

World Cup a great way to breed MICE

by Amanda Rogaly*

Planning for the World Cup has been going on for years. What about planning for after the World Cup?

Some forward-thinkers in the events and exhibitions industry believe that event marketing opportunities after the tournament could dwarf the immediate benefits, but planning for life after 2010 has to start now or the chance could slip.

Unfortunately, there is little sign that feverish planning is under way. National strategists remain fixated on the event itself. Legacy issues are occasionally mentioned, but deriving economic benefits way into the future is little considered.

Yet surely the legacy issue that matters most in terms of jobs and economic growth is the spin-off derived by key industries, one of which has to be MICE (meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions).

MICE is an important element in government planning for sustainable tourism development, but there is little evidence that planners are eager to turn the World Cup into a catalyst to transform South Africa into one of the world's big MICE destinations.

This is disappointing. To build top-end tourism, you have to 'breed' MICE, and the World Cup is the perfect opportunity.

The potential is underlined by the magnitude of the TV audience. A cumulative World Cup TV audience of 26 billion is projected by FIFA while up to 450 000 visitors are expected to fly here for the event, including large VIP and media contingents.

Visitors and viewers obviously have opportunities to see how beautiful our country is, but we have to do more than show off the bushveld and our beaches. We have to showcase modern communications, the facilities available at our top hotels and conference centres and our ability to stage world-class business events.

Leading companies in the event management industry have already drawn up World Cup optimisation Cup strategies and an industry leader like Kadoro Events & Communications is confident sustained growth can be achieved by the industry post-2010.

But so far it looks like business optimisation beyond 2010 will be left to individual companies. A fully coordinated, national effort to use the event as a springboard to ongoing national growth is nowhere in sight.

Yet it seems obvious that to achieve an increase in inbound MICE-activities we need to encourage visitors to bring colleagues and other executives to South Africa, not only their families.

It seems equally clear that a national drive will build greater momentum than sporadic individual efforts.

The time to do it is when positive awareness is still high immediately following the FIFA event.

A major MICE push by government has every chance of success – as long as we don't leave it too late.

The potential benefits are huge. MICE is reportedly a R21 billion industry in South Africa, though about 95% of this is estimated to be domestic expenditure. Clearly, the biggest opportunity lies in internationalisation.

Conference delegates from overseas are big spenders as they usually bring a spouse or partner and complement conference time with vacation add-ons.

In 2008, the average amount spent in South Africa per business traveller was R1 200 a day.

MICE can make a mighty contribution to our economy and the World Cup is an unprecedented MICE-breeding opportunity. It would be a shame to pass it up because we were so happy to host the event we forgot to make it pay.

- **Amanda Rogaly is owner of Kadoro Events & Communications, one of the country's leading event management and brand activation companies.**

545 words