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Capital FM (Nairobi)

## South Africa: How Country Became a Top Brand

BY VICTORIA RUBADIRI, 29 MAY 2012

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Nairobi, Kenya — South Africa seemed to have found the formula to get set itself to the top of Africa's most valuable brand and staying there for the last two years.

Brand South Africa Chief Executive Miller Matola said the country realised the importance of partnering between the government, the private sector and the civil society in efforts to boost domestic tourism that drives 70 percent of the sector.

"We believe that any country's competitiveness in tourism hinges on a strong domestic base. If you don't have a strong domestic tourism market you are susceptible to the challenges of the external markets," he explained.

A couple of years ago the country's tourism marketing agency began a campaign that encouraged South Africans to be tourists of local attractions dubbed the Short Left Campaign.

"It wasn't an easy thing because South Africans were not used to traveling their own country and the product was not geared towards the local market. So we started easing people into the idea of becoming tourists in their own country by educating them that they can experience their country for a minimal amount of money," he said.

South Africa took on a huge undertaking when it hosted the World Cup in 2010 constructing 10 state-of-the-art stadiums across nine different cities that collectively housed a total of 3.18 million people.

"It's something that always gives one goose bumps. It was a challenging experience but we viewed it as something we were doing for the reputation of the continent. So everything was at stake," he said.

The South African government spent \$4.3 billion for the World Cup, with some speculating that the games contributed 0.4 percent increase the real gross domestic product (GDP).

With tourism contributing seven percent to GDP, South Africa plans to increase this figure by boosting arrivals to over 40 million by 2015.

As a BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) member South Africa is also sourcing from its fellow Asian counterparts to offset losses from the ailing Eurozone.

"Three years ago we started focusing on a policy that said we need to enhance our trade relations with the BRICS markets and South-South partners that bolstered our economic performance," Matola said.

Business tourism as well as the conference and exhibitions are fledgling markets Matola adds his organization is also promoting to diversify the country's offerings moving forward.

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