How exhibitions are helping to shape the future of Africa

Global Exhibitions Day (GED) is an annual event that celebrates the importance of exhibitions in driving economic growth, fostering innovation, and facilitating global partnerships. This year, the theme of GED is "We run the meeting places and marketplaces for everyone." The Association of African Exhibition Organisers (AAXO) is joining GED to highlight the importance of business tourism as a catalyst for growth and progress in Africa.

Source: Supplied

Having a profound impact on economies worldwide, tourism – including business tourism - contributes significantly to GDP and job creation with 7.6% contributed to global GDP in 2022, marking an increase of 22% from 2021. Additionally, 22 million new jobs were created by tourism in 2022, representing a 7.9% increase compared to 2021.

In Africa, business tourism is growing rapidly. In 2022, the continent hosted over 1,000 business events, which attracted over 2 million visitors. Business tourism is expected to continue to grow in Africa, as the continent becomes a more attractive destination for businesses and investors.

"Business tourism serves as a transformative force, empowering the African continent by igniting economic growth, fostering cross-cultural exchange, and unlocking boundless opportunities for collaboration and development," says Naji El Haddad, regional director at UFI.

With the ever-increasing positive impact on the African economy, Devi Paulsen-Abbott – chairperson of The Association of African Exhibition Organisers - highlights key areas in which business tourism contributes significantly to the continent:

Economic growth and job creation

Exhibitions are crucial drivers of economic growth, both locally and globally and bring together businesses, investors, and customers, providing a platform for trade, investment, and collaboration.

By showcasing products, services, and innovations, exhibitions stimulate business activities, resulting in increased sales, contracts, and investments. Events also generate employment opportunities across various sectors, ranging from event management and logistics to hospitality and tourism.

Knowledge sharing and innovation

Exhibitions bring together experts, thought leaders, and professionals from diverse industries, creating a fertile ground for the exchange of ideas, best practices, and cutting-edge technologies.

The collaborative environment nurtured by these events facilitates innovation and inspires breakthroughs in various fields from medical advancements to sustainable technologies.

International collaboration and networking

One of the most significant benefits of exhibitions is their ability to foster international collaboration and networking opportunities.

Exhibitions attract participants from different countries and cultures, enabling cross-border partnerships and business expansions, and providing a platform for companies to connect with potential clients, suppliers, distributors, and investors from around the world, opening doors to new markets and facilitating trade relationships.

Industry advancement and market insights

Exhibitions offer a unique opportunity for industry players to stay updated on the latest market trends, emerging technologies, and consumer demands.

By attending exhibitions, professionals gain valuable insights into their respective sectors, enabling them to adapt and innovate in response to market changes through specialised conferences, seminars, and workshops that provide educational sessions and thought-provoking discussions.

"Global Exhibitions Day serves as a platform to acknowledge and celebrate the profound impact of exhibitions on our world. These events not only drive economic growth and create job opportunities but also foster innovation, knowledge sharing, and international collaboration. Exhibitions have consistently proved their worth in connecting people, businesses, and ideas, leading to breakthroughs, partnerships, and market advancements," concludes Paulsen-Abbott.