

It's not just bars. From art museums to fundraisers, Miami has World Cup fever

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July 10, 2018 07:00 AM

As the World Cup rages and Miami ramps up its commitment to soccer, local companies are finding ways to marry the beautiful game to business.

Everybody knows about the bar or restaurant viewing party. But other entities less traditionally associated with sports are finding creative ways to capitalize on the World Cup fever to bring in new clientele.

"By plugging into a mass audience, we expose people to things they may have never seen," said Franklin Sirmans, director of the Perez Art Museum of Miami.

Just as art transcends borders and language, so does soccer. The museum is exploring the intersection in an exhibition running from April to September entitled "[The World's Game: Futbol and Contemporary Art](#)." The show includes 50 contemporary works by 40-plus artists including Andy Warhol and Kehinde Wiley, who painted [Obama's post-presidential portrait](#).

The show has been a hit beyond the typical museum-going crowd, said Sirmans.

"It's brought in a lot of people that were either not aware of us, or aware but never came," said Sirmans. "And I love that. Our goal is to expose the people of Miami to art because we believe that art can really affect lives."

That's the objective, said George Bermudez, senior vice president at Bank of America.

Bermudez — who once was a professional soccer prospect in South America — combined business and pleasure with a presentation on tax reform for around 25 current and prospective clients, followed by a watch party. On that day, Argentina clinched a 2-1 victory over Nigeria.

"Miami is an international market and we definitely wanted to take advantage of the World Cup, an international event," he said. "We were able to penetrate a different clientele with a more international focus."

Bermudez sees a bright future for soccer in Miami. "I think there's definitely a lot more hype around this World Cup and the future," he said, and he's not wrong.

The Miami-Fort Lauderdale area boasted the highest Spanish-language viewership and the second-highest English viewership of [World Cup games on June 26](#), according to Nielsen. In addition, Miami could be a host city [for the 2026 World Cup](#) hosted by Canada, Mexico and the US. And David Beckham's group [is grabbing headlines](#) as he looks to bring a professional soccer team to Miami.

When the World Cup games are on, fans flock to downtown Miami's restaurants and venues, tripling the population of Fort Lauderdale and nearly ten times that of West Palm Beach, according to the Miami Downtown Development Authority.

But of all of the World Cup-themed events, Miami developer Dan Kodsi may boast the most extravagant.

Last month, Kodsi held a Special Olympics fundraiser at the site of his massive \$2.7 billion downtown mixed-use development, [Paramount Miami Worldcenter](#). The menu featured food from many of the participating nations — Moscow Mules, Peruvian ceviche, French macarons. Pro soccer players mixed with over 250 — real estate brokers and clients trying to score penalty kicks on an AstroTurf field.

The international nature of the games make it perfect fit for the project, said Kodsi, which is aimed at foreign buyers. Players from the Turkish, Colombian and Cameroonian national teams have already bought residences in advance of its completion, he said.

"In the old days, buyers used to just be from South American countries," said Kodsi. "But now we have buyers from all around the globe."

Of course, it helps that this year's World Cup has been one of exciting upsets. Germany, Argentina, Brazil and Spain have all been sent packing.

"We've had some wild games," said Kodsi.