

Sponsorships for Africa beyond the pandemic

The 2021 Africa Cup of Nations, Afcon, is currently underway in Cameroon. Originally scheduled to be played in June and July 2021, it was moved due to the pandemic. Does this mean that 2022 will see sporting and other events return, signalling a return to business as usual for sponsorships?

By [Judith Mugeni](#) 13 Jan 2022



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Afcon is enjoying Binance as a sponsor, with title partners TotalEnergies, TikTok, Umbro, 1XBET, Continental, Orange and Visa.

Watching the broadcast, it is great to see fans in the 60,000 seat Olembe Stadium (vaccination and a negative Covid-19 test are mandatory to be allowed into the stadium), despite capacity capped at 60% or 80% for the host's matches.

This year sees a myriad of sporting events planned across the globe. In Africa, this includes the African Women's Football Cup (Morocco) and the Rugby World Cup Sevens (South Africa).

But, is this a sign that it's business as usual for sponsorship of events? The trends I found suggest not. These trends are based on one-on-one in-depth expert interviews relating to South Africa and Nigeria and presented in 2021 at the SponsorshipX: top sponsorship trends around the world, but are still pertinent today.

Sponsorship trends

- **The rise of the health-conscious fan/audience/event**

We have been exposed to “a new way of living or working”, and therefore we have come to expect certain aspects of this, such as masks, testing, organised queuing or seated systems by distance sanitisers, crowd control and in some cases curfews, virtual working, virtual viewing habits and vaccinations. This has created a new fan or audience who has a higher self-awareness of their health.

This will trickle down into the planning, execution and leveraging of future events, making safety at experiences/events/activations paramount and at the centre of sponsor and organiser/rights owners' conversations. Be it security, access control, medical measures as well as the health and well being of different role players (employees, participants, spectators, stakeholders), safety will be even more important in the planning and decision making of future events.

- **Re-imagined content broadcast/delivery solutions**

Content delivery is being driven by the consumer and how they access content making the “take what we have” content approach of broadcasters absolute. Broadcasters and sponsors will need to be creative on how to reach the audience, going beyond the traditional mediums to do the job

They will need to ask themselves what content does the audience seek and on which platforms can we reach them?

In addition, while sponsors and organisers have taken on the virtual challenge, we are not at a point where we can offer a full virtual experience to the masses at scale.

On the continent, future audience engagement will have to take into account zero data models, hybrid models per segment (not a one size fits all approach) and subscription models.

- **A renewed industry call for value: mutually beneficial partnerships**

The pandemic has shone a spotlight on the relationships between sponsors and rights holders. While, in many cases, the two have worked together to find solutions, for example, rights fees negotiations and supporting new innovative solutions of delivery of experiences, this has not been across the board.

Value-based sponsorship strategic imperatives include:

- Are the sponsorships we take on truly on brand and business strategy?
- Do we have a full understanding of customisation of rights offering and the acquisition of assets that are beneficial and integrated to the sponsor organisation and its strategy?
- Purpose and community led sponsorships become increasingly important, beyond the logic placements. What added value and impact does a sponsor bring to the table to meaningfully engage?
- A fight for digital rights beyond telco companies. Content has become a key driver of engagement for all brands regardless of industry. We will see brands engaging in acquiring digital rights for future engagement.

As sponsors and rights holders we are not oracles of what the future holds, but we are more than capable of pivoting and doing things differently, optimistically, whatever the future brings.

ABOUT JUDITH MUGENI

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