

Qatar Airways: Selling airline seats in Africa through sports sponsorships

By [Hendrik du Preez](#)

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More recently, just ahead of the Rugby World Cup, Qatar Airways sponsored the Qatar Airways' Cup for the warm-up match between the Springboks and the All Blacks at a sold-out Twickenham.



Source: © 123rf [123rf](#) Hendrik du Preez, vice president – Africa at Qatar Airways outlines the airlines' sport sponsorship strategy in Africa

There's some element of chance in sports sponsorship, although on this occasion we couldn't have hoped for a better result.

Qatar Airways' rapid growth in Africa since the pandemic is supported by a sponsorship strategy that aims to engage markets across the continent.



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Football sponsorship

Football is the largest and most obvious of these. While the sponsorship of the 2022 Fifa World Cup and 2023 Fifa Women's World Cup clearly had a global reach, it definitely attracted plenty of interest on the continent.

An IPSOS survey ahead of the 2022 Doha tournament found that six out of 10 South Africans planned to watch the football spectacle – this although Bafana Bafana didn't qualify.

Fifa figures estimate five billion fans around the world and, despite the big-name leagues and teams being in England or Europe, the majority of these are in Latin America, the Middle East and, of course, Africa with its large and young population.

Winning the hearts of fans around the world

The 2023 Women's World Cup produced record viewing figures for women's football and some commentators described the tournament as the best in Women's World Cup history.

The performance of African teams won the hearts of fans around the world, but particularly in Nigeria, South Africa and Morocco, with all three making the knockout rounds - Morocco in its debutant tournament.

The beauty of the beautiful game from a sponsor's perspective is that it transcends borders and cultures and consequently is ideally suited to the marketing needs of a global airline and one that serves 29 destinations across Africa.



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Specific sponsorships

Where football has broad appeal throughout Africa, it is augmented with specific sponsorships that target equally passionate fans in some countries.

Examples include the two-year sponsorship of the United Rugby Championship, which resonates with fans in South Africa and Europe.

While the rugby sponsorship and particularly the Twickenham game was obviously to encourage Springbok supporters to book on Qatar Airways for the Rugby World Cup as well as the upcoming URC tournament, our Formula One sponsorship may seem less relevant in Africa and South Africa.

Interestingly note South Africa is among the top five origin countries for ticket sales for the Doha F1 Grand Prix next month and South Africa is neck-and-neck with other destinations in terms of sales of Qatar Holiday packages to the event.



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Marketing through advertising, promotions and social media

Of course, we don't just rely on these and other sponsorships to fill the 190 weekly flights we operate to African

destinations.

We market Doha and other destinations and our award-winning products and services through advertising, promotions and social media. What the sponsorships do is to help ensure that audiences are more receptive to these messages.

While our sponsorship strategy is certainly self-serving in terms of building brand awareness, acceptance and resonance, we also hope that by investing in sport we can help grow and develop the sports we support for the participants, fans and especially talented and hopeful young people wanting to realise their dreams.

I certainly hope that many of these are from Africa.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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