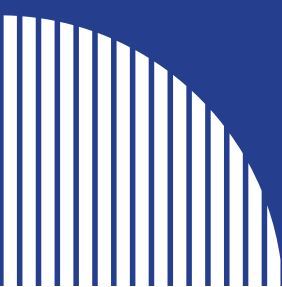
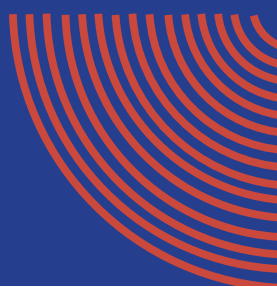




DAILY NEWS



of Connecting Africa
to the World



Welcoming You to BONDay 2026

One of the most important weeks for the business events sector begins today, and on behalf of the Board and Executive of South African Tourism, it is my pleasure to welcome you to the opening day of Meetings Africa 2026.

This year marks a truly special milestone as we celebrate 20 years of connecting Africa's business events industry to the world.

Over the past two decades, Meetings Africa has evolved into far more than a trade show. It has become a strategic business platform that enables African and global stakeholders to connect, trade and build long-term partnerships. It is a platform designed to showcase Africa's strengths, unlock opportunity and position the continent as a competitive and globally relevant business events destination.

As we open this landmark edition, we do so with pride in the role Meetings Africa continues to play in advancing Africa's visibility on the global stage. Your presence here reflects the world's confidence in Africa's capabilities, creativity and growth potential.

We begin with BONDay 2026, which has been thoughtfully designed to set the strategic tone for the days ahead. Guided by our 20-year theme, "Connecting Africa to the World," BONDay creates space for meaningful dialogue on Africa's place in the global business events

landscape and how we can strengthen our collective positioning.

This year's programme has been intentionally streamlined to allow for deeper engagement and more meaningful connections. From global market insights and continental discussions to industry power sessions and association engagements, BONDay lays a strong foundation for the exhibition days that follow.

Sustainability and legacy remain central to Meetings Africa. I encourage you to visit the Sustainability Village, where local artisans showcase authentic, handcrafted products made from sustainable materials. This initiative supports small businesses, promotes responsible consumption and ensures that the benefits of Meetings Africa extend beyond the event itself.

Equally important is our commitment to the future of the industry. The Future Leaders Forum provides a platform for emerging professionals to engage, learn and contribute to shaping the next generation of African business events leaders. It reflects our belief that the long-term success of this sector depends on investing in people and skills.

As we reflect on 20 years of progress, we are equally focused on the road ahead. This edition is both a celebration and a call to action. The partnerships formed, deals concluded and ideas



sparked here will help shape the next chapter of growth for our industry and our continent.

Welcome to **BONDay 2026**.

Welcome to **20 years of Meetings Africa**.

And welcome to the future of Africa's business events industry.

Dr Shamilla Chettiar

Acting CEO, South African Tourism

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MICE
Destination



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our website



BONDay PROGRAMME

VENUE : SANDTON CONVENTION CENTRE - PLENARY LEVEL -2 BALLROOM 1

TIME	EVENT
08:30 – 09:00	ARRIVAL, REGISTRATION & COFFEE
09:00 – 09:10	MC REMARKS
09:10 – 09:40	OPENING ADDRESS Opening The Global Lens – Global Business Events Landscape Market– Where Africa Fits
09:45 – 10:10	KEYNOTE ADDRESS Africa As A Turning Point - Connecting Africa To The World (Through Business Events)
10:10 – 10:55	PANEL DISCUSSION Priorities That Matter In 2026 - An Industry Conversation
10:55 – 11:15	NETWORKING BREAK
11:15 – 12:00	SPOTLIGHT SESSION – A FIRESIDE CHAT Africa's Cultural Advantage: Preservation, Innovation, Arts And Creative Industries As Agents Of Change In A Competitive Global Market
12:00 – 12:45	PANEL DISCUSSION Sport In Destination Positioning - Beyond Just Bidding, How Do They Do It?
12:45 – 13:00	MC CLOSING REMARKS AND ANNOUNCEMENTS
13:00 – 14:00	LUNCH – 20 YEARS OF CONNECTING AFRICA TO THE WORLD CELEBRATORY LUNCH
14:00 – 14:30	EVENT GREENING
14:30 – 15:00	LEGACY INITIATIVES FOR THE BUSINESS EVENTS INDUSTRY
15:00 – 15:30	PROFESSIONALISATION OF EVENT SAFETY

*information correct at time of publishing

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One password login for the mobile app and diary system



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SA Tourism Champions Significance of LIV Golf South Africa for Sports Tourism

In March, the fairways of Steyn City in Johannesburg will carry more than the sound of competition. They will carry South Africa's story to the world.

When LIV Golf comes to South Africa, it does so as one of the world's most talked about sporting properties. Yet in the South African context, its importance extends far beyond the leaderboard. It represents a deliberate sports tourism play, one that connects global visibility with tangible economic opportunity.

At Meetings Africa, that story is being told clearly and confidently. South Africa's golf tourism offering is market ready, globally competitive and easily accessible. The country is not simply hosting a tournament. It is demonstrating capability.

Through its collaboration with LIV Golf, South African Tourism is leveraging the event to drive conversion led tourism growth. Meetings Africa serves as the strategic platform to amplify awareness of curated golf travel offerings that are already packaged, priced and ready to book.

This narrative will form part of a dedicated panel discussion on sport tourism taking place today at BonDay. The session will explore how major sporting events such as LIV Golf integrate seamlessly with safari experiences, winelands, coastal escapes and vibrant city life, and how a tournament can become the starting point of a multi provincial journey that extends far beyond the host venue.

For South African based delegates attending Meetings Africa, the experience becomes even

more immediate. They have the opportunity to take part in a competition for ticket giveaways to attend LIV Golf themselves. It is an invitation not just to promote the story, but to live it. To move from conversation to first hand experience.

At the same time, South African Tourism is actively promoting tour packages linked to the event. It reinforces sport as a catalyst for extended stays and increased geographic spread.

South African Tourism will also have an exciting on site presence at LIV Golf, including a mini exhibition featuring leading golf tour operators. This curated space will allow visitors to explore tailored golf itineraries, engage directly with operators and discover how easily a tournament visit can evolve into a broader South African journey.

The timing of the tournament adds another layer of opportunity. Taking place ahead of the Easter period, LIV Golf offers international visitors a natural gateway into one of South Africa's most vibrant travel seasons. Easter is traditionally marked by leisure travel, family gatherings, cultural celebrations and outdoor exploration, all enhanced by favourable, pleasant weather.

A spectator who arrives for golf can easily extend their stay. From bush escapes in Limpopo to wine tasting in the Cape, from coastal retreats in KwaZulu Natal to urban lifestyle experiences in Johannesburg and Cape Town, the transition from tournament to

holiday feels seamless.

This supports increased length of stay, multi provincial travel and broader economic participation across accommodation providers, transport operators, attractions and local enterprises. The impact stretches well beyond the fairways.

Importantly, LIV Golf also has a meaningful impact on domestic tourism. The tournament creates an opportunity for South Africans to travel within their own country, whether for a weekend break, a family outing or a golf focused getaway.

Through this collaboration, South African Tourism is positioning golf not as a standalone event, but as an entry point into deeper destination exploration.

At Meetings Africa, the message is consistent. South Africa is ready. Its golf tourism offering is competitive, accessible and digitally enabled. Its sport tourism strategy is intentional. And its ability to convert global sporting moments into sustained tourism growth is real.

For more information on LIV Golf South Africa, visit www.southafrica.net or follow LIV Golf on social media:

Instagram: @livgolf_league

X: @livgolf_league

Facebook: LIV Golf

Essential Golf Tourism Statistics

- High-Value Travellers:** In South Africa, golf tourists spend **120% more per person per day** than the average tourist.
- Economic Impact:** The South African golf industry generates a total direct economic impact of **R29.2bn** and supports over 50,000 jobs. When including the multiplier effect, its overall worth rises to **R58.4bn**.
- Market Growth:** The South African golf tourism market is projected to reach **US\$ 424.9 million by 2033**.
- Global Market Value:** The global golf tourism market was valued at approximately **\$25.34bn in 2024** and is projected to reach **\$27.04bn by the end of 2025**.
- Travel Intentions:** According to IGTM and Sporting Insights, between **83% and 89% of core golfers** plan to take a golf vacation in the next year.

Sources: IGTM, The Golfer Magazine



Featured Sessions Not to Be Missed

Date: 24 February 2026 | Venue: Media Centre, Café Nala, Mezzanine

12:00 – 13:00 Growing the African Tourism Market – A Collaborative Effort

Africa's tourism growth remains constrained by visa barriers, fragmented marketing, and limited coordination across the value chain. Join industry leaders as they explore how collaboration can accelerate sustainable growth across the continent.

14:00 – 15:00 Creative Collaborations: Creativity as an Economic Catalyst: How Arts and Culture Drive MICE Growth

Intentional partnerships between tourism, government, and the creative industries can transform cultural assets into economic catalysts, driving destination appeal, community pride, and sustainable growth. Discover how.

15:30 – 16:30 Club Med Engagement

Club Med is a global leader in all-inclusive resort holidays, known for its premium locations, world-class amenities, and exceptional guest experiences across destinations worldwide. They will be opening their first South African resort in July 2026. Find out more.

Sports Tourism:

Africa's Most Undervalued Economic Multiplier

The opportunity is not simply in hosting events, it lies in integration, writes Tumelo Selikane, Managing Director of Nielsen Sports SA.

Africa does not lack sporting passion. It does not lack world-class events. It does not lack compelling destinations. Instead, what we have historically lacked, is a deliberate, integrated strategy to convert sport into structured tourism growth.

As Managing Director of Nielsen Sports SA, I firmly believe South Africa is uniquely positioned to lead this charge not only for our country, but as a blueprint for the continent.

Our sporting calendar is no longer seasonal or sporadic. It is global, consistent, and commercially attractive.

From globally sought-after properties like LIV Golf which are in high demand, to the historic Springbok rivalry with New Zealand, "The Greatest Rivalry", which attracts inbound travelling supporters embedded in decades of rugby heritage, South Africa continues to demonstrate that sport is a powerful travel driver.

Our mass participation events are equally transformative. The Sanlam Two Oceans Marathon, Comrades Marathon, Cape Town Cycle Tour, and Absa Cape Epic increase flight and hotel bookings annually, attracting international athletes and participants who travel along with spectators, as active contributors to the tourism economy. These events extend stays, drive regional dispersal, and generate multi-day spend.

South Africa is a proud host of the World Rugby Sevens in Cape Town during peak tourism season, and the annual globally marketed Betway SA20 cricket tournament with national sold-out games, also attracts strong inbound interest from India and beyond.

For two consecutive years now we have been hosts of the NBA Basketball Africa League, which places African sport on the global broadcast map. The Sunshine Tour ensures year-round golf tourism, while the upcoming 2027 Cricket World Cup presents a platform to accelerate structured inbound travel strategies from key global markets.

Yet perhaps our most underestimated driver is school sport. Across South Africa and increasingly across borders, teams travel in groups, accompanied by parents and extended families, turning tournaments into community-based travel festivals. This model is scalable across Africa.

The opportunity, however, is not simply in hosting events. It lies in integration.

At Nielsen Sports SA, our research underscores the inherent alignment between sport and travel. In our 2025 South African Sports Fan study, over 90% of respondents interested in lifestyle activities, indicated strong interest



in travelling locally. More compellingly, those interested in participating in sports and fitness showed a 93% interest level in travelling locally, while general sports enthusiasts recorded a 92% interest level. Sport is not a niche audience, it is a high-propensity travel segment.

We are back in the field conducting updated research to track shifts in sentiment and travel decision-making drivers, and additionally, we're eager to see whether experiential travel, particularly around sport, continues to gain momentum.

For Africa, this is a defining moment.

Sport tourism can reduce seasonality and overtourism, drive regional dispersal beyond primary cities, create SMME opportunities in hospitality and logistics, and attract youth markets through storytelling and digital content. But it requires collaboration between rights holders, event and festival organisers, tourism authorities, airlines and hospitality groups. I emphasised the need for this collaboration at the TBCSA Business Conference in 2024, and I will continue to do so until we progressively make the necessary changes.

Africa must move beyond hosting. We must

package. We must tell our stories. We must create joint travel products around our sporting calendar. We must leverage broadcast exposure into destination marketing. And we must measure impact rigorously!

If executed strategically, sport tourism will not simply be an event-driven boost to arrivals. It will be an economic multiplier that positions Africa as a continent of movement, experience, and global connection.

South Africa is ready to lead. The continent is ready to benefit. The question is not whether sport can drive tourism.

It already does.

The question is whether we are prepared to scale it deliberately.

For more information on Nielsen Sports contact info@niensports.co.za

JOIN THE PANEL DISCUSSION:

Sport in destination positioning - Beyond the bidding, How do they do it?

Date: BOneday, 23 February 2026

Time: 12:00 – 12:45

Venue: Plenary

*information correct at time of publishing

Key 2026 African Sporting Events

- **Summer Youth Olympics Dakar, Senegal:** 31 October to 13 November | The first Olympic event on African soil.
- **Women's Africa Cup of Nations Morocco:** 17 March – 3 April 3, 2026 | Featuring 16 teams
- **World Athletics Relays Gaborone, Botswana:** 2-3 May | The world's fastest athletes are heading to Gaborone.
- **IWBF U25 Women's Africa Championships Kinshasa, DR Congo:** | A key wheelchair basketball qualifying event for the 2027 World Championship.

Major Events in South Africa

- **LIV Golf South Africa Steyn City:** 9 - 22 March
Golf's biggest names to tee off in inaugural tournament
- **New Zealand Rugby Tour South Africa:** August -September | Includes a four-Test series against the Springboks.
- **Sanlam Cape Town Marathon Cape Town:** 23 - 24 May | A major Abbott World Marathon Majors candidate.
- **Two Oceans Ultra Marathon Cape Town:** 11 April
Globally lauded as 'the world's most beautiful marathon'.

South Africa's Digital Welcome Mat

The Department of Home Affairs' Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system is accelerating into full gear.

South Africa is rolling out the red carpet like never before. In a powerful blend of innovative technology and expanded skies, the country is making entry smoother, faster, and more welcoming for global travellers.

At the core of this transformation is the Department of Home Affairs' Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) system, launched in September 2025 and now accelerating into full gear.

This AI-powered, fully digital platform lets eligible travellers apply online from anywhere in the world. A simple selfie captures live biometrics, documents upload in seconds, and a secure digital visa with QR code arrives – often within hours. No embassy visits, no lengthy paperwork, just seamless modern convenience.

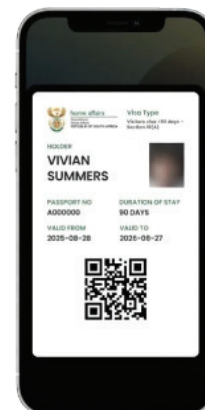
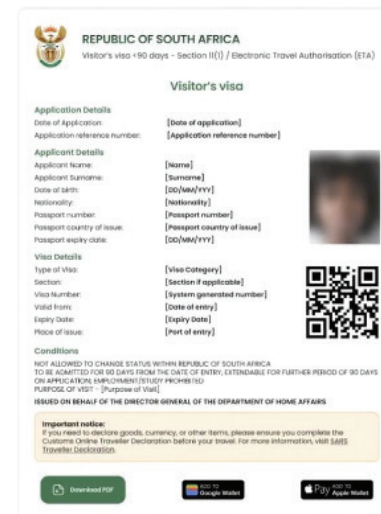
The rollout has been smart and strategic. It kicked off successfully with G20 delegates from China, India, Indonesia, and Mexico ahead of the summit in Johannesburg.

By February 2026, ordinary passport holders from these dynamic markets can use the ETA at South Africa's flagship gateways: OR Tambo

(Johannesburg), Cape Town International, and Lanseria airports.

Then came the headline moment – in his February 2026 State of the Nation Address, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced the major expansion: later this year the ETA will open to all visa-required nationalities for tourism and short business stays, with decisions delivered digitally in as little as 24 hours. The system will also extend to all international airports and busy land borders, including Beitbridge and Lebombo.

For MICE travel planners, this is game-changing. Faster approvals from high-growth source markets mean shorter lead times, reduced administrative headaches, and the ability to book large groups confidently, knowing visas will flow smoothly.



With digital efficiency meeting the warm spirit of Ubuntu, South Africa isn't just opening its borders, it's inviting the world to connect, explore, and do business.

What's on at Meetings Africa 2026

Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA) Session 1

Minister's outreach program in collaboration with Department of Home Affairs, Gauteng Tourism and TBCSA for local hosted buyers and local DMC's including exhibitors

When: 4pm, 23 February 2026

Where: Sandton Convention Centre - Ballroom 4

*By Invitation Only

New Routes Bring SA Closer to the World

Complementing the visa revolution is a wave of exciting new flight routes that bring South Africa closer than ever:

- Qantas launched direct Johannesburg–Perth services in December 2025 (three times weekly), cutting travel from Western Australia to under 11 hours.
- LATAM Airlines introduces São Paulo–Cape Town direct flights from September 2026 – the first regular South America link.
- Qatar Airways adds seven weekly services across Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban.
- Lufthansa boosts frequencies from Europe into both Johannesburg and Cape Town.
- South African Airways' new Cape Town–Mauritius direct route (three times weekly since December 2025) strengthens Indian Ocean connectivity.



SA Welcomes Record International Arrivals in 2025

South African Tourism has reached a landmark milestone in its global recovery and growth journey, with international arrivals reaching 10.48 million between January and December 2025. This represents a 17.6% increase compared to 2024 and marks the highest number of international arrivals on record.

Europe continues to be a critical growth engine, with arrivals up 12.6% between January and December 2025, underlining a strong year-end momentum. Exceptional double-digit growth was recorded across key markets, including:

- The UK (+15.4%)
- Germany (+14.0%)
- Austria (+15.6%)
- Switzerland (+13.2%)
- Sweden (+12.5%)
- Belgium (+10.9%)
- Italy (+10.2%)

Commenting on the performance, Ian Utermohlen, Regional General Manager (RGM): Europe at South African Tourism, notes that: "These results reflect not only sustained demand for South Africa as a long-haul destination, but also the impact of highly targeted, locally relevant initiatives implemented by our Europe hubs. Europe has been a key driver of South Africa's recovery and record-setting growth in 2025."

Thank you to our Host Partners



Infrastructure Development Fuelling MICE Growth in Malawi

A number of conference venues and convention centres have been opened in major cities as well as the lakeshore.

Malawi is at Meetings Africa 2026 to showcase some brand new products.

The MICE industry in Malawi has shown significant growth over the years driven by major investments in infrastructure and a rise in demand from both public and private sectors, says Sarah Njanji, Tourism Attaché at Malawi Consulate General.

“From the infrastructure development point of view, the highlight has been the opening of the Bingu International Convention Centre in Lilongwe, and there are a number of conference venues and convention centres that have been opened in our major cities as well as the lakeshore. Therefore, the country has quite a diverse offering when it comes to venues for various business events. In addition, technological advancements mean that these venues are able to support meetings, conferences and events of any type and size.”

New products include from co-exhibitors Sunbird Hotels and Resorts, who recently opened the state-of-the-art 1000-seater Livingstonia International Conference Centre in Salima, and Protea by Marriott who will be opening their second hotel in Malawi, specifically in Lilongwe soon.

“These developments are critical to the development of tourism in Malawi as they are creating jobs, supporting local communities and generating revenue thereby increasing the sector’s contributions to the country’s socio-economic development,” says Sarah.

“Particularly at this Meetings Africa, these and other developments in nature conservation and cultural preservation mean that we are presenting a broader product portfolio than we did in the last edition.”

Sarah says it is important to also acknowledge the advancements in local grown talent in event management as well as a wider spread of suppliers offering support services in seamless event booking and registration, online payments, event décor among others.

“Of importance is the role that the youth in Malawi are playing in this space, from curating events to developing tech that is supporting



execution of events.

“Cultural events, music festivals and art exhibitions like Art in the Park are taking centre stage and have become platforms for knowledge exchange, talent acquisition and entrepreneurship.”

Sarah says Malawi Tourism sees growth opportunities in developing large-scale specialised venues and integrated resorts and again further upgrades in technology, as well as hosting of corporate retreats in protected areas and other places of natural beauty.

Africa Steals the Spotlight in Incentive Travel Index

The 2025 Incentive Travel Index (ITI), released by SITE and the Incentive Research Foundation with Oxford Economics, surveyed 2,700 professionals across 85 countries and delivers one unmistakable message: planners are chasing fresh, never-before-used destinations.

Nearly 70% of buyers are actively seeking new spots, with 63% already booking them for 2026 and 2027. Safety remains non-negotiable (for 47% it was a deal-breaker), followed by direct air access (41%), premium accommodations (34%), and trusted local DMCs (29%).

Europe is riding high – Lisbon, Prague, and Mediterranean cruises are surging as “new, near and safe” favourites. The Caribbean continues its rebound, while Asia-Pacific holds steady.

Meanwhile, the US faces headwinds: 70%

of respondents predict a decline in inbound incentive groups due to political perceptions, visa complexity, and shifting DEI expectations.

But the real headline? Southern Africa has rocketed onto the global radar as the ultimate bucket-list winner.

Planners are discovering what SITE Africa members have known for years: no other continent delivers the perfect cocktail of novelty, safety, authenticity and jaw-dropping ROI quite like ours.

Cape Town tops emerging lists – Table Mountain cable car sunrises, private wine estate tastings in Stellenbosch and Franschhoek, and cultural tours through Bo-Kaap and Robben Island create emotional, story-rich programmes that align perfectly with the ITI’s top-valued activities: cultural sightseeing (60%) and

relationship-building (53%).

Further North Kruger National Park and the Greater Kruger private reserves offer Big Five game drives, star-bed sleep-outs and traditional boma dinners under the Milky Way. Victoria Falls delivers adrenaline and awe, and community visits that embody Ubuntu. Botswana’s Okavango Delta adds exclusive mokoro safaris and walking trails.

Improved direct flights from Europe and within Africa, plus world-class lodges and SITE-accredited DMCs, tick every must-have box. Per-person spend averaging US\$5,100 globally suddenly feels like exceptional value.

The 2025 ITI confirms it: in a world craving genuine connection, Africa is not just competitive – it is the destination that turns incentives into life-changing legends.

“



Each year has presented a lot of networking and business opportunities for Malawi. The standout moment being in 2023 when we won an award in the Green Stands award category in accordance with the greening criteria. Such recognition speaks to our efforts in ensuring sustainability in every stage of planning and execution of events

Sarah Njanji, Tourism Attaché at Malawi Consulate General

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Where Emerging Talent Meets Global Opportunity

The Future Leaders Forum continues to elevate South Africa's young business events talent at Meetings Africa 2026.

The IMEX–MPI Future Leaders Forum (FLF) returns to Meetings Africa this year, once again spotlighting the next generation of business events professionals. With tourism students from 18 institutions participating in 2026, the programme reflects strong national and regional academic representation across tourism, hospitality, and event management disciplines.

As part of the global IMEX–MPI partnership, the South African forum forms part of an international network of Future Leaders Forums, ensuring local students gain access to global industry platforms, professional networks and real-world event environments, bridging the gap between academic learning and industry practice.

Since its introduction in South Africa in 2013, more than 1 000 students have participated

in the forum, hosted annually during Meetings Africa by the South African National Convention Bureau (SANCB) in partnership with the Tourism Educators of South Africa (TESA).

Prior to the FLC at the trade show, the University Challenge brief is shared with all Institutions of Higher Learning, who then nominate three top performing students to prepare a proposal and to represent the Institution, explains Nellie Swart, TESA chairperson.

A panel of independent judges review the proposals, and the top three students are invited to present their outcomes at the IMEX MPI MCI FLF at Sandton Convention Centre. These presentations are scored by judges and the winner is announced who will represent South Africa at the International University Challenge at IMEX Frankfurt, Germany. There, students from Future Leaders Forums around the world compete in event planning and innovation challenges, with the chance to win the prestigious MPI Foundation Student

Scholarship Award presented at the IMEX Gala Dinner.

“During the FLF at Meetings Africa, participating students are typically grouped into teams and presented with a real-world case or industry-relevant challenge,” says Swart. “They are required to collaborate within a limited timeframe to develop innovative, practical solutions which are then

presented to a panel of judges drawn from academia and industry. This process encourages teamwork, problem-solving and presentation skills, while also simulating the types of pressures and expectations that professionals in the meetings and events industry experience in practice.”

South Africa has demonstrated remarkable success in the global competition, winning the International University Challenge four times.

- Anzelle Vorstman – North-West University (2015)
- Kazzandra Grove – North-West University (2017)
- Emile Coetzee – North-West University (2019)
- Hlolohelo Zwane – Tshwane North College (2024)

Hannah Lee, Operations Manager at IMEX, says: “For students in the final year of a hospitality, event or tourism management course, the IMEX-MPI-MCI Future Leaders Forum is a free opportunity to gain ‘real life’ insight into the meetings industry, learning from and connecting with inspirational industry experts and fellow students.

“Research from McKinsey shows that one of Gen Z’s top values is belonging to an inclusive and welcoming community. And the University Challenge winners from South Africa are an important part of this thriving student and alumni community.

“We’ve now reached the point where we can look around the global events industry and see many former Future Leaders who’ve really excelled. Take, for example, Hlolohelo Zwane who won the University Challenge in 2024 with her presentation about the Urban Township Future (UTF) Summit. She went on to secure a role at South African Tourism and is now working as Culture Officer at the City of Tshwane Metropolitan Municipality.”



“

The Tourism Educators South Africa (TESA) association exists to strengthen collaboration between academia and industry, and to create meaningful opportunities for our members and their students. The Future Leaders Forum aligns strongly with this mandate, as it provides a platform for students to gain exposure to the MICE sector, engage directly with industry leaders, and begin building networks that can support their future careers. Bringing FLF to Meetings Africa enables students to experience the sector in a real-world context, rather than only through academic study. For many, this represents their first meaningful engagement with the professional events environment.

Prof Nellie Swart, Chair: Tourism Educators South Africa

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