales officer Mam Jorjo Jammeh-Joof said ATA was a success for them as they were able to make a plus in their business.

One of the topics discussed during the congress was how the use of modern technology such as mobile phones can boost tourism in Africa and Mam said Africell is working toward this end because they have provided each of the delegates a free Sim Card with credit they used to communicate among themselves during the congress and communicated with their loved ones back home.

Echoing similar sentiments Baboucarr Jallow, also Africell's Sales officer said Africell is partnering with most operators in the world and the delegates were able to use their mobiles thanks to that. "Africell's is not only national but global," he said.

Marshal Correa a vendor from HG Art gallery gave an account of how ATA congress helped them to expose their products. "Many delegates are buying our products because it is hand-made," she said. "We sell hand-made scarf, clothes, hand bags, beads and jewelry boxes among others."

Musa Jawneh, the president of Gambia farmers' platform expounded on how agriculture and tourism are linked, saying if both sectors work together, it would result to the enhancement of both sectors and of course improve the socio-economic development of the country.

According to him, farmers in The Gambia can produce quality products to meet the need of hotels and tourists in general, but lack the processing materials.

He said ATA accorded them the opportunities to not only expose their products but to make contacts with people who are willing to help them have processing machines.

**Source:** Dailynews

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