



**MAJOR SPORTS EVENTS:
MAJOR DRIVERS FOR TOURISM**

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THE POWER OF PLAYING HOST

The Olympic Games. The FIFA World Cup. The Commonwealth Games. The Paralympic Games. The Cricket World Cup. The Rugby World Cup.

For athletes of the world these (and many other) major sporting events represent the highest point of achievement on the international sporting stage. With the eyes of the world watching, athletes are given the opportunity to prove that they are among the best in the world. Prominence, preeminence, profile and power – these are outcomes of being seen to play a part in the Games.

Yet to earn the right to play a part takes years of preparation. Significant investment of time, energy and money are prerequisites. You have to really want it to be able to win your place on the podium. And you need to make every second of the Games worth it to be able to maximise the benefit of being able to say “*I was there*”. Because those few days of competition can change your life forever.

Winning a place in the Games is not the only competition involved in major sporting events. Equally fierce is the competition to win the right to be the place where the Games are held.

Like aspiring athletes, aspiring host cities seek their moment of fame, the opportunity to show the world what they can do better than anyone, and anywhere, else. To be awarded the title and immense honour of ‘host city’ of a major international sporting event can have as profound an effect on a city, region and nation as on an athlete. It can change the profile of the place, and lives of the people, forever.

To take on the responsibility of host city or nation of a major sporting event demands unprecedented levels of commitment to delivery of a very tightly defined, carefully watched and painstakingly engineered set of contracted deliverables as defined by the Games ‘owners’ – the IOC, FIFA, ICC, IRB, etc. For

an extended period of time the event grabs hold of the best of the city's or nation's resources, taking over personal lives and professional careers. There is zero margin for executional error, zero opportunity for Plan Bs, zero space for exhale. And this is even before the Games begin.

So why do destinations do it? Why is being host city or nation so important? Why turn a place seemingly upside down for a few days of sport? A few locations of play? A few special athletes?

It's all about one little word with massive impact: LEGACY.

WINNING THROUGH HOSTING

The chance to play host to a major event is an exceptional opportunity to shape the future of the nation, especially it's tourism sector. And with that, to magnify the multiplier effect of the tourism economy, and the greater spirit of the people of the nation itself. As a powerful example of the power of major events: the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa.

South Africa's hosting of the FIFA World Cup in June 2010 represents so much more than 30 days of football. Even for this football-loving nation. It's about Legacy. As stated emphatically by Dr. Danny Jordaan, CEO of South Africa's 2010 Organising Committee:

"It's not about football – it's about nation building. South Africa has been chosen to not only stage the World Cup in 2010 but also to carry the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Africa and especially African football. This provides a golden opportunity to change perceptions about Africa and to influence public opinion around the globe.

We must demonstrate through this event that we are equal to the best (FIFA WORLD CUP) countries in the world – equal to Germany, equal to France, equal to the United States, equal to Japan. If we can be equal to them we must be

amongst the best. And that we can transfer into our business approach in investment, in tourism. Through the 2010 FWC we can leave a legacy of growth, unity and pride.”

SCORING POINTS

From the perspective of the Tourism Economy, with major events come the potential for dramatic increases in a number of critical destination growth and development metrics. These include, *inter alia*;

- ARRIVALS – athletes, support teams, media, officials and fans arriving into the destination from across the country and across the world for the Games, and for pre-and post-Games touring
- REVENUES – money spent by visitors spending time in the destination over the period of the Games, as well as pre and post stays
- INVESTMENT – money injected into the destination for critical infrastructure development
- EMPLOYMENT – the tens of thousands of people employed in the array of roles needed to make the event happen - *before, during and after* the Games
- SKILLS DEVELOPMENT – knowledge and skills transfer which result from Games preparations and activation and which remain in people’s minds and lives
- ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT – engineering environmentally responsible methods of design and operation into new and/or upgraded infrastructure - *‘greening the Games’*
- IDENTITY – building of profile of the destination as a host city / nation through media exposure of the event

- UNITY – the natural effect of the coming together of the people of the host city or nation

For this reason major sporting events are actively sought after by governments. The long-term benefits far outweigh the short-term cost. Through major events critical initiatives can be addressed, core attitudes shifted, key strategic priorities fulfilled. Which is why for a limited period of time national treasuries willingly turn into giant ATMs (with withdrawal limitations, of course), channeling funds into major, mandatory infrastructure projects required for the events, recognising the greater value of hosting as a powerful stimulant to their:

- economy,
- society,
- key economic sectors (especially Tourism),
- national Brand,

and ultimately

- global competitiveness.

Timing of hosting is, of course, critical.

Back in May 2004 when South Africa bid for the title of host nation of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, leaders of the national bid team knew very well the impact that winning would have on national image advancement – within and outside South Africa. The moment Sepp Blatter, President of FIFA, opened the envelope and revealed South Africa's success in its bid, not only did the joy at the moment of announcement allow President Nelson Mandela to feel like a 16 year old teenage boy again while tearfully holding the World Cup tight, the moment also set South Africa on a six year path of national reconstruction, both physically and emotionally. Interestingly, preparations for the Games since 2004 have insulated

the nation from the worst of the impact of the 2008/9 global economic downturn. Whilst the building sector globally came to a grinding halt due to the lack of availability of credit and the high cost of materials, as a result of pre-committed, pre-funded Games preparations thousands of workers involved in 2010 FWC infrastructure projects across the country have remained employed. Progress has been maintained. And of critical importance, the people of the nation have remained focused on the day the opening whistle of the Games blows on June 11th, 2010. The spirit of the nation has remained positive and inspired.

ENGINEERING SUCCESS: BUILDING A DESTINATION

Putting aside all of the glitz, glamour, grand excitement and great blessing of hosting a major sporting event, Games execution must be understood and positioned by the destination as a strategic lever within the greater Tourism Growth and Development Strategy.

Form and fanfare must follow strategic function.

It is critical that major sports events maximise short-term efforts for the long-term benefit of the destination to truly **BUILD** the destination:

- **B**: directly reflecting, and overtly driving, the essence of the destination **BRAND**
- **U**: working to **UNITE** the people of the destination, and its visitors, closer together in pride, in interaction, and in upliftment of quality of life
- **I**: ensuring **INFRASTRUCTURE** supports delivery of both hard (transport systems, energy, stadiums, telecommunications, safety & security, accommodation, etc.) and soft (service culture, skills development, Brand delivery, policy, marketing & promotion, partnerships etc) areas of the experience

- **L**: investing in the **LEGACY** of the Tourism sector – creating today what will become the building blocks of tomorrow
- **D**: dramatically enhancing the destination’s ability to **DELIVER** the tourism Brand promise to travellers

The benefits of hosting a major sporting event are as wide reaching, deeply penetrating and long lasting as the vision of the leadership of the local government and people of the destination. While there may only be one gold, one champion’s trophy, one MVP, when it comes to hosting major sports events winning goes far beyond the athletes.

When the rules of hosting the game are mastered, and the role of the Tourism sector is played correctly, the host city or nation can only come out on top.

Let the Games begin!

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