

Confex industry stimulates business growth

According to Shaun Bird, Sandton Convention Centre's GM, the conference and exhibition industry has had an ongoing and significant impact on the greater business and tourism value chain, contributing to growth in a wide variety of sectors. "For every person who participates in an exhibition or conference, as an exhibitor, visitor, or delegate, there are positive repercussions for the local economy."



Image via [Tsogo Sun - Sandton ConventionCentre](#)

Bird cites travel costs, accommodation, food and entertainment during events as an example, as well as pre- or post-event leisure travel within the country, noting: "Recent research by the National Convention Bureau shows that up to 60% of international delegates who have come to South Africa will come back within the next five years with their family – creating a ripple effect in the economy."

“ When major events are rotating within a region, it stimulates the growth of the size of the pie, rather than growth in the number of slices in the same-size pie. ”

He adds that the research also found that about half the visiting business delegates are accompanied by one other person on their trips to South Africa, and a significant number are joined by three or more fellow travellers – colleagues or family members.

The National Economic Contribution Study 2014-2016 by the SA National Convention Bureau states that in job creation and economic impact, the international business events industry annually supports on average about 252,000 direct and indirect job equivalents in SA and contributes in total over R115bn to SA's annual GDP.

The study states: "South Africa is host to approximately one million international business events delegates annually whose primary purpose of visit is to attend meetings, convention, conference or exhibition."

Developing a rotational strategy

Bird notes that leisure visitors to the country tend to spend their own money when travelling here, whereas business delegates tend to travel on company money and have a larger amount of disposable income as their accommodation, flights, and conference expenses are taken care of. This allows them extra budget for shopping, excursions, and leisure travel within the country.

Bird believes there is more that can be done by the southern African conference and exhibition industry in terms of developing a rotational strategy for major global business events, both within South Africa, between the major cities, as well as within the SADC countries. “When major events are rotating within a region, it stimulates the growth of the size of the pie, rather than growth in the number of slices in the same-size pie.”

The theme of this year’s Meetings Africa 2018, ‘Shared Economies’, echoes this perspective. Meetings Africa, which is Africa’s premier business events trade show, takes place at Sandton Convention Centre from 26 to 28 February.

Confex events and its importance in Africa

Chief Convention Bureau officer at SA Tourism, Amanda Kotze-Nhlapo reinforces the importance of the business events industry to the continent’s economy: “The Shared Economies theme is a critical component of the work that our industry does, which is way beyond tourism. The goal this year is to expand the overall conversation and focus on how collaboration can help us find innovative solutions to bettering the lives of our people.”



Image via [Tsogo Sun - Sandton ConventionCentre](#)

Meetings Africa is an iconic industry event that showcases Africa's diverse offering of services and products and offers a platform for African associations and meetings industry professionals to partner to help transform the continent.

"Meetings Africa is the continent's largest business tourism event and has been a signature event on the SCC calendar for 12 years. Last year we were proud to win the bid to host Meetings Africa for the next five years, which we believe reflects the growing success of these events," comments Bird.

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