

How sporting events like the 2018 FIFA World Cup has benefited Africa

 By [Robin Fredericks](#)

13 Jul 2018

The 2018 FIFA World Cup, which draws to a close this Sunday, 15 July, has seen African nations like Nigeria, Egypt, Senegal, Morocco and Tunisia participate and become enlivened with what their countries can offer to the rest of the world. The African continent as a tourist destination has remained resilient in its approach in dealing with challenges stemming from both political and economic instability. These challenges have not deterred it from making its mark as a destination with which to be reckoned.



Fauzan Saari via [Unsplash](#)

Considered a forerunner in providing both positive economic and employment contributions, the tourism industry continues to grow from strength to strength in Africa. From visitor attractions to new hotel developments, MICE events – where African countries see the need to grow their conference offerings – to sustainable tourism considerations, Africa sees the need for being more Africa conscious.

No longer seen as just a 'downtrodden continent', Africa continuously invites the world to be part of its narrative, to be a part of its experiences and in so doing, has incorporated itself into the international community.

In light of this, and the World Cup, we caught up with Tim Smith, managing director of HVS Africa, which is also gearing up for its annual [THINC Africa conference](#), to find out more about how the World Cup has had an influence on participating nations – and the continent as a whole, how the industry can make the most out of these sorts of opportunities that provide a platform to showcase its offerings, and how Africa can market itself efficiently and have sporting events of this stature create a 'positive knock-on effect' for the continent.



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Tunisia, especially in the hospitality industry?

There were great celebrations in Senegal and Nigeria when they played well and won matches; these pictures were beamed around the world and showed Africa in a positive light. Many journalists were sent to these countries to cover the World Cup, hopefully, the tourism ministries made the most of the opportunity and showed them more of the country.

It is too early to say whether there has been an economic impact, but what is certain is seeing these nations on an international stage has boosted profile and marketing. It is now down to the tourism boards to make the most of this exposure. For Africa to receive some positive international news and for the local people to be seen as young, fun and excited will help destroy the misconceptions of travel to the dark continent.

🍷 *From your own observations, how have these countries capitalised on exposure from the World Cup?*

Nigeria, in particular, has focused on the DSTV advertisements for the World Cup, with players profiled, often showing their routes and where they started playing. This is a good start, but I suspect this was driven by the TV station, not the country. Unfortunately, I did not see any Visit Senegal/Nigeria/Tunisia/Morocco/Egypt advertisements during their games. This to me seems like a wasted opportunity.

It was not a good World Cup in footballing terms for African countries, however, it should be a great success in building a positive feeling around visiting Africa for business and leisure.

Fourteen of the France squad have African heritage from the following countries, Congo, Cameroon, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Mali, DRC, Togo, Angola, Morocco, Algeria. It would be great to see these countries making the most of this exposure. A simple good luck message from Visit Togo, for example, would be great.



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🍷 *Is there anything that you think they could consider in terms of economic and social benefits going forward?*

Each country (and those not involved) need to make the most of the feel-good factor around Africa at the moment. In exactly the same way that Manchester United saw the opportunity of offering the Wild Boars FC team of Thailand a trip to Old Trafford, the tourism ministers need to be offering to show journalists and travel companies around their countries. Demonstrate they are safe with great weather and fabulous experiential travel.

Tourism is the only sector of the economy that can drive the whole economy forward. For example, a hotel needs infrastructure, agriculture, staff (skilled and unskilled), goods and services, accountants and lawyers, etc so by promoting tourism the social benefits to whole communities will be significant.

▣ ***What do you think is fundamentally behind the boost in Africa's tourism?***

People of all ages are looking for experiences. This has been driven by social media, which now shows what you are doing, where and with whom. Very rarely does it show what you are wearing or want to wear.

Unique is an overused word, but Africa truly does have unique and life-changing experiences. It is not just climbing the tallest free-standing mountain in the world or seeing the Big 5 on safari, or marvelling at the Indian ocean beaches, or hiking to see the gorillas, or spending 24 hours in Cape Town, which includes hiking a mountain, relaxing on a beach, visiting the Winelands and eating fabulous food from around the world; it is the people. 54 countries all with different and interesting histories, stories to tell yet all welcoming and willing to share with a visitor.

▣ ***How can South Africa learn from its neighbouring countries and that of the international markets in maintaining this boost?***

Cost effective travel and easy and efficient visas are the fundamentals to attract visitors. People don't HAVE to come to SA, so you have to ensure it is a relatively straightforward process to get here.

Perception is the other key, Cape Town has suffered from the perception there was going to be no water by now. The city and residents have done an amazing job in protecting this vital resource, but it has been at the cost of tourists. We need to reverse this trend.

Similarly, the perception of safety is an issue, all cities have rougher neighbourhoods, but generally speaking, tourists don't enter those areas, whether they are in New York, London or Cape Town. Yet Africa suffers from the perception of being unsafe. With sensible precautions, you can have a very relaxing visit to most African cities.

▣ ***How has the world paid attention to African countries in light of the World Cup?***

Africa is seen much more positively, not just poverty, terrorism, violence, corruption and migrants. Africa is filled with warm and friendly people, just like many other countries. People who are keen to show you their country and lifestyle.



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▣ ***What improvements have you noticed?***

Yes, many people in Africa live a different lifestyle to 'westerners' but it is just that, different. They are the same human beings, celebrating wins and suffering heartbreak with defeats. Seeing the African people as the same is the biggest win for Africa.

▣ ***What can Africa do to market itself more efficiently?***

Visit Rwanda with their shirt deal with Arsenal FC is a great illustration of thinking out of the box. Education and constant promotion is the key. Each country has some amazing experiences and unique opportunities, it is important for the rest of the world (including other African countries) know this.

Access and visas are the other issues that need to be resolved; cheaper flights and easier visas are key.

▣ ***How can we stimulate more interest in the continent?***

Better facilities at affordable prices will be key. Regional travellers and Millennials cannot afford to travel and stay at properties priced for wealthy Europeans. Developing a hospitality industry for Africans with facilities F&B and prices they

want and feel comfortable with will be a huge step in the right direction.

▀ ***How does participating in sporting events of this stature create a 'positive knock-on effect'?***

It brings the destination to mind and shows off all the facilities and people. It is then down to the tourism departments to make the most of that. It should also promote the governments to invest in infrastructure to promote the sport at the grass root level to ensure future involvements. This too will have positive social and economic benefits.

With the right promotion and a celebration of the success and involvement of Africa in the World Cup, it will be Africa and not a European team that lifts the real trophy.

For more information and updates on THINC Africa, check in on our [THINC Africa](#) special section.

ABOUT ROBIN FREDERICKS

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