

China, US to shore up demand for tanzanite



Diamond and tanzanite necklace

Tanzanite continues to capture the fancy of global gemstone and jewellery markets, with consumers from China and the US bolstering the growth. Rising demand for one-of-a-kind designs, stones in calibrated sizes as well as tanzanite in various shapes are expected to drive sales in 2015 and beyond, according to tanzanite dealers interviewed recently by JNA.

Tanzanite Foundation

Tanzanite traders are counting on sustained demand from China to drive their business over the coming years, citing consumers' thriving appetite for the stunning blue-violet gemstone as a catalyst for growth, a non-profit organisation of industry players said.

China is the "new focus" of tanzanite dealers, Imran Khan, director of the Tanzanite Foundation, added.

"We see great opportunity for growth and expansion in China. Our ethically sourced loose tanzanites and tanzanite jewellery have so far been extremely well-received," Khan noted.

The Tanzanite Foundation is also promoting its latest marketing campaign, "Be Born to Tanzanite."

According to Khan, tanzanite is the "perfect gift" for a newborn child, based on an African tradition where Maasai women who recently gave birth wear blue beads and ornaments to bestow upon the child a healthy and positive life.

This custom is now celebrated in a modern tradition: Presenting the gift of tanzanite on the birth of a baby.

"Tanzanite symbolises new beginnings and pays tribute to parents. Due to tanzanite's rarity, it will no longer be enjoyed by future generations so it will become a family treasure, an heirloom to be passed from one generation to another," Khan added.

Tanzanite Foundation members sell one-of-a-kind stones for wholesale prices of about \$150 to \$500 per carat depending on the colour, cut, clarity and carat weight.

"With our special focus on China, we are positive that we will be successful in strengthening

tanzanite's presence in this market. We look forward to working with Chinese tanzanite jewellery designers to create fresh, inspirational and innovative designs," Khan noted.

The Tanzanite Foundation is a non-profit, industry-supported organisation, which provides education and marketing services both at trade and consumer levels. As the authority on tanzanite, the foundation aims to unite industry leaders and protect and promote tanzanite on behalf of socially responsible companies that practice ethical operations. Its members have over 100 years of collective experience in the tanzanite business, from mining to manufacturing, marketing and sales.

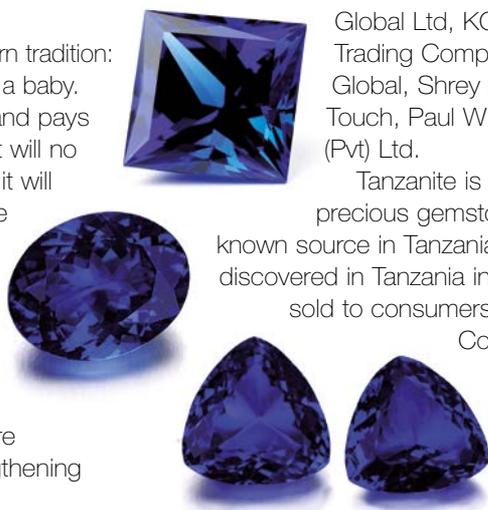
"We remain committed to making a difference in the lives of those living near tanzanite mines by channelling a percentage of sales back to local communities through our sustainable community upliftment initiatives," added Khan.

In another development, Hong Kong-based Sky Associates Ltd recently announced its acquisition of Tanzanite One Mining Ltd. Sky said it is focused exclusively on ethical tanzanite mining and marketing, and "looks forward to a renewed vitality and interest in tanzanite, after having been deeply involved in the tanzanite business for over ten years."

"We are passionate about tanzanite and positive about its' potential in the Chinese and American markets," said Sky CEO Rizwan Ullah.

Sky's Sightholders include Emerald House Ltd, Rare Multi Color Gems, Vaibhav Global Ltd, KGK Gems, Gems Trading Company, Shree Narayan Global, Shrey International, Royal Touch, Paul Wild and AG Gems (Pvt) Ltd.

Tanzanite is an exquisite, rare and precious gemstone that has a single known source in Tanzania, East Africa. It was discovered in Tanzania in 1967 and was first sold to consumers in 1968 by Tiffany & Co in New York.



Fancy-shaped tanzanites. Photo credit: Tanzanite Foundation



Top: Baroque tanzanites and a smooth drop tanzanite from AG Color

Right: This 43.96-carat oval tanzanite cabochon from AG Color won first place under the All Other Faceted category of the 2015 AGTA Spectrum and Cutting Edge Awards

AG Color Inc

US-based AG Color Inc is banking on solid demand for tanzanite from the US and China to drive continued market growth.

According to company president Hemant Phophaliya, AG Color is eyeing to expand its client base in the US and China as well as attract potential clients from Europe, the Far East, Africa, the Middle East and India.

The company has a diverse collection of loose tanzanites of 5 carats to 200 carats and finished jewellery.

"We also offer fine fancy-cut singles and pairs, beautiful cabochons, buff tops, checkerboards and drops. Our tanzanite jewellery line is also making waves in the market," said Phophaliya.

The company official added that despite a challenging global business environment, tanzanite still enjoys stable demand from the company's key markets.

"We attribute our continued success to the quality of products and services that we offer our clients. We have been getting positive feedback from them," he continued.

Phophaliya said both AG Color's high-quality loose stones and finished jewellery lines are sought-after by customers.

US buyers place orders for tanzanites in calibrated sizes while other customers, particularly the Chinese, are partial to stones of 5-carat to 100-carat size that come in singles and pairs in various shapes, according to the AG Color executive.

"These are the most popular sizes in Hong Kong. Fine-quality goods of 10-carat size and up, in all shapes and sizes, are the fastest-moving products," Phophaliya added.

Despite a tough 2015 for the coloured gemstone

industry, AG Color cited continued interest in top-quality goods, particularly certified unheated tanzanites. "We saw an increase in demand for this type of stones from customers looking for exceptional investment pieces."

The company is also gearing up for the second half of the year, with both loose stones and finished jewellery contributing to the growth.

"We remain optimistic. We have recently been focusing on our tanzanite jewellery line. Our existing customers have given us good response. We were also able to attract new clients," noted Phophaliya. "Our jewellery collection is diversified and caters to both large stores who need price-point multiple pieces and specialised stores looking for fine-quality special items."