

NATIONBRAND

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Shaping Global Perceptions:
Africa's Most Impactful
Country Brands in 2025

SHAPING GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS: AFRICA’S MOST IMPACTFUL COUNTRY BRANDS IN 2025

For a long time, Africa was not simply misunderstood, it was narrated. A single story dominated, crisis as identity, instability as destiny, scarcity as spectacle. In 2000, a major international magazine coined a label that still echoes, “The Hopeless Continent.” It was more than a headline, it was a worldview, one that shaped perceptions, investment, and attention for years.

Yet the continent kept transforming.

Across the past decade, Africa has been building, creating, and asserting complexity, through cultural power that travels, through new industries and ambitions, through cities that set trends rather than follow them. None of this erases the challenges that persist, inequality, climate shocks, security pressures, governance gaps, access to capital. But the reality is clear, the mutations are profound, and too often invisible in a global media landscape that still struggles to look at Africa with depth.

That is why country branding and soft power are not cosmetic, they are strategic. In today’s world, perception is infrastructure, narrative is leverage, visibility is a currency. There is an African proverb that captures this truth : “Until the lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter.” Africa can no longer wait for others to speak on its behalf, it must shape its own global story with clarity, credibility, and ambition.

This report is written in that spirit. “Shaping Global Perceptions, Africa’s Most Impactful Country Brands in 2025” is a qualitative editorial assessment of the countries that, in 2025, most effectively shaped how they are seen on the global stage. They created global moments, activated culture as influence, projected credibility through diplomacy and mobility, elevated ambassadors and recognition, strengthened institutional confidence, and built investment narratives that travel.

Africa does not need permission to shine. It needs platforms that see it clearly, and voices that refuse to let others speak on its behalf.

THE LION IS LEARNING TO WRITE

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AFRICA'S MOMENT ISN'T COMING, IT'S ALREADY HERE

The moment has come to tell our story with clarity, confidence, and ambition, not through borrowed lenses, but in our own voice. A new generation is building, creating, exporting culture, attracting capital, and shaping global conversations in real time, and the world is watching.

What's missing isn't talent or momentum, it's a standard of positioning equal to the reality on the ground. That's why we exist: to turn visibility into credibility, and attention into lasting perception, by telling the stories that deserve to lead.

NATIONBRAND: THE FIRST PLATFORM FOCUSED ON PLACE BRANDING AND ON ELEVATING AFRICA'S SOFT POWER WORLDWIDE

Now Is the Moment to Take Back the Narrative

For decades, Africa's image has been filtered through a narrow set of headlines, conflict, corruption, poverty, instability, as if complexity itself were an inconvenience. This is not only a cultural distortion, it is an economic penalty. A report published on October 10, 2024 by Africa No Filter and Africa Practice argues that stereotypical international media narratives impose a "prejudice premium" on African countries' debt servicing costs, estimated at up to 4.2 billion dollars every year. NationBrand exists because that cost is unacceptable, and because perception is not decoration, it shapes credit, confidence, tourism, investment, diplomacy, and the everyday dignity of nations. If the world continues to misunderstand Africa, it is not only because Africa is not seen enough, it is because Africa is too often seen through the wrong lens.



A New Standard for African Place Branding

Our ambition is to raise the standard of place branding in Africa, shaping how African countries, cities, and destinations are positioned, assessed, and understood globally. Through flagship reports, scorecards, and editorial rankings, we identify the place brands that move perception with discipline, creativity, and credibility, then we unpack what made the difference, what worked, why it travelled, and what others can learn. We spotlight the moments that capture global attention, the campaigns that reset narratives, the cultural forces that scale across borders, the ambassadors who embody a place, the reforms that build confidence, the investment signals that attract capital. NationBrand is not a gallery of optimism, it is a platform for strategic clarity, because the goal is not simply to make Africa visible, it is to make Africa unmistakable, on its own terms, in its own voice, with stories strong enough to hold the world's gaze.



NationBrand: A Platform Dedicated to Amplifying Africa's Soft Power

NationBrand operates at the frontier of media, strategic analysis, and marketing intelligence, built to help African countries and brands compete in the global marketplace of attention. We publish editorial storytelling that makes Africa's transformations visible, we produce frameworks that decode what drives country brand power, we track how soft power is activated through culture, events, diplomacy, governance momentum, and investment narratives. We are not here to "spin" reality, we are here to sharpen it, to translate progress into clarity, to turn scattered signals into a coherent story the world can read. With a community of 150,000+ followers across social platforms, NationBrand has become a public arena where Africa's new image is not requested, it is asserted, discussed, refined, and amplified.



UNDERSTANDING SOFT POWER

Soft Power explains why some countries shape global choices without threats, force, or payments. It is the capacity to attract, to persuade, and to make others want what you want

What Soft Power is, and Where the Idea Comes From

Soft power is the ability to influence outcomes through attraction not by force (hard power) and not by payments or pressure. A country has soft power when others trust it, admire it, or want to associate with it, so cooperation becomes easier: partners listen more, investors feel more confident, talent is more willing to come, and alliances are more durable. In a world where reputations spread instantly, soft power often works before any formal negotiation begins because it shapes what people consider credible, legitimate, and desirable.

The concept was coined by the political scientist Joseph S. Nye Jr. and is widely traced to 1990, when he introduced it in his book *Bound to Lead: The Changing Nature of American Power* (published in 1990). He then expanded and systematized the idea in *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*.

Nye's key point is simple: power is not only about what you can make others do, but also about what you can make others want. When a country's image is credible and its actions feel consistent, its influence travels further and costs less.



Measuring Soft Power, from Perception to Structured Evidence

Soft power can be measured by combining what people feel with what a country demonstrates. In practice, robust measurement starts with quantitative surveys that capture perceptions at scale, trust, admiration, familiarity, preference, willingness to visit, invest, study, or collaborate, across priority markets. This is strengthened by qualitative research, interviews, focus groups, and in depth listening, to understand why certain images persist, what narratives resonate, and where credibility breaks.

These perception insights are then paired with an analysis of a structured set of components, cultural reach, governance and institutional confidence, diplomatic engagement, education and talent appeal, innovation and business environment, international visibility, and digital influence.

By weighting and aggregating these dimensions into a consistent framework, it becomes possible to build soft power indexes that track a country's influence over time, compare performance across peers, and identify the levers, policy, culture, diplomacy, and storytelling, that most effectively convert reputation into lasting international advantage.



Why Soft Power Matters Now, in a world ruled by attention and trust

Soft power matters more than ever because influence is increasingly decided before the first meeting, the first negotiation, or the first official visit. In a hyperconnected world, countries compete in an economy of attention where images, stories, and signals circulate instantly, shaping trust, curiosity, and credibility at scale. This makes perception a strategic asset, it affects tourism flows, investment appetite, talent mobility, partnerships, and the room a nation has to lead in regional and global arenas. As geopolitics becomes more multipolar and audiences more skeptical, coercion often backfires and paid persuasion quickly loses impact, while attraction, legitimacy, and consistency compound over time. In this context, soft power is not a "nice to have", it is the infrastructure of long term influence, the ability to turn visibility into confidence, and confidence into durable alignment.



Africa's Soft Power Momentum, a new era of visibility and credibility

For African nations, soft power is a strategic lever that shapes trust, partnerships, investment, tourism, and diplomatic influence, often before any official engagement begins. A shift is already happening, driven by a decade of accelerating cultural visibility. African creativity now reaches unprecedented global audiences through music, film, fashion, sport, and digital creators, building familiarity and changing the everyday stories people associate with the continent. The priority now is to convert this momentum into lasting impact, by strengthening credibility, investing in cultural and creative ecosystems and talent, and aligning what is communicated with what is experienced, so that attention becomes trust, and trust becomes long term partnership.



THIS REPORT USES A RIGOROUS ANALYTICAL METHODOLOGY TO ESTABLISH THE RANKING

Nature of the Report

This report is a rigorous editorial analysis of African country brands, produced by the NationBrand editorial committee and grounded in what nations actually did and projected to the world over the course of 2025.

Rather than relying on opinion polls or proprietary quantitative surveys, the ranking is built on observable, verifiable facts: major cultural and sporting events, tourism and investment drives, diplomatic initiatives, policy decisions on mobility and diaspora, global campaigns, media coverage and the international trajectories of artists, athletes, entrepreneurs and institutions associated with each country.

Throughout the year, the committee conducted structured desk research and continuous monitoring of open sources — official communications, international press, industry reports, cultural calendars and corporate announcements — and interpreted these signals through a place-branding and soft-power lens.

The result is an assessment that assumes its editorial nature but applies a consistent framework and a demanding standard of evidence, aiming to capture how African countries have actually shaped, or failed to shape, their image and influence on the global stage in 2025.



Ranking Process

The ranking was established through a structured multi-step process designed to bring maximum rigor to what remains an editorial exercise. First, the NationBrand editorial committee drew up a shortlist of African countries that had demonstrated significant activity or visibility in 2025 in terms of soft power and nation branding.

Each shortlisted country was then assessed against a dedicated evaluation matrix, with scores from 1 to 10 assigned on the basis of evidence for nine dimensions: the solidity and clarity of the country brand foundation (name, visual identity, narrative); the consistency and reach of strategic communication and global campaigns; the organisation or hosting of flagship events and their international exposure; the dynamism of cultural and creative soft power across music, film, art, fashion and festivals; media visibility and the degree of control over national narratives; diplomatic reach and global mobility, including visa policies and regional or international leadership; the role of national ambassadors and global recognition of high-profile figures; governance dynamics and institutional credibility; and, finally, economic attractiveness and the perceived quality of the business environment and major structural projects.

For each country, scores were based on concrete 2025 facts and documented developments, then reviewed and, where necessary, adjusted through collective deliberation to ensure internal consistency and avoid outlier judgments. The final Top 20 reflects this comparative scoring, not as a mechanical output, but as the considered conclusion of a committee applying a transparent grid and a coherent standard across all countries.



The Nine Pillars of the NationBrand Ranking

- 1 Country Brand Foundation**
This criterion assesses whether a country has a clear, coherent, and widely used brand platform: a recognizable name or tagline, a visual identity, and a core narrative shared across institutions. A strong foundation means the brand is more than a logo and serves as a common reference point for positioning the nation.
- 2 Strategic Communication and Global Campaigns**
Here, we evaluate how deliberately a country communicates with the world: the quality of its international campaigns, its use of media and digital platforms, the clarity of its messages, and its adaptation to key markets. High scores go to campaigns that are visible, consistent with the brand, and backed by real investment and planning.
- 3 Flagship Events and Global Exposure**
This criterion measures the role of major events, sports, culture, business forums, and global gatherings in generating visibility. The focus is both on the scale of these events and on the lasting impact they have on media coverage, perception, and positioning.
- 4 Cultural and Creative Soft Power**
We look at the strength and reach of music, film, art, fashion, literature, and creative scenes associated with the country. High performers are those whose artists and movements win awards, tour widely, and give the country a recognizable cultural signature.
- 5 Media Visibility and Narrative Control**
This dimension examines how often and in what way a country appears in international media, and whether it is able to frame its own story. A good score reflects not just the volume of coverage, but also proactive storytelling and an ability to influence narratives rather than merely react to them.
- 6 Diplomatic Reach and Global Mobility**
Here, we combine foreign policy presence with the experience of crossing the country's borders: its role in regional and multilateral arenas, participation in global debates, visa openness, and the clarity of its mobility rules. Countries that are active diplomatically and clearly open to visitors, talent, and diasporas perform best.
- 7 National Ambassadors and Global Recognition**
This criterion captures the impact of individuals, artists, athletes, entrepreneurs, thinkers, and public figures who personify the country abroad. Higher scores go to nations whose leading personalities enjoy strong global recognition and project values aligned with the national brand.
- 8 Governance Dynamics and Institutional Credibility**
We assess how the country is perceived in terms of stability, reform, and institutional seriousness, including visible policies, crisis management, and the trust signaled by international partners. Credible, predictable governance tends to reinforce the country brand.
- 9 Economic Attractiveness and Business Environment**
This criterion looks at the country's ability to attract investment, tourism, and business activity through infrastructure, major projects, regulatory climate, and sector success stories. Strong performers are those that pair a compelling narrative with a concrete and convincing economic proposition.



#10 CÔTE D'IVOIRE, THE LAND OF ELEPHANTS

In 2025, Côte d'Ivoire pulled tourism, culture and business into one coherent story. Under the Sublime Côte d'Ivoire banner, the country pushed tourism toward the core of its economy and put its brand on European pitches with Olympique de Marseille and Stade Français Paris. Abidjan's rap ivoire scene, led by Himra and Didi B, travelled through French award shows and streaming charts, while Nike and Air Afrique chose the city to launch the Air Max RK61 with Didier Drogba in the campaign. At the same time, the Africa CEO Forum in Abidjan confirmed the country as both a cultural stage and a place where African deals are negotiated.

CÔTE D'IVOIRE IN 2025, A RISING POWER IN CULTURE AND BUSINESS



Côte d'Ivoire, Tourism Finds Its Place at the Center

Tourism in Côte d'Ivoire in 2025 looked less like an emerging bet and more like a confirmed pillar of the economy. Government figures point to about 1,100 billion CFA francs in revenue for the year, roughly 6.5 percent of national GDP, and some 560,000 direct and indirect jobs linked to the sector, with around four million domestic and international visitors recorded. Behind those numbers sits the long term "Sublime Côte d'Ivoire" plan, launched in 2019 to make tourism the country's third growth engine and push it into Africa's top five destinations. The brand has been given a very public stage in Europe. Since 2023 it has appeared on the shirts and digital platforms of Olympique de Marseille, tapping into a global football audience of more than twenty million followers. In September 2025 the programme went one step further, becoming major partner of Stade Français Paris, the first time an African state tourism brand has secured front of shirt visibility with a French Top 14 side. The combined effect is that "Sublime Côte d'Ivoire" now circulates weekly on football and rugby broadcasts, in stadium advertising and on social media, so that the push to turn the country into a leading African destination is increasingly visible in the everyday rituals of European sports fans.

Himra, Didi B and the Sound of Abidjan

In 2025, Abidjan settled into its role as one of the main capitals of francophone rap. French newspaper Le Monde described the city as "the other capital of French rap", noting how young audiences now move as readily for local drill stars as for visiting French headliners, and how a new generation of Franco-Ivorian artists split their time between Paris and Côte d'Ivoire. The image of the city that emerges is less a distant outpost than a second home for the scene, with its own slang, visual codes and online communities feeding back into European trends. At the centre of this shift stands Himra. His album *Jeune & Riche*, released in 2024, reached gold then platinum status in Côte d'Ivoire in a matter of months, a first for an Ivorian rap record, and helped turn tracks like *Yorobo Drill Acte 3* and *Banger* into part of Abidjan's daily soundtrack. In 2025 he carried that momentum onto major stages, most notably at Les Flammes, the French awards show dedicated to rap and popular urban music. Nominated in the category for African or Africa-inspired tracks with *Yorobo Drill Acte 3*, he delivered a medley that quickly became one of the ceremony's most replayed performances on YouTube, confirming that an artist formed in Abidjan's neighbourhoods could hold his own at the centre of the Paris rap calendar.

Didi B has pushed the same story along a slightly different path. Already an established name, he spent much of the year consolidating a digital audience that now stretches well beyond Côte d'Ivoire, with French charts placing him among the country's most streamed Ivorian artists, behind only Magic System and just ahead of veterans like Tiken Jah Fakoly and Alpha Blondy. His nomination at Les Flammes for *DX3*, a collaboration with MHD, anchored rap ivoire in yet another high-profile French ceremony and underlined how often Ivorian voices now appear in pan-African and European playlists. Between Himra's charged drill and Didi B's polished hits, Côte d'Ivoire's name has been carried across festivals, award shows and streaming platforms without the need for official slogans; in 2025, the country's most effective cultural diplomacy often came with a bass line.

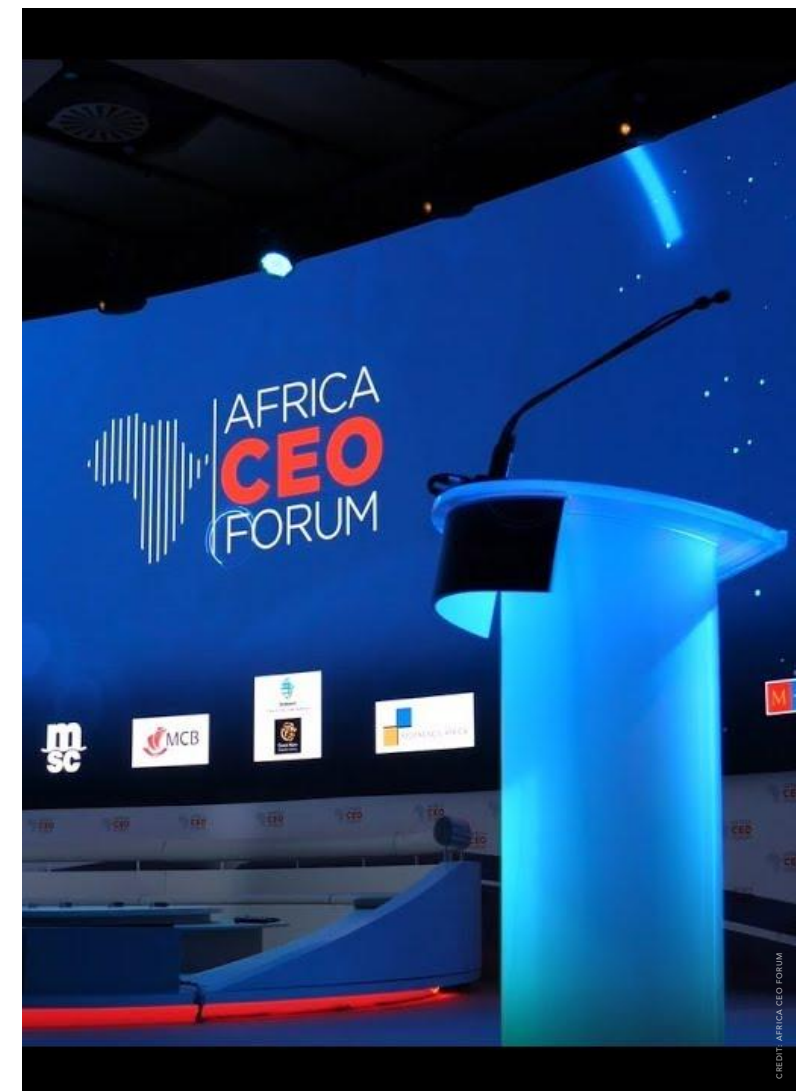


Nike and Air Afrique Turn Abidjan Into a Launchpad

For a weekend in late September, the centre of Nike's global storytelling was not New York or Paris but Abidjan. The company chose the city's Blu Lab concept store to unveil the Air Max RK61, a new shoe created with the Paris based collective Air Afrique and named after the flight code and founding year of the former Pan African airline. The drop in Côte d'Ivoire came before the pair was released worldwide through SNKRS and selected retailers, a first for the brand on the African continent.

The collaboration leans heavily on memory and movement. Air Afrique, revived as a cultural platform by a group of young creatives from the diaspora, brought archive photos, graphic codes and a sense of nineteen seventies airline glamour; Nike added its Air technology and its global marketing machine. The campaign cast reads like a small map of African pride: Didier Drogba, Marie Josée Ta Lou Smith, Oumou Sangaré and a former employee of the original airline share the frame in images that mix everyday travel scenes with subtle cues to the old company's colours and typography.

For Côte d'Ivoire, the choice of Abidjan as the place where the story begins matters as much as the product itself. The launch pulled in local sneaker collectors, artists and media, but it also sent a quieter signal to the outside world: West Africa is no longer just a reference in the mood board of global brands, it is a primary stage. A shoe built around diasporic routes and Pan African ambition is introduced not in a European capital but in a city that now sits at the crossroads of those histories.



Africa CEO Forum 2025, Abidjan's Boardroom Moment

In May 2025, Abidjan once again hosted the Africa CEO Forum and confirmed its status as one of the continent's key business junctions. Over two thousand chief executives, investors and public officials from more than seventy five countries met at the Sofitel Hôtel Ivoire for the twelfth edition of a gathering often described as a Davos for Africa's private sector.

The theme captured the mood of the year, asking whether a new compact between governments and businesses could give Africa a stronger hand in an environment of rising protectionism, shrinking aid and costly debt. On stage, Ivorian president Alassane Ouattara opened the forum alongside leaders such as Paul Kagame, Cyril Ramaphosa, Mohamed Ould Ghazouani and Bassirou Diomaye Faye, underlining that this was not just a technical conference but a space where heads of state, multilateral institutions and corporate heavyweights sat in the same room.

Behind the set pieces, discussions focused on three recurring levers: better governance, more predictable public policy and faster implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area, all presented as conditions for turning African companies into global players. For Côte d'Ivoire, already positioning Abidjan as a regional hub for finance and services, images of packed plenaries and dense bilateral meetings reinforced a simple message in 2025: the country is not just a place for festivals and tourism, it is also where deals are negotiated and the next decade of African growth is discussed.

#9

GHANA, BEYOND

THE RETURN

In 2025, Ghana leans fully into its role as a meeting point between the continent and its scattered family. The country continues to court Afro-descendants through the “seventeenth region” narrative, while Ibrahim Mahama’s rise to the top of the global art world and Yayra Agbofah’s climate work in Kantamanto give Accra and Tamale new cultural and environmental weight. In December, AfroFuture and Detty December turn the capital into a seasonal capital of global African nightlife, fixing Ghana a little more firmly in the imagination of a generation.



GHANA 2025: A COUNTRY IN CONVERSATION WITH ITS DIASPORA

Ghana and the Seventeenth Region

By 2025, Ghana has settled into its role as one of the main homes in Africa for people of African descent who are looking back across the Atlantic. The “Year of Return” has long passed, but its logic lives on in “Beyond the Return,” in the December in GH season and in a steady calendar of diaspora-focused events in Accra.

The 2025 Diaspora Summit is framed as another step in the same direction, presenting the diaspora as a “seventeenth region” of the country and pairing speeches on investment and reparative justice with softer rituals of welcome during the festive season. Ghana’s message is consistent: the descendants of the transatlantic slave trade are not simply visitors, they are part of the national story.

That message is reinforced, and complicated, by the country’s experiment with citizenship for the “historical diaspora”. Since 2016, people able to prove African ancestry, especially descendants of enslaved Africans, have been eligible for Ghanaian nationality, and more than 1,000 people have acquired passports under this scheme, including Stevie Wonder. In early 2026 the government moved to pause new applications in order to review the process and make it more accessible and user friendly after complaints about the number of steps and the cost. Officials insist this is an overhaul rather than a retreat, and the pause is presented as a way to align the bureaucracy with the political promise that Ghana remains, for many Afro-descendants, the most credible gateway back to the continent.

Ibrahim Mahama and the New Gravity of Ghanaian Art

In 2025, Ghana’s cultural influence has a face and a set of coordinates. The face is Ibrahim Mahama’s, and the coordinates are in and around Tamale, where the artist has spent the past decade turning old grain silos and abandoned buildings into a network of art spaces. When ArtReview placed him at the top of its Power 100 list of the most influential figures in contemporary art, the decision was read as a recognition not only of his vast jute-sack installations, but of an infrastructure that now pulls curators, students and writers to northern Ghana instead of always sending its talent abroad. His projects, the Savannah Centre for Contemporary Art, Red Clay Studio, Nkrumah Voli-ni, function as exhibition spaces, archives and schools at once, folding local histories of labour and trade into conversations that travel to Vienna, London or New York.

Mahama’s rise gives Ghana a different kind of soft power. For years, the country’s cultural story abroad was carried mostly by music and by the memory work around the slave forts on the coast. In 2025, contemporary art joins that list with a clearer centre of gravity.

International reviews describe Tamale as a place where the vocabulary of global art, installation, performance, social practice, is being spoken in a distinctly Ghanaian accent, grounded in markets, railways and the material life of the north. The effect, for the country brand, is subtle but important: Ghana is no longer just a backdrop for visiting artists or film crews, it is a producer of institutions and ideas that shape how the wider art world thinks about Africa, history and the future.



From Kantamanto to the Climate Stage

In 2025, one of Ghana’s most visible climate voices does not speak from a ministry or a negotiation hall, but from inside Kantamanto Market, the dense warren of stalls in central Accra where bales of second-hand clothing arrive by the container. For years, designer and activist Yayra Agbofah has walked those alleys, documenting how unwanted garments from Europe and North America pile up on Ghana’s beaches and in its drains, and turning the phrase “waste colonialism” into a concrete image rather than a slogan. Through his collective The Revival, he works with young tailors and traders to transform discarded clothes into new pieces, stage performances and run workshops that treat fashion as both industry and evidence. The market becomes a classroom, a runway and, increasingly, a case study for how the global North’s consumption habits land in the global South.

In 2025, that work crosses a new threshold of visibility. Agbofah is named to a major international list of climate leaders and receives support from a global fashion foundation to build a dedicated textile recycling and education space in Accra. The press profiles that follow linger on the same set of details, the weight of a single bale, the cost of a ruined shipment, the stories of traders who lose their capital when clothes arrive mouldy or unsellable, and in doing so recast Ghana not simply as a victim of fast fashion, but as a place where new answers are being tested. For the country’s image, the effect is double. On one hand, Kantamanto is exposed as a frontline of the climate and waste crisis. On the other, Ghana appears as a laboratory where circular economy, youth creativity and climate justice come together in a way that speaks to campaigners and policymakers far beyond West Africa.



Detty December and the Season That Rebrands Accra

In Accra, December 2025 feels less like a date on the calendar and more like a season of its own. Flights land full, car parks turn into concert grounds, and the city’s English blends with accents from Brooklyn, Brixton and Braamfontein in the same crowd. The Ghana Tourism Authority now treats “December in GH” as a flagship product, inviting promoters to list festivals, block parties, beach shows and cultural gatherings across the country, then folding them into one long invitation to come home for the holidays. At the centre sits AfroFuture, the multi-day festival that mixes concerts, fashion, food and talks, and that has become one of the clearest stage images of a global African future: diasporans and locals sharing the same mosh pits, catwalks and food courts.

Away from official branding, the season has built its own mythology. International coverage describes Accra in December as one of the busiest circuits in African nightlife, a place where new Afrobeats tracks are tested live and festival line-ups read like snapshots of the diaspora in motion, with AfroFuture often treated as the anchor around which smaller events orbit. A recent young-adult novel set around a trip to Ghana uses this December atmosphere as its backdrop and treats Detty December almost as a character in the story, a mix of late-night concerts, family reunions and chance encounters that push the plot forward. The cumulative effect for Ghana’s image is clear: even for people who have never been, “December in GH” now evokes heat, sound, crowded dance floors and the sense that, for a few weeks each year, Accra is one of the main stages where the global African family, and its Afrofuture, comes together.



#8 KENYA, A LOUDER VOICE ABROAD

In 2025 Kenya leaned on its tourism strength to project a clearer image abroad. The Kenya Tourism Board was recognised as Africa's leading tourism agency, the Masai Mara was named the continent's benchmark safari destination and the country set its sights on three million international visitors under the Magical Kenya banner. Nairobi scrapped visas for African travellers, created a permit for digital nomads and welcomed The Ritz Carlton Masai Mara Safari Camp, putting a global luxury name inside its flagship landscape. At the same time, Faith Kipyegon, Eliud Kipchoge and Lupita Nyong'o kept Kenyan talent in front of worldwide audiences, tying natural assets, open doors and star power into a single story.



KENYA IN 2025, A TOURISM GIANT WITH A LOUDER GLOBAL VOICE

Kenya's Tourism Grows Into Its Ambitions

Kenya enters 2025 with tourism numbers that match its ambitions. The country welcomed about 2.4 million international visitors in 2024, a 15 percent increase on the previous year, and earned roughly 452.2 billion shillings from the sector. Officials now talk about pushing earnings to 650 billion shillings in 2025 and building on that record base, treating tourism as one of the main pillars of foreign exchange and employment rather than a supporting actor. That confidence is reinforced by how the industry is seen from outside. At the Africa Tourism Awards 2025, the Kenya Tourism Board was named Best Tourism Board in Africa, while the Masai Mara National Reserve was recognised as the continent's leading safari destination. For an agency that has carried the "Magical Kenya" brand to trade shows, media partners and airlines for years, the double distinction is more than a trophy moment: it underlines that Kenya's marketing architecture is now treated as a benchmark on the continent. Behind the labels, the offer itself is being stretched. Safaris in the Mara and stays on the Indian Ocean coast remain at the centre of the imagery, but the board increasingly highlights Nairobi as a meetings and conventions city, promotes hiking and birding in the highlands and pushes short urban breaks built around restaurants, music and galleries. The idea is to make sure that as visitor numbers climb, growth is spread across a wider range of products and regions, and Kenya is seen less as a single postcard and more as a portfolio. The way decisions are taken is shifting too. In 2025, the Kenya Tourism Board deepens a partnership with Visa that gives it access to the company's Government Insights Hub, an analytics platform that tracks travel patterns, peak seasons and spending behaviour through billions of transactions. The data allow officials to refine campaigns, target source markets more precisely and adjust to demand in near real time. Taken together, record arrivals, stronger earnings, continental awards and a more data-driven approach give Kenya's tourism push in 2025 a clear profile: a mature African destination that is planning for bigger numbers and is increasingly equipped to manage them.

Ritz-Carlton Bets on Kenya's Wild Luxury

The arrival of The Ritz-Carlton, Masai Mara Safari Camp in August 2025 is a quiet but unmistakable vote of confidence in Kenya's position at the top end of African tourism. Set on a secluded stretch of the Sand River inside the Masai Mara National Reserve, the camp brings the brand's first safari property on the continent into one of Kenya's most emblematic landscapes, with just 20 elevated tented suites, private plunge pools, outdoor lounges and butler service designed around long, unbroken views of the plains.

Within Marriott International's broader expansion across Africa, the choice of the Mara as the launchpad for Ritz-Carlton's luxury safari portfolio is telling: when the world's biggest hotel group looks for a place to anchor a new ultra-luxury concept, it treats Kenya as a natural starting point.

For the country's brand, the camp is more than another high-end lodge. It signals that the Masai Mara sits in the same mental map as the Riviera or the Maldives for the most demanding travellers, and that the "Magical Kenya" promise now extends all the way up to the very top of the global hospitality ladder.



Kenya Opens Its Doors to Africa and the World's Nomads

Kenya's passport policy in 2025 says as much about its brand as any advertising campaign. On 14 July, the government dropped both visas and electronic travel authorisations for all African countries and most Caribbean states, allowing their citizens to enter visa-free for stays of up to 60 to 90 days, with no online forms and no fees, aside from a narrow set of security exceptions such as Libya and Somalia. For African travellers who were used to navigating layers of paperwork just to attend a conference in Nairobi or visit family on the coast, the change turns Kenya into one of the continent's easiest gateways, aligning the country very directly with the African Union's long-stated goal of free movement for Africans on their own continent.

In parallel, the state opens a different kind of door: a Class N "digital nomad" work permit, effective from April 2025, designed for foreign remote workers employed by companies based abroad. The permit allows them to live in Kenya for one or two years, renewably, as long as they can show proof of remote employment, a clean record and an assured annual income, widely cited at around 24,000 dollars from non-Kenyan sources, while committing not to compete in the local labour market. Taken together, the two decisions pull Kenya in the same direction: they position Nairobi not just as a national capital but as an African crossroads, inviting both the continent's own travellers and a globally mobile class of professionals to treat the country as a base, a meeting point and a place where movement feels simple rather than complicated.



Faith Kipyegon Eliud Kipchoge and Lupita Nyong'o Put Kenya in the Spotlight

Kenya's image in 2025 is carried as much by its people as by its policies. On the track, Faith Kipyegon spent the year turning middle distance running into something close to a solo franchise, lowering her own 1500 metre world record to 3:48.68 at the Eugene Diamond League and then collecting a fourth world title over the distance in Tokyo. That sequence has made her one of the most recognisable Kenyan athletes of her generation.

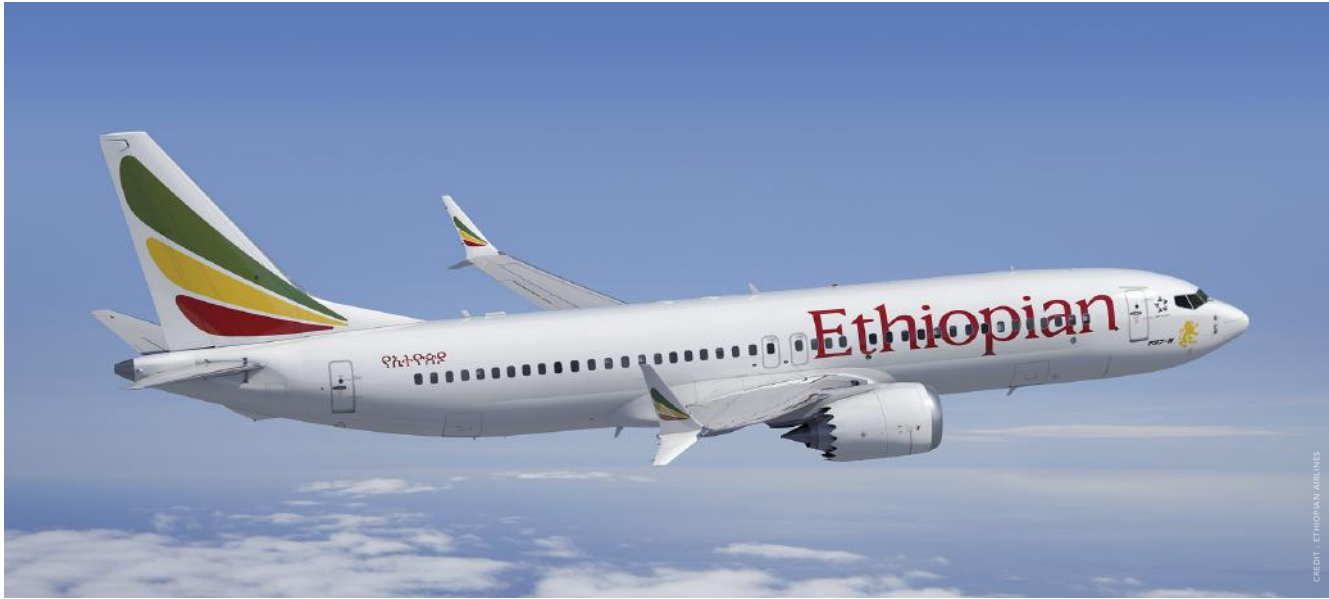
On the roads, Eliud Kipchoge moved into the closing chapter of a historic career, finishing sixth at the London Marathon before lining up in New York to complete the full set of World Marathon Majors. Even when he is no longer the automatic winner, television coverage and commentary still circle back to his name, keeping Kenya at the centre of the marathon story.

On stage and screen, Lupita Nyong'o, who was born in Mexico to Kenyan parents and grew up in Nairobi, anchored a high profile production of Twelfth Night at the Delacorte Theater in New York's Central Park, playing Viola in a staging that blended Shakespeare with Swahili and was later broadcast on public television in the United States. Together, a record breaking runner, a marathon legend and a global film star kept Kenya's flag visible in stadiums, city streets and cultural venues throughout 2025.

#7

ETHIOPIA THE LAND OF ORIGINS

In 2025, Ethiopia's soft power was shaped by a strong blend of infrastructure, diplomacy and connectivity. The inauguration of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam turned a major national project into a symbol of sovereignty, ambition and regional influence. At the same time, Ethiopian Airlines continued to act as one of the country's most visible global brand assets, while rising tourism and major climate gatherings in Addis Ababa reinforced Ethiopia's image as both a continental hub and a country in transformation.



A YEAR MARKED BY THE ECONOMIC RISE OF AN EMERGING POWER

The Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam, A New National Landmark

By early September 2025, the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam had moved from engineering project to finished symbol. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed formally inaugurated the dam on 9 September in Guba, in the Benishangul Gumuz region, in front of regional leaders, African Union officials and a domestic audience that had followed the project for more than a decade. Built at a cost of around five billion dollars and designed to generate about 5,150 megawatts of power, the dam is now Africa's largest hydroelectric plant and is presented by Addis Ababa as proof that the country can finance and deliver a strategic asset largely on its own.

The project still worries Egypt and Sudan, which fear for their water security, but Ethiopian officials insist it will become a shared source of electricity for the region. The government has also begun to treat the site as a destination in its own right. On 22 September the authorities opened the dam to public visits, with the tourism minister describing it as a new attraction that will host school groups, domestic travellers and foreign visitors who want to see the structure that has dominated the country's political and economic conversation for years.



Ethiopian Airlines, The Flying Backbone of Ethiopia's Brand

For 2025, Ethiopian Airlines is basically one of the main "instruments" of Ethiopia's country brand. The flag carrier closed its 2024-25 financial year with revenue up about 8%, driven by higher passenger numbers and new routes, confirming its status as Africa's biggest commercial airline.

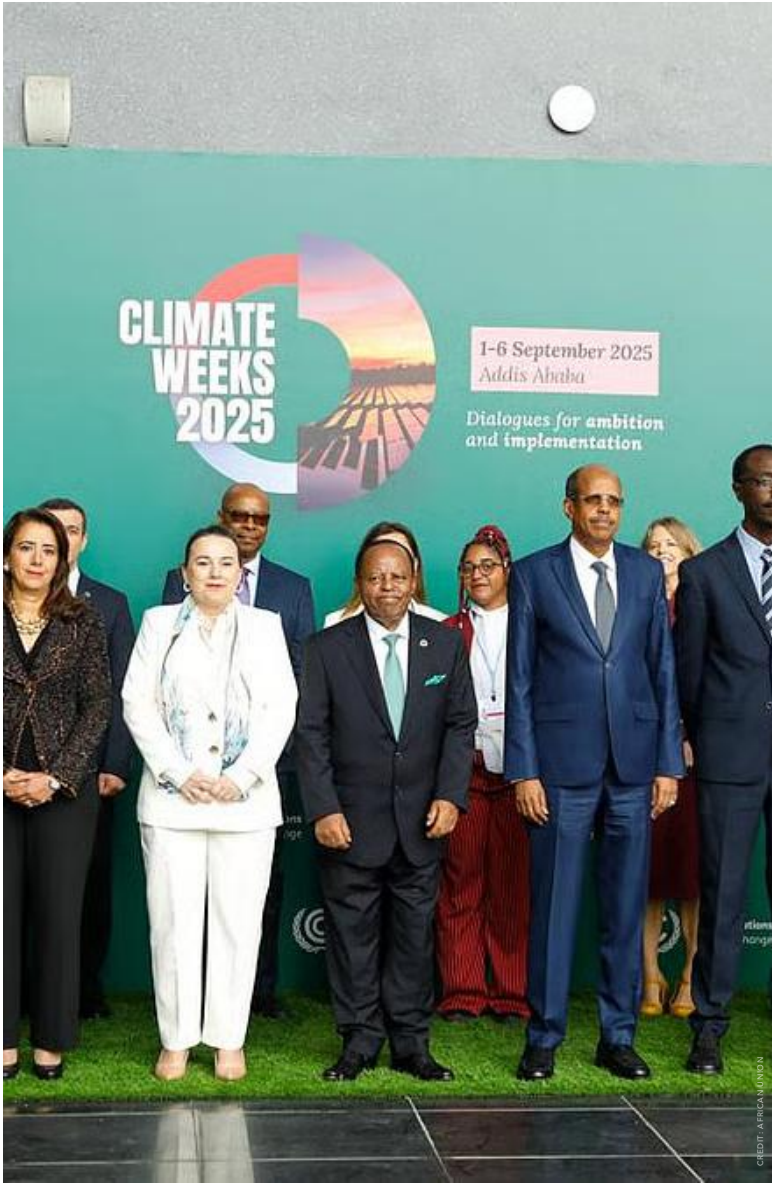
During the year it pushed deeper into its hub-and-spoke strategy out of Addis Ababa, opening passenger services to Porto via Madrid, as well as new routes to Hyderabad and Sharjah, while continuing to spread a network that now links Africa to Europe, the Gulf and India in a very visible way. At the same time, the airline kept consolidating its image as a continental champion: at the 2025 Skytrax World Airline Awards it was named Best Airline in Africa for the eighth consecutive year and picked up three other regional titles for its economy cabin, business cabin and onboard catering, on top of APEX and PAX distinctions for cabin concept and food service.

On the hardware side, Ethiopian expanded and modernised its long-haul fleet with additional A350s and 737 MAX aircraft and presented its Vision 2035 roadmap, which aims to almost double the fleet and global destinations and position the group among the world's top twenty aviation players. The year ended with the opening of a new premium lounge at Addis Ababa Bole International Airport, a move designed to upgrade the hub experience at the very moment the country is preparing its next step: a planned mega-airport at Bishoftu that is being marketed as a future continental gateway.

Ethiopia, Tourism Growth and a New Story for Visitors

In 2025, tourism gave Ethiopia a rare sense of forward movement. Figures relayed by UN Tourism and local media point to a rise of about 15 percent in international arrivals, putting the country among the fastest growing destinations in the world and confirming a rebound that had already taken visitor numbers beyond their pre pandemic level. This momentum is not presented as an accident. Authorities in Addis Ababa talk about a deliberate effort to reposition Ethiopia as an immersive destination built around history, landscapes and culture rather than a quick stop on a regional tour. The government has tied this shift to a series of practical measures.

The Ministry of Tourism has launched new digital tools to simplify visa procedures and entry formalities, part of a broader push to make it easier for visitors to come and stay longer. At the same time, public communication has highlighted investment in heritage sites, from ancient rock hewn churches to castles and national parks, and the development of new circuits that link these places in a more coherent way. Conference tourism is also becoming a pillar of the narrative. With the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and a growing calendar of global meetings in the fields of climate, food systems and business, Addis Ababa is presented not only as a political capital but also as a city where visitors can combine work, diplomacy and discovery. Together, these elements support a story in which tourism is no longer a side activity, but a sector that helps carry the image of a country in transformation.



Addis Ababa, A Climate Calendar in One City

In early September 2025, Addis Ababa hosted two of the most important climate meetings on the African agenda, one after the other. First came a United Nations Climate Week, a working platform where negotiators, experts, financiers and civil-society groups focused on concrete files: how to fund adaptation in fast-growing cities, how to turn hydro, wind and solar projects into bankable deals, and how to make carbon-market rules usable for African countries.

A few days later, the same conference centre welcomed the second Africa Climate Summit, co-organised with the African Union, where heads of state, ministers and business leaders pushed a more assertive line: Africa should be seen as a place to invest in climate solutions, with a target of tens of billions of dollars a year for green infrastructure, not just as a victim of other people's emissions.

For Ethiopia, these meetings doubled as a form of brand work. Officials repeatedly cited the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam and the Green Legacy tree-planting campaign as examples of domestic projects meant to back up the country's climate rhetoric. For the continent, the images from Addis Ababa reinforced a simple fact that now matters for Ethiopia's soft power: when African leaders want to talk climate among themselves before taking positions to global summits, they often do it there.

#6 RWANDA, SOFT POWER IN HIGH DEFINITION

In 2025 Rwanda leaned on arenas and major events to stay visible far beyond its borders. Kigali hosted the UCI Road World Championships, Basketball Africa League games and the Giants of Africa festival, putting cycling and basketball broadcasts through the city's streets and into living rooms worldwide, while the Move Afrika Global Citizen concert brought an international line up and audience to BK Arena. At the same time, Visit Rwanda signed multi year partnerships with the Los Angeles Clippers and Los Angeles Rams, placing its tourism brand on NBA jerseys and inside SoFi Stadium, as the capital welcomed the 46th Ministerial Conference of La Francophonie, tying together sport, music and diplomacy into a single, consistent soft power message.

JERSEYS, CONCERTS AND CONFERENCES: RWANDA'S SOFT-POWER YEAR

Visit Rwanda Takes a Big Swing in Los Angeles

In 2025, Rwanda pulled off a branding coup usually reserved for much larger powers, planting its tourism logo in the visual core of American sport. Through Visit Rwanda, the marketing arm of the Rwanda Development Board, the country signed multi-year agreements that put its name on Los Angeles Clippers jerseys and inside the premium spaces of SoFi Stadium and Hollywood Park, home of the Los Angeles Rams. The Clippers deal makes Visit Rwanda the exclusive jersey patch sponsor and a key partner at Intuit Dome, while the Rams agreement grants naming rights over select club areas and prominent exposure on SoFi Stadium's giant video board and digital signage. It is the first time an African tourism brand has held this kind of position in both the NBA and the NFL, extending a portfolio that already includes Arsenal and Paris Saint-Germain into the heart of the American sports calendar.

For Rwanda, the bet is straightforward: by tying its image to franchises in Los Angeles, a city that shapes global tastes in entertainment and sport, it hopes that scenes of green hills and mountain gorillas will travel alongside highlight reels to a young, affluent, highly connected audience. Community clauses in the Clippers agreement, including court refurbishments and exchanges between youth coaches in California and Kigali, give the project a second layer, linking the logo to concrete opportunities for teenagers rather than to branding alone. For a small state intent on widening its footprint, this mix of jersey patches, stadium hospitality and grassroots programs amounts to a calculated soft-power play, turning American arenas into billboards for a nation determined to be seen as a confident actor in the global sports and tourism economy.



Move Afrika Returns, and Kigali Leans Into the Spotlight

In February 2025, Global Citizen's Move Afrika tour returned to Kigali and turned BK Arena into something closer to a public forum than a simple tour stop. John Legend headlined a sold-out night that threaded his catalog through a steady stream of messages about jobs, health and opportunity for young Africans.

Between songs, the screens carried campaign calls and footage of the city outside, making the concert feel like a carefully staged proof of concept: Rwanda can host a major international show, fill the seats, and wrap advocacy around the spectacle without losing the crowd.

The Kigali date sits in a lineage that runs through earlier Global Citizen festivals in Johannesburg, Lagos and Accra, where big-name headliners have been used to draw attention to policy pledges and financing commitments. What is new is the regularity. Move Afrika is designed as a multi-year circuit, and Rwanda is one of the anchors.

For the country's brand, that recurrence matters as much as the star on stage. Each edition sends out images of a modern arena, a young and connected audience, and a city that feels plugged into the same touring map as far larger markets. Behind the cameras, local crews and technicians gain experience on a world-class production, and a generation of Rwandan fans grows up seeing Kigali as a place where global culture does not just pass through once, but comes back. For a small state intent on enlarging its footprint, that is exactly how a concert becomes a soft-power asset.



Kigali's Hills Take Center Stage in World Cycling

In late September 2025, the hills around Kigali became the unlikely center of the cycling world as Rwanda hosted the UCI Road World Championships, the first time the event had ever been staged in Africa. Over eight days of racing, the men's and women's elite fields, along with juniors and mixed relay teams, tackled a circuit that riders and commentators quickly labeled one of the toughest in recent memory, a sawtooth loop of climbs and descents that turned each lap into an endurance test. For television viewers used to seeing rainbow jerseys decided in Europe, the pictures from Kigali were arresting: dense roadside crowds on narrow streets, sharp ramps cutting between new apartment blocks, distant views over green valleys.

For Rwanda, the stakes went well beyond sport. The championships were the latest step in a long campaign to brand Kigali as a safe, orderly, high-functioning host city, as comfortable welcoming world-class cyclists as it is staging basketball finals or major political summits. Weeks of smooth logistics, clean courses and full grandstands offered a counter-narrative to old images of the country, and gave officials a new set of visuals to deploy in tourism pitches and investment roadshows. The riders left with medals and stories about a brutal but memorable course; the host nation kept something more durable, a week of global coverage that cast Rwanda not as a peripheral venue, but as a confident organizer of one of cycling's most prestigious events.

Rwanda's Capital Joins the Francophonie's Diplomatic Circuit

In November 2025, Kigali hosted the 46th Ministerial Conference of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, bringing together foreign ministers and senior officials from dozens of member states and governments at the Kigali Convention Centre.

Over three days, delegations worked through a set of themes that included gender equality thirty years after Beijing, the role of French in education and diplomacy, and the organisation's position in a more fragmented multilateral system. Side meetings dealt with economic cooperation, youth and digital policy, and preparations for the next francophone summit, giving the Rwandan government a steady flow of bilateral and regional contacts on its home turf.

The choice of Kigali as host was noted in communiqués and press briefings as a first for Rwanda, a country that has shifted much of its administration and schooling into English while remaining an active member of the francophone bloc. The final "Kigali Appeal" reiterated standard commitments on rights and cooperation but also highlighted the need for the Francophonie to project a more coherent voice on global issues, language that suited a host keen to be seen as outward-looking and pragmatic. Delegates and observers underlined the smooth organisation of the meetings and the visibility given to the conference in the city. For Rwanda, the event added a diplomatic strand to a year already marked by major sports and cultural fixtures, placing Kigali on the calendar not only as a venue for arenas and festivals but as a regular stop in the circuit of international political meetings.





#5 BENIN, THE NEW WORLD OF WONDERS

In 2025, Benin strengthened its country brand by turning heritage into modern soft power and giving its story a clearer global stage. Vodun Days became a defining cultural moment, reframing a tradition long misrepresented and drawing more than 435,000 participants in three days. Benin also expanded its international visibility through Expo 2025 Osaka, where it earned a Golden Prize for its pavilion, while accelerating its destination narrative with "Benin, A World of Wonders" and new global partnerships. At the same time, the launch of My Afro Origins gave concrete form to Benin's historic diaspora citizenship law, reinforcing the country's international profile through a powerful message of reconnection and belonging.

BENIN IN 2025: “A WORLD OF WONDERS” TURNED INTO A YEAR OF GLOBAL VISIBILITY

Vodun Days, The World’s Largest Celebration of Vodun

Vodun Days has become one of Benin’s most strategic cultural statements, not an event for entertainment, but a deliberate act of narrative sovereignty. For decades, Vodun was too often misrepresented internationally, reduced to cliché, sensationalised, or framed through fear, despite being a living spiritual and cultural system with profound artistic, philosophical, and communal depth.

In 2025, Benin chose to reverse that lens by placing Vodun at the centre of a major national celebration, curated as a contemporary expression of heritage through music, dance, performance, visual arts, ceremonies, and public programming that invites understanding rather than mystery. The message is clear, Vodun is not a marginalised footnote, it is a pillar of identity, creativity, and pride, and the country will tell that story in its own voice, with its own codes, and its own dignity.

The scale of the moment reinforced the strength of this positioning, with more than 435,000 participants in three days, a figure that confirms Vodun Days as the world’s largest celebration dedicated to Vodun. Beyond attendance, Vodun Days functions as soft power in motion, it reframes a long contested narrative into a positive, shareable cultural moment, it turns heritage into contemporary relevance, and it places Benin on the global cultural agenda with a story that is both rooted and modern.



My Afro Origins, Reconnecting a Global Family to the Source

Launched on 4 July 2025, myafroorigins.bj marked a concrete turning point in Benin’s diaspora strategy, transforming Law No. 2024-31 of 2 September 2024 into an operational pathway through a dedicated digital portal for applications for the recognition of Beninese nationality for Afro-descendants.

Framed as a first in the country’s legal history, the law establishes a formal “right of return” for descendants of sub-Saharan Africans deported during the transatlantic slave trade, and the platform was designed to make that promise accessible, structured, and internationally legible. The initiative quickly gained global visibility through high profile figures who embodied the story: Ciara Wilson became one of the first beneficiaries granted Beninese citizenship, turning the policy into a widely shared international moment.

Benin also appointed Spike Lee and his wife, producer Tonya Lewis Lee, as thematic ambassadors to strengthen ties with Afro-descendant communities and amplify the reconnection agenda on the world stage. In the same spirit, Ms. Lauryn Hill visited Benin in 2025 in a highly symbolic reconnection journey that reinforced the emotional and cultural dimension of the programme. More than an administrative mechanism, My Afro Origins functions as a bold soft power instrument, positioning Benin as a country that does not merely acknowledge history, but converts it into a forward looking relationship with a vast global Afro-descendant community through citizenship, memory, and belonging.



The Katakè restitution, Benin’s “restitution laboratory” in motion

In May 2025, Benin received the Katakè, a sacred three legged royal stool from the Kingdom of Danxomé, returned by Finland’s National Museum during an official ceremony in Cotonou, a moment that extended the country’s restitution arc beyond symbolism into sustained diplomatic and cultural action.

The Katakè is historically tied to the 1892 seizure of royal treasures from Abomey during the French colonial campaign, and its return completed a powerful sequence often described as the “first phase” of Benin’s modern restitution story, after France returned 26 royal works in 2021, leaving the Katakè as the separated missing piece of that original set. Finland’s own documentation explains how the object entered its collections via a 1939 museum exchange, and how the repatriation process was prepared through bilateral cooperation, underscoring that restitution can be handled through clear institutional pathways, state to state engagement, and ethical museum policy.

Beyond the object itself, the significance is strategic, Benin is building a position as a leading African case study for heritage restitution, combining diplomacy, legal clarity, cultural infrastructure, and narrative projection, and turning returns into a long term programme that reshapes how African heritage is governed, exhibited, and spoken about globally. In that sense, the Katakè did not just come home, it reinforced Benin’s role as a reference point for the next chapter of African restitutions, one where ownership, dignity, and cultural authority are treated as modern statecraft.

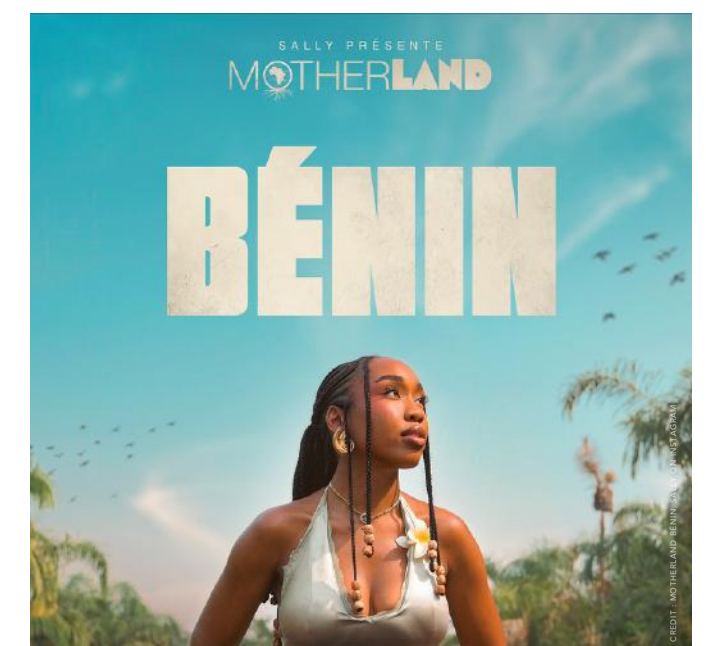
Benin’s country brand momentum in 2025, a year of global stages and sustained storytelling

In 2025, Benin pushed its country brand with a rare sense of continuity, moving from one global platform to another while keeping the narrative coherent, culture, creativity, heritage, and opportunity. At Expo 2025 Osaka, the Benin Pavilion was positioned as an immersive window into the country’s identity and ambitions, and the effort was recognised with a Golden Prize, a Gold Trophy in the “Exhibition and Design” category, awarded by the Bureau International des Expositions and the Japanese organising committee, a strong validation of the pavilion’s aesthetic and narrative quality on one of the world’s biggest stages.

That international momentum was reinforced in Paris, where Benin sustained visibility within the travel industry through IFTM Top Resa 2025, deploying an immersive pavilion experience and amplifying the destination storyline that anchors the brand’s outward projection. The year also marked a shift toward more global, platform based distribution through the strategic partnership signed between Benin Tourisme and Expedia Group at IFTM, aimed at strengthening international visibility and activating integrated marketing campaigns across Expedia’s ecosystem to attract high value travellers.

In parallel, Benin invested in creator led storytelling as a soft power lever, notably through the collaboration with content creator and filmmaker Sally, whose documentary Motherland Benin was premiered at the Grand Rex in Paris on 25 September 2025, turning a cinema screening into a high impact moment of narrative projection for the destination.

Finally, Benin extended this visibility into diaspora facing ecosystems by participating in the Black Travel Summit 2025 in Rio de Janeiro, 13–16 November, a strategic platform for engaging Afro descendant travel communities and building partnerships beyond traditional tourism circuits.



#4

NIGERIA, THE GIANT OF AFRICA

In 2025, Nigeria leans further into its “Giant of Africa” role, with Afrobeats, and Tems in particular, keeping Lagos on the global sound map while Nollywood deepens its presence on streaming platforms. The Dangote Refinery’s ramp-up signals a shift from crude exporter to refined-products player, adding industrial weight to the country’s influence. Lagos Fashion Week’s fifteenth anniversary shows Nigerian designers speaking a fashion language that is both rooted and globally legible. Together, music, film, fashion and industry keep Nigeria in a setting-the-pace position rather than catching up.



NIGERIA IN 2025 : CULTURE
BUSINESS AND THE LAGOS
EFFECT

From Fela to Tems, Nigeria’s Music
Soft Power in 2025

In 2025, Nigeria’s musical soft power kept operating like a constant signal, not a trend, but a presence that repeatedly returned to the centre of global pop culture. The year carried a major prestige stamp when Tems won the GRAMMY for Best African Music Performance for “Love Me JeJe,” a mainstream validation that further anchored Nigerian sound inside the world’s biggest awards ecosystem. Back in Lagos, the country also reclaimed its musical lineage as a contemporary cultural event with a major Fela Kuti exhibition, reported as the first African showing of a display developed by the Philharmonie de Paris, and expanded into a Lagos edition three times larger, featuring 440 items alongside live renditions, turning heritage into a living, public experience.

On the contemporary frontline, Burna Boy sustained Nigeria’s arena level visibility with a 2025 cycle driven by international scale collaborations and a steady run of headline records, including “TaTaTa” featuring Travis Scott, released as part of the rollout for his album No Sign of Weakness, which kept him in global music press and playlists. Davido reinforced his own global reach through Sive, with “With You” emerging as a standout record in the project’s conversation, another reminder that Nigerian pop can still produce songs that travel fast across borders and formats.

And Wizkid added a different kind of international visibility, the kind that turns a career into a global narrative, with HBO’s Music Box documentary, Wizkid: Long Live Lagos, debuting on December 11, 2025, placing his Lagos to world stage story inside one of the most influential media institutions in global culture.

Dangote Refinery’s 2025 acceleration,
a mega project that amplified Nigeria’s
economic power

In 2025, Nigeria’s economic narrative gained a powerful, highly visible industrial anchor as the Dangote Petroleum Refinery moved from being a headline project to a platform for national scale ambition. In October, Aliko Dangote announced that plans were underway to more than double the refinery’s capacity from 650,000 barrels per day to 1.4 million barrels per day within three years, an expansion designed to position the Lekki complex not only as Africa’s largest refining site, but as a contender for the largest single site refinery globally.

The announcement mattered beyond the number itself, it signalled a country pushing to convert crude production into higher value output at home, reduce dependence on imported refined fuels, and strengthen supply reliability for Nigeria and the wider region. In the months that followed, the project’s forward motion became more concrete, with Dangote Group selecting Honeywell to support the expansion plan, underscoring that the ambition was being matched with industrial execution and global grade technology partnerships.

As a soft power and country brand marker, this is the kind of infrastructure that reshapes perception, it tells a story of industrial capability, long term confidence, and an economy that is no longer satisfied with exporting raw potential, but is determined to manufacture strategic power at scale.

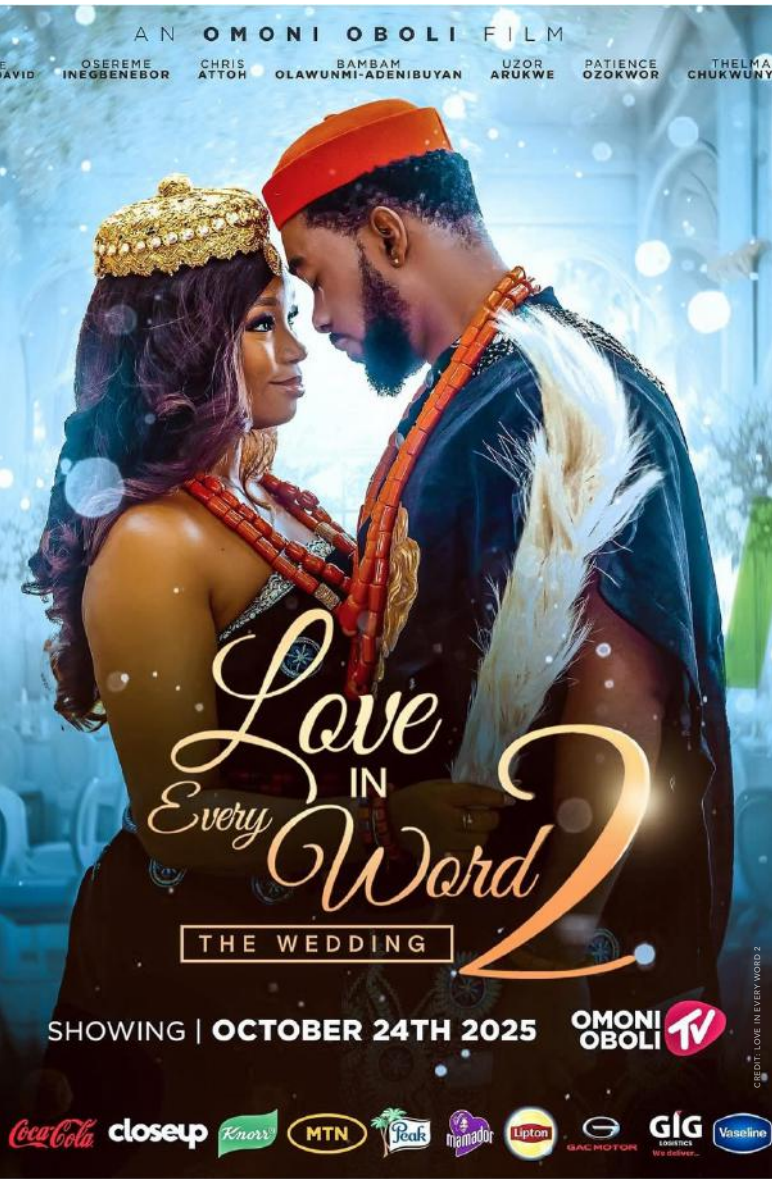


Lagos Fashion Week 2025, A Runway
for Nigeria’s New Fashion Power

In 2025, Lagos Fashion Week once again worked as Nigeria’s fashion amplifier, a platform where creative identity turns into international visibility, and where Nigerian design proves it can be both culturally rooted and globally legible. The 15th anniversary edition, held October 29 to November 2 under the theme “In Full Bloom,” brought the industry back into sharp focus, not only through runway spectacle, but through the sense of a maturing ecosystem with ambition, structure, and export potential.

This edition also gained extra global attention with Ciara’s presence, a moment widely covered after she described Lagos Fashion Week as one of her highlights of 2025, and later shared her first runway experience at the event, a pop culture signal that helped widen the spotlight beyond fashion insiders.

On the runway, brands such as Orange Culture, Emmy Kasbit, Kenneth Ize, IAMISIGO, Nkwo, Maki Oh, Lisa Folawiyo, and Fruche reinforced why Lagos remains a key gateway for African fashion, these labels are increasingly recognised for a blend of craft, modern silhouettes, and narrative depth that travels well across global media and buyer attention. What made 2025 especially telling is that Lagos Fashion Week continued to position fashion as more than imagery, with an emphasis on sustainability and industry building through initiatives like Green Access, which strengthens the credibility of Nigerian fashion as both a cultural force and an economic proposition.



Nollywood 2025 : Streaming, Virality, and
Global Visibility

In 2025, Nollywood’s soft power kept expanding, not only through cinemas, but through distribution that travels, with Nigerian stories increasingly designed for global screens and global audiences. Even as parts of the streaming market recalibrated their African spending, filmmakers proved the industry’s adaptability, some pivoted aggressively to YouTube, where a single release can become a mass cultural moment overnight, as seen with the romantic comedy “Love in Every Word,” reported to have reached five million views in three days in March 2025.

At the same time, Nigeria’s screen culture continued to benefit from the ecosystem built over the past decade, higher production values, more export ready storytelling, and a growing habit of watching Nigerian titles on global platforms, reinforcing Nollywood’s role as a cultural mirror for the diaspora and a narrative engine for the continent. The year also carried a prestige signal for international recognition, with “My Father’s Shadow” drawing global attention as a Lagos set story positioned as a milestone for Nigerian cinema’s presence in elite festival circuits, another reminder that Nollywood’s expansion is not only about volume, it is increasingly about visibility, credibility, and the ability to compete in the world’s cultural conversation.

#3

SOUTH AFRICA,

THE RAINBOW NATION

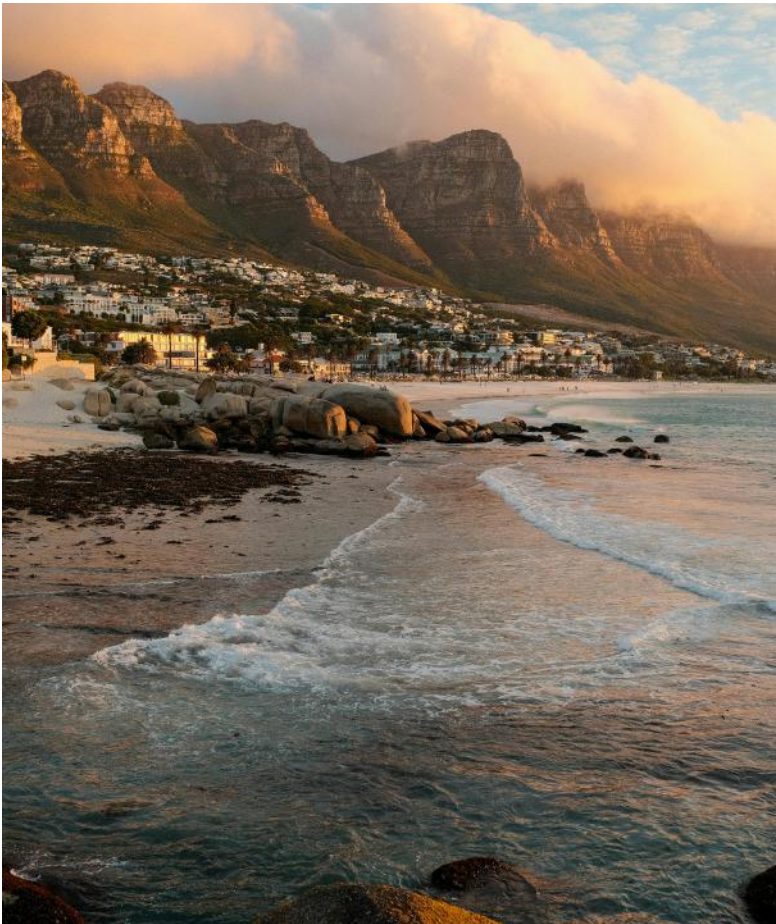
In 2025, South Africa further strengthened its country brand through a diplomacy-first approach, reinforcing its role as one of the continent's most visible and influential powers on the international stage. By hosting the G20 Leaders' Summit in Johannesburg in November 2025, the country positioned itself not only as a key diplomatic actor, but also as a credible agenda setter capable of convening major global discussions on economic governance, development and international cooperation. At the same time, South Africa recorded record international visitor arrivals, confirming the country's strong tourism appeal and its ability to attract global audiences. Alongside this momentum, its major corporate champions continued to expand their presence internationally, while South African music, culture and creative exports further enhanced the country's visibility and influence abroad.

SOUTH AFRICA IN 2025, WHEN GLOBAL DIPLOMACY MET CULTURAL FORCE AND ECONOMIC SCALE

G20 Johannesburg 2025, South Africa hosted a historic first for Africa and affirmed its role as a global agenda setter

On 22–23 November 2025, South Africa hosted the G20 Leaders’ Summit in Johannesburg, the first time the G20 convened on African soil, under the official theme “Solidarity, Equality, Sustainability.” The summit culminated in the Johannesburg Leaders’ Declaration, which explicitly framed solidarity, equality, and sustainability as pillars of inclusive growth, and positioned South Africa not only as a host, but as a country shaping the tone of global coordination at a moment of geopolitical and economic fragmentation. South Africa’s presidency used the platform to elevate priorities with worldwide relevance and strong resonance for emerging economies, including disaster resilience and response, and debt sustainability for low income countries, themes highlighted in the official G20 South Africa presidency agenda and echoed across the summit’s policy messaging. The event also demonstrated institutional capacity at scale, high level protocol, security, multilateral logistics, and the ability to convene leaders, international organisations, and financial institutions around a shared text and shared commitments.

Beyond the communiqué, the signal was clear, by hosting the G20 in Johannesburg, South Africa reinforced its diplomatic reach and its credibility as a bridge between blocs, projecting a form of global leadership that is built on convening power, agenda discipline, and a distinctly African presence in world governance.

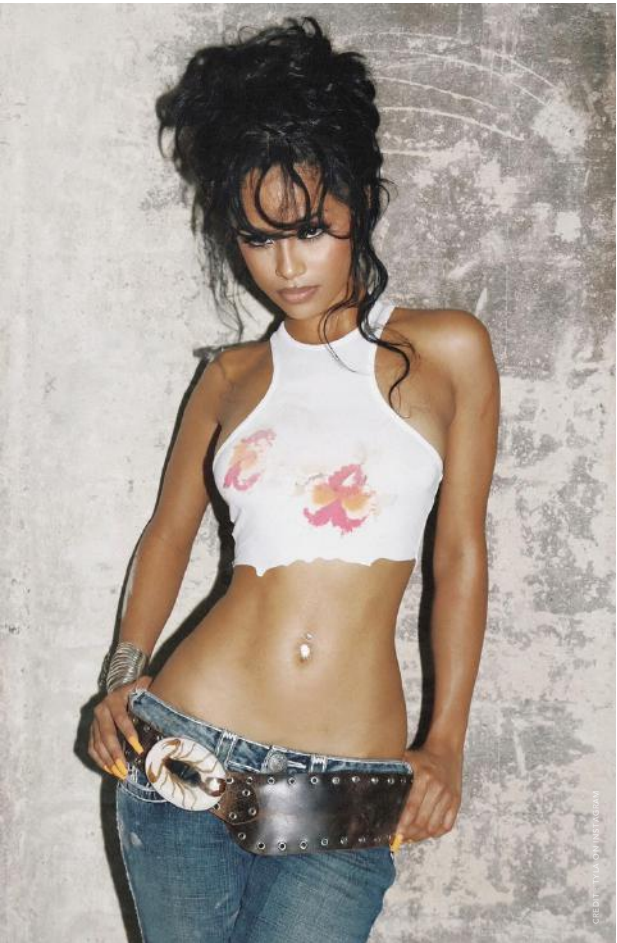


South Africa’s tourism surge in 2025, record arrivals, smarter access, and renewed investor confidence

South Africa closed 2025 with one of its strongest tourism performances on record, welcoming 10.48 million international arrivals between January and December, a 17.6% increase compared to 2024, as announced by Tourism Minister Patricia de Lille and the Department of Tourism.

The milestone was reinforced by external validation, with South Africa named Best Destination, Africa 2025 at Travel Weekly’s Readers’ Choice Awards, adding reputational lift to an already rising demand curve. On the policy side, Cabinet endorsed the Tourism Growth Partnership Plan, developed with industry, with a clear focus on reducing friction to travel, including the rollout of an Electronic Travel Authorisation, ETA, targeted at key growth markets such as India and China, to expand access and accelerate volume.

Connectivity gains supported this momentum, with new air links highlighted by the launch of Qantas’ direct Perth–Johannesburg service in December 2025, signalling renewed confidence in long haul demand. Investment also strengthened the story, the inaugural Tourism Infrastructure Investment Summit surfaced bankable opportunities worth close to R1 billion, while the Club Med South Africa Beach & Safari project on KwaZulu Natal’s North Coast, a multi billion rand development, signalled growing appetite for large scale leisure infrastructure. At the same time, South Africa leaned into innovation and business events as growth engines, launching Siyanda, an AI powered travel assistant for North American travellers and advisors, and securing 51 international conference and event bids in the financial year, generating close to R900 million in estimated economic impact.



Amapiano in 2025, South Africa’s most viral sound kept travelling

In 2025, Amapiano continued to function as a global language, carried by DJs, dancers, and streaming culture far beyond South Africa, with the log drum remaining one of the most recognisable rhythmic signatures in contemporary music.

The year was marked by a steady flow of records that moved fast across dancefloors and social platforms, reinforcing Amapiano’s role as a living, exportable expression of South African creativity rather than a trend tied to a single moment.

Among the standout titles that captured attention in 2025, “Abalozi” became a reference point for the genre’s mainstream energy and collaborative power, while MDU aka TRP’s remix of “Mabebuza” gained a renewed life and kept climbing across charts and dancefloors, illustrating how Amapiano can continuously reinvent its own catalogue and still feel urgent worldwide.

In parallel, 2025 was also a major year for Tyla as an international pop figure from South Africa, with high visibility releases such as “Bliss”, “IS IT”, and “Chanel” sustaining global attention throughout the year. That momentum translated into awards season recognition, with Tyla later winning Best African Music Performance at the 2026 GRAMMY Awards for “Push 2 Start”, reinforcing South Africa’s presence in mainstream global culture through star power, reach, and repeat visibility.

South Africa’s economic pull in 2025, a continental heavyweight powered by global champions

In 2025, South Africa’s economic attractiveness remained anchored in a rare combination for the continent, scale, deep capital markets, strong regional integration, and a portfolio of homegrown champions that operate far beyond national borders. By GDP, it continues to rank among Africa’s largest economies, giving it structural weight in global investor and policy conversations. That credibility is amplified by companies that act as international brand carriers in their own right.

Naspers, through Prosus, links South Africa to global consumer internet and tech investing at scale. MTN Group reinforces the country’s role as a pan African connectivity powerhouse across 19 markets. In financial services, Standard Bank Group extends South African capacity into the continent’s deal flow, with a presence across more than 20 African countries and global centres. In retail, the Shoprite Group signals operational strength and supply chain sophistication across multiple markets, while Aspen Pharmacare projects industrial credibility through a pharmaceutical footprint reaching well beyond the continent.

As a symbol of mobility and projection, South African Airways (SAA) remains a recognisable flagship, rebuilding and extending its network as connectivity continues to shape tourism, trade, and confidence. Taken together, these champions help explain why South Africa remains a reference point for business visibility and economic storytelling, the country is not only a market, it is a platform economy whose leading firms export South African know how, standards, and ambition into the world.



#2

EGYPT, THE LAND OF PHARAOHS

In 2025, Egypt strengthened its country brand by turning history into a modern global proposition. The official opening of the Grand Egyptian Museum in November 2025 became a flagship cultural moment with worldwide resonance. At the same time, Egypt reported record tourism momentum, positioning itself as both an iconic heritage destination and a fast scaling travel hub. Egypt also reinforced its diplomatic visibility by hosting a high profile Sharm El Sheikh Peace Summit in October 2025.

EGYPT’S 2025, WHERE
TIMELESS HERITAGE MET
MODERN MOMENTUM ON
THE WORLD STAGE

The Grand Egyptian Museum, a global
cultural milestone facing the Pyramids

On November 1, 2025, facing the Pyramids of Giza, the Grand Egyptian Museum was inaugurated through a ceremony that became a planetary cultural moment, attended by around eighty international delegations, alongside representatives of regional and international organisations and major global companies.

The museum spans 490,000 square metres and was conceived as an integrated global cultural, civilisational, and entertainment landmark, with exhibition halls on a scale larger than many existing museums in Egypt and worldwide. It is the largest museum dedicated to telling the story of ancient Egyptian civilisation, bringing together exceptional collections, including the treasures of Tutankhamun displayed in full for the first time since the discovery of his tomb in 1922, alongside the collection of Queen Hetepheres, the Khufu Solar Boat Museum, and archaeological holdings ranging from the Pre Dynastic era to the Greco Roman period.

Architecturally, GEM reads like a modern tribute to eternity, its overlapping triangular façade inspired by the three pyramids, while its interiors combine preservation excellence with immersive technology, from digital displays to augmented reality. More than an opening, the inauguration reinforced Egypt’s cultural positioning as the land of pharaohs, a civilisation whose influence still radiates across the world today.



19 Million Visitors, Egypt’s 2025 Tourism
Breakthrough and a New Record Year

Egypt delivered one of its strongest tourism years on record in 2025, reinforcing its position as a leading global destination and accelerating well beyond global trends. According to official figures from the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities, the country welcomed nearly 19 million visitors, a 21 percent increase compared to 2024, outperforming the global growth rate of around 5 percent referenced by UN Tourism.

Air connectivity was a key driver, with charter flight traffic rising by 32 percent, signalling renewed confidence among tour operators and travellers. New Alamein City emerged as a standout success, recording a striking 450 percent increase in charter flights and quickly gaining visibility as a new destination on Egypt’s tourism map. Cultural travel also expanded sharply, with archaeological sites and museums, excluding NMEC and GEM, receiving 18.6 million visitors, up 33.5 percent year on year, confirming the enduring pull of Egypt’s heritage alongside broader diversification. Cairo, Hurghada, Sharm El Sheikh, and Marsa Alam led arrivals, reflecting the breadth of Egypt’s destination portfolio and multi market appeal.

Tourism Minister Sherif Fathy described 2025 as a milestone year, driven by security and stability, a clearer strategic vision, and an integrated approach focused on diversifying tourism products and elevating visitor experience, with a rare proposition globally, culture, beach, leisure, and entertainment combined within one destination ecosystem.



Sharm El Sheikh 2025, Egypt as a
Stage for Global Diplomacy

On 13 October 2025, Egypt hosted the Sharm El Sheikh Peace Summit, co chaired by President Abdel Fattah el Sisi and US President Donald Trump, with leaders from more than 20 countries taking part, according to the Egyptian Presidency and international reporting.

The summit was built around ceasefire momentum and the next steps for stabilisation, humanitarian access, and reconstruction, but its strategic significance was broader than a single file, it demonstrated Egypt’s continuing ability to convene high level coalitions in a fractured international landscape.

Convening that level of leadership is not symbolic, it requires diplomatic networks that can mobilise attendance, credibility as a host able to engage different blocs, and operational capacity to deliver protocol, security, and coordination under intense international scrutiny.

The presence of the UN Secretary General in Egypt during the summit period further reflected the level of multilateral attention attached to Sharm El Sheikh in 2025. By hosting this gathering, Egypt projected diplomatic reach and convening power, showing it can operate at the crossroads of major powers, multilateral institutions, and cross regional partnerships, and still play a central role when the world needs a venue, a broker, and a platform for coordination.

Mohamed Salah in 2025, Egypt at the
heart of global excellence

In 2025, Mohamed Salah delivered a year that consistently projected Egypt’s name into the most watched football conversations on the planet, not through symbolism, but through relentless, measurable dominance in elite competition. At the core of that narrative is what he achieved in the 2024/25 Premier League season, where he finished with 29 goals and 18 assists, numbers that directly powered Liverpool’s title winning campaign and framed him as the league’s most decisive player across both output and creation. On 24 May 2025, Salah was voted the EA SPORTS Premier League Player of the Season, joining the small group of players to win the award more than once, a distinction that signals not just popularity, but sustained top tier performance at the highest level. The following day, 25 May 2025, the Premier League confirmed he won both the Golden Boot and the Playmaker Award, a historic double that made him the first player to end a season with the most goals and the most assists while also being named Player of the Season.

That sequence matters because it placed an Egyptian athlete at the top of English football’s three most visible individual honours in the same campaign, week after week amplifying Egypt’s image through excellence rather than messaging. In parallel, Salah’s recognition extended beyond league organisers to the two most influential “peer and press” ecosystems in English football: he was named FWA Footballer of the Year in May 2025, confirming the scale of his season in the eyes of journalists and commentators shaping global narratives. Then came the ultimate peer validation, on 19 August 2025, he won the PFA Players’ Player of the Year, becoming the first footballer to claim the award three times, a milestone because it is voted by fellow professionals.

For Egypt, this kind of year functions like a continuous soft power broadcast, every award announcement, every headline, every highlight reel repeats the same association, Egypt produces world class talent, Egypt is present in the global mainstream, Egypt is attached to excellence. And because Salah’s platform is both global and sustained, his impact goes beyond a single moment, it builds familiarity, admiration, and modern relevance for Egypt in a way that few official campaigns could replicate at the same intensity.



#1 MOROCCO, THE KINGDOM OF LIGHTS

In 2025, Morocco strengthened its country brand by turning hosting excellence into a modern global proposition. AFCON 2025 became a flagship moment, widely recognised for the quality of venues, broadcast delivery, organisation, and security, reinforcing Morocco's credentials as a reliable stage for major international events. At the same time, Morocco posted a record tourism year, welcoming 19.8 million visitors and confirming its position as Africa's most visited destination, combining heritage appeal with rising travel hub momentum. Morocco also consolidated its international profile by positioning 2025 as a full scale rehearsal for a country set to co host the 2030 FIFA World Cup.



MOROCCO'S 2025, A YEAR OF POWERFUL SOFT POWER AND GLOBAL PROJECTION

19.8 Million Visitors, Morocco's Sensational Tourism Year

In 2025, Morocco posted another record breaking year for tourism, confirming its position as Africa's most visited destination with a historic 19.8 million tourist arrivals, exceeding the government's 18 million target and marking a 14% increase over 2024. What makes the year especially significant is that the growth was not only a question of volume, it translated into rising value, with tourism receipts reaching 124 billion dirhams in the first eleven months of 2025, up 19% year on year, reinforcing tourism as a major engine of jobs, local activity, and foreign currency inflows.

Moroccan authorities framed this milestone as the result of a deeper transformation of the sector, driven by a more diversified tourism proposition that expands beyond classic city breaks and beach holidays, improved service quality, and a sustained push on international air connectivity that made access easier across multiple source markets. The performance also carried symbolic weight in the continental narrative, as Morocco retained its lead ahead of Egypt on visitor numbers, consolidating the shift first observed in 2024 and turning it into a durable trajectory.

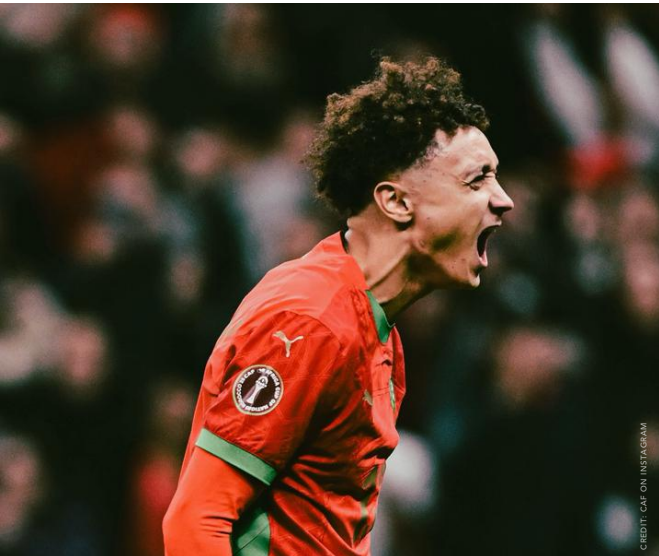
2025 was not presented as an endpoint but as a stepping stone in a longer arc, with the national tourism roadmap pointing to 26 million visitors by 2030, aligning international arrivals, investment, and destination positioning with the country's wider ambition for global visibility.

AFCON 2025, a hosting masterclass ahead of the 2030 World Cup

AFCON 2025 gave Morocco a rare opportunity to demonstrate, under maximum attention, its ability to deliver a major tournament at scale, and the edition read as a full scale rehearsal for a country preparing to co host the 2030 FIFA World Cup. Hosted across six cities, Rabat, Casablanca, Tangier, Marrakech, Agadir, and Fès, the competition showcased a modern, networked hosting model rather than a single city moment, with upgraded venues and matchday operations designed to meet elevated expectations in infrastructure, security, and broadcast production. Just as importantly, Morocco's message was about systems, not only stadiums, the tournament sat on top of a wider infrastructure story, improved intercity mobility supported by motorway expansion, high speed rail development, and airport capacity upgrades that made travel between host cities smoother and reinforced the image of a country investing for long term international access.

From an economic and reputational perspective, Moroccan authorities presented AFCON 2025 as a national accelerator, with Industry and Trade Minister Ryad Mezzour stating on France 24 that the event helped lift growth to 4.5% in 2025, supported the creation of more than 100,000 jobs, and boosted consumption, while arguing that "in 24 months" Morocco had gained "a decade" of infrastructure development, with durable spillovers in transport and even health related capacity.

On the commercial side, CAF itself reported that the Morocco edition generated a 90% surge in commercial revenues compared with the previous tournament, driven by a larger sponsor roster and expanded media rights distribution, reinforcing the idea that Morocco's AFCON was not only well staged, but also a business success for the competition's global market value. The scale of demand also became part of the story, with claims of over 1.25 million tickets sold and a headline box office figure of \$55 million, even as some reporting pointed to public complaints about ticket resale on the black market, a reminder that high demand and operational excellence can still coexist with pressures of scarcity and enforcement.



Morocco's Business Power, the Kingdom's Influence Beyond Borders

In 2025, Morocco's international influence was also carried by the scale and visibility of its economic champions, companies that project the Kingdom's credibility through trade, finance, logistics, connectivity, and mobility. OCP Group remains one of Morocco's strongest global brand carriers, operating on five continents and working in partnership with more than 160 customers worldwide, placing the country at the centre of global food security and agricultural value chains.

In banking, Attijariwafa bank embodies Morocco's role as a pan African financial platform, with operations in 27 countries, a network of more than 7,417 branches, and over 12 million clients (as of end 2024 figures disclosed by the group), helping position Casablanca as a reference point for regional capital flows and financial services know how. On the logistics and industrial story, Tanger Med continued to operate as a strategic global gateway, its port complex handled 11,106,164 TEUs in 2025 and 161 million tons of cargo, reinforcing Morocco's status as a high performance trade hub between Africa, Europe, and the Americas.

In telecoms, Maroc Telecom sustained Morocco's footprint across the continent through Moov Africa, and the group surpassed 81 million customers by the end of Q3 2025, with Moov Africa driving much of the growth and operating across 11 African markets, turning connectivity into both infrastructure and soft power. Finally, Morocco's national airline, Royal Air Maroc, strengthened the country's mobility narrative by scaling capacity for 2025, with a summer schedule offering over 6.6 million seats serving more than 95 destinations, while pursuing a long term expansion plan that aims to acquire up to 200 aircraft by 2037, consolidating Casablanca's role as a hub linking Africa with Europe and the Americas.



Hakimi's 2025, Morocco's excellence written into the season

In 2025, Achraf Hakimi did what the most influential national figures always do, he made Morocco visible without ever having to explain it. Week after week, in the world's most watched competitions, he played with the authority of a footballer who has moved beyond promise into proof, quick, relentless, and decisive when matches tighten and margins disappear. With Paris Saint Germain, he was a central part of a historic campaign that culminated in the club's first UEFA Champions League title, a peak moment that amplified his stature from elite performer to global reference.

Later in the year, the continent's highest individual honour confirmed what the season had already suggested, Hakimi was crowned CAF African Player of the Year 2025 in Rabat, a headline that carried extra weight because it broke patterns, a defender winning the award for the first time in more than five decades, and the first Moroccan to receive it since 1998.

Together, those milestones turned into a clean soft power signal for Morocco, the Kingdom doesn't only stage big moments, it produces champions who belong at the centre of them, and whose excellence travels farther than any campaign ever could.

In 2026, the African Countries to Watch Closely

In 2026, the continent's soft-power story will not only be written by its usual heavyweights.

Senegal will host the Youth Olympic Games in Dakar and Diamniadio, turning a global sporting ritual into a first African Olympic moment and a showcase for its youth and culture. Angola will stand at the centre of the world's largest travel fair as host country of ITB Berlin, using the Berlin stage to pivot from oil narrative to tourism potential. And Namibia, already flooding social feeds with images of red dunes and empty coastlines, will test whether a "dream destination" aura online can translate into lasting arrivals and a stronger place in the travel imagination.



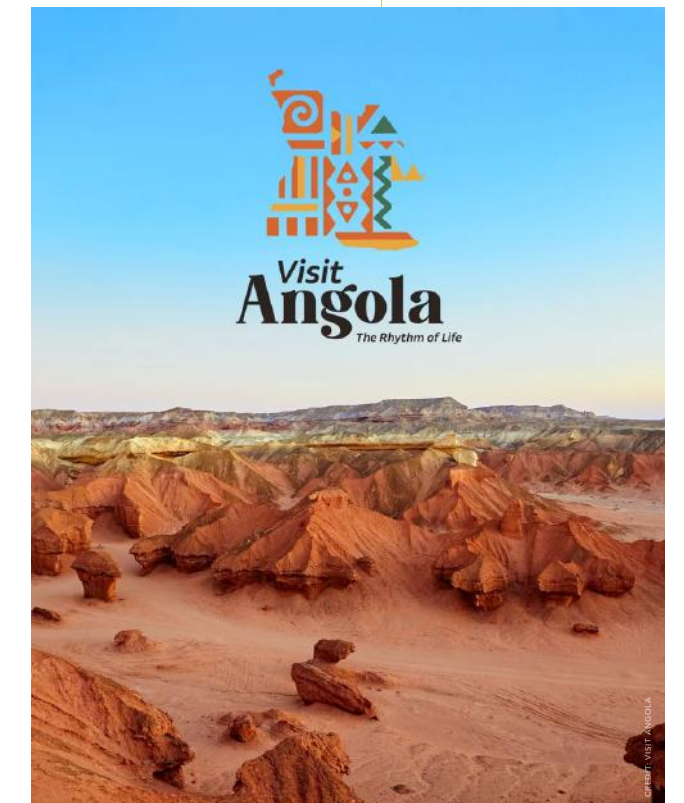
Dakar Steps Onto the Olympic Stage

In 2026, Senegal becomes the first African country to host an Olympic event, as Dakar, Diamniadio and Saly welcome the Youth Olympic Games from 31 October to 13 November. Far beyond a junior competition, the project is framed by the IOC and African Olympic bodies as a test of the continent's capacity to stage major events, with new venues, upgraded transport and a cultural programme meant to showcase a modern, outward-looking West African nation. The coming year will show how Senegal turns this moment into something larger: not only a sporting success, but a story about youth, tourism and African confidence told in real time to a global audience.



Angola Steps Into the World's Biggest Tourism Fair

Angola stepped into the centre of the global travel trade in March 2026 as the official host country of ITB Berlin's sixtieth anniversary edition. For three days, the southwest African nation used this platform to showcase its Atlantic coastline, national parks and cultural heritage to tens of thousands of buyers, media and investors, with B2B speed-dating sessions, live broadcasts and a high-profile opening gala organised around the Angolan stand. For a country long seen primarily through the lens of oil, the partnership offered a strategic opportunity to reposition Angola as an emerging leisure and nature destination, and to test whether a concentrated spotlight in Berlin could help accelerate a broader tourism narrative at home.



Namibia, the Desert Dream Filling Our Feeds

Namibia enters 2026 with the profile of a "next" destination, pushed by social media images of Sossusvlei's red dunes, the Skeleton Coast's emptiness and ghost towns half buried in sand that circulate widely on Instagram and TikTok.

Travel publications and industry bodies have started to echo that energy, with the African Tourism Board naming Namibia Africa's leading destination for authentic experience driven travel, and international magazines highlighting new high style safari lodges and regenerative experiences in Etosha and Bwabwata.

For 2026, the question is how this mix of viral imagery, conservation credentials and fresh product can be translated into sustained arrivals and a stronger place in the global imagination.

3 Major Nation-Branding Trends Shaping the African Continent in 2026

In 2026, three forces are quietly changing how countries compete for attention.

The traveler's journey increasingly runs through AI, where only destinations with clear, structured stories and data truly appear. At the same time, trips gravitate toward "live" moments, concerts, festivals, major sports and rituals like Vodun Days, that turn events into strategic stages. Around this, visa regimes, digital-nomad rules and diaspora programmes are becoming part of the message, signaling which countries are serious about welcome, connection and shared futures.

The Traveler Journey Rewritten by AI

Across 2026, destinations that matter will be those that understand the traveler journey as an AI journey. From the first vague search in a chat interface to real-time rebooking on the move, large language models and recommendation engines are now mediating almost every step, with major OTAs and search platforms using AI to infer intent and assemble hyper-personalized itineraries in seconds.

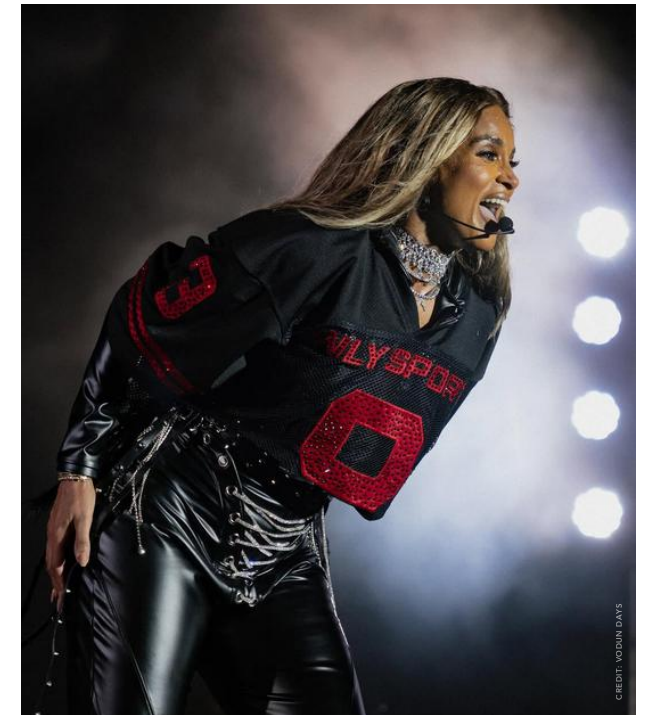
For countries, this means thinking less in terms of slogans and more in terms of structured data, content and partnerships that make their brand intelligible to algorithms: if AI is the new concierge, destinations that do not feed it with rich, up-to-date narratives, offers and stories will simply not appear in the conversation.



Mobility, Homecoming and the Politics of Welcome

A third trend to watch is how countries use mobility policy to tell a story about who is invited in. Visa openness is gaining ground, with states like Kenya combining visa-free entry for many African nationals with new digital nomad permits, while others, from Zambia to Ghana, adjust their regimes to compete for tourists, talent and the diaspora's capital. In parallel, homecoming programmes for Afro-descendants and diaspora investors are moving from symbolic campaigns to more structured frameworks of citizenship, residency and investment.

In 2026, the countries that stand out will be those that align their country brand with a coherent politics of welcome – making it genuinely easier for visitors, nomads and returnees not only to arrive, but to stay, build and belong.



Live Tourism and the Power of Shared Moments

Another defining trend is the rise of "live tourism": travel organized around music tours, sporting events, festivals or natural spectacles, where the real product is the shared moment. Global observers already track trips built around Taylor Swift concerts, solar eclipses, the Olympics and World Cups, noting how fans are willing to spend far beyond the ticket to complete the experience. In Africa, this logic is now central to soft power, from Dakar's Youth Olympic Games to AFCON host cities and to events like Vodun Days in Benin, where the 2025 edition combined heritage, ritual and a headline appearance by Ciara to generate images that travelled far beyond Ouidah. Countries that design a few strong "live moments" each year, and treat them as strategic assets rather than one-off shows, will be best placed to capture attention, visitors and narrative space.



Shaping Global Perceptions:
**Africa's Most Impactful
Country Brands in 2025**

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