

Investing in unity: The true impact of sports sponsorships in South Africa

Sponsorship isn't just about a branding exercise—it's about creating shared experiences that resonate with our collective identity.



Source: © SA the Good News [SA the Good News](#) Carrie Delaney, managing director, Mscsports (Pty) Ltd, says sponsorship isn't just about a branding exercise; it's about creating shared experiences that resonate with our collective identity

When brands back events like the Rugby World Cup, the Soweto Derby, or even smaller community-drive initiatives, they are investing in moments that unite us.

They ensure that, for a few hours, our differences fade away, and we're all just fans, united by the love of the game.

Recently, I had the privilege of being at both Ellis Park and Cape Town Stadium to witness the Springboks beat the All Blacks.

It's hard to describe the energy of those moments.

Besides, live music concerts, which have always been my ultimate indulgence, not much else compares to the feeling of being in a stadium, supporting a World Cup-winning team, where South Africans—regardless of race, age, class, or creed—come together to share in the same passion.

You make instant friends with the people around you, cheering together, shouting at the referee, and raising your beers in celebration.

Show me something more unifying than that.

Working in the sponsorship industry, I've seen first-hand how brands can play a meaningful role in creating these moments.

Significant increase in sponsorship spending

The numbers support this.

In recent years, sponsorship spending in South Africa has seen a significant rise, with brands recognising the value of connecting with local audiences.

In 2023 alone, corporate sponsorship expenditure reached an estimated R10bn across sport, entertainment, and community initiatives.*

This isn't just about exposure for brands—it's about driving economic growth.

Major events like the Cape Town Cycle Tour and the Comrades Marathon contribute millions to local economies through tourism, job creation, and business development.

For every major sporting event, local businesses—from hotels to small vendors—see a surge in revenue.

Sponsorship for women

Being a woman in a male-dominated industry like sports sponsorship is a journey I've embraced with both passion and pride.

It mirrors the broader journey of South Africa—progressive, challenging, and ever-evolving.

Just as we recently celebrated our cultural heritage and the diversity that defines us, we also celebrate the strides women are making in sports, both on and off the field.

The rise in sponsorship for women's sports, from local leagues like the Hollywoodbets Super League to global events such as the Women's World Cup, demonstrates how far we've come.

These sponsorships are not just about visibility but about rewriting the future—one where everyone has a seat at the table, empowering the next generation of talent and leadership.

Impact of sponsorship

But the impact of sponsorship doesn't end with sport.

It extends into our rich cultural heritage.

Brands that support local festivals, youth development programmes, and community-driven events are not only helping preserve South Africa's diverse culture but are also investing in the country's future.

These sponsorships create jobs, drive tourism, and leave lasting impressions on the communities involved. For instance, research has shown that for every R1 spent on event sponsorship, up to R3 can be generated in broader economic activity.***

When done right, sponsorship is more than a business transaction—it's an investment in the social fabric of South Africa.

With the recent celebration of Heritage Day, I'm reminded of the power of partnerships and the role we all play in building a better, more unified nation.

After all, it's through these shared experiences and evolving narratives that we create a more inclusive and vibrant South Africa!

(References:

** South African Sponsorship Report 2023, Sponsorship Research Agency*

*** Economic Impact of Major Sporting Events, University of Cape Town Economics Department*

**** The Multiplier Effect of Sponsorship Investments, South African Chamber of Commerce*

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