



INDUSTRY-SPECIFIC BRIEFING KC SMALL BUSINESSES

Surviving the World Cup Surge

Overview

Kansas City and its regional partners will welcome hundreds of thousands of domestic and international visitors during the 2026 FIFA World Cup™. For tourism and experience providers, this represents a major opportunity to shape how visitors perceive Kansas City, while also requiring rapid adaptation to evolving traveler expectations. Success will depend on: delivering authentic, memorable local experiences, leveraging digital discovery and booking platforms, managing fluctuating, event-driven demand and creating experiences that resonate with global audiences.

Industry -Specific

Tourism & Experiences

OPPORTUNITY

Experience over transaction is key — with increasing emphasis on storytelling, personalization and creating an emotional connection to each place.

Global Visibility for KC Area

The World Cup will bring:

- International fans
- Corporate sponsors
- Media organizations
- Team staff and families

Johnson County Advantage

Johnson County will play a key supporting role in visitor exploration:

- Visitors staying in suburban areas will seek nearby experiences beyond the stadium
- Opportunities include:
 - Food and brewery tours
 - Cultural and historical experiences
 - Family-friendly and outdoor activities

Key opportunity: to position Kansas City as a destination for authentic, local, and culturally rich experiences—not just a host city.

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KC GAME PLAN PLAYBOOK](#)



THE REALITY

- Travelers Are Changing
 - Gen Z and Millennials now represent ~50% of travelers
 - They prioritize:
 - Experiences over material purchases
 - Digital-first discovery (social media, short-form video)
 - Sustainability and authenticity
- Demand Is Experience-Driven
 - The industry is shifting from discount-based competition to storytelling and connection
 - Visitors want:
 - Unique, immersive activities
 - Insider access and local culture
- International Travel Is Volatile
 - U.S. inbound travel has recently declined due to policy and perception challenges
 - Major events like the World Cup will help—but demand may still be uneven

Implication: Tourism businesses must compete on experience quality—not price alone.

WIN THE CUSTOMER

Visitors will choose experiences that are:

- Easy to Discover
 - Strong presence on:
 - Google
 - Social media
 - Travel platforms
 - Mobile-friendly booking systems
- Authentic
 - Real local culture, not generic offerings
 - Unique, story-driven experiences
- Flexible & Convenient
 - Multiple time slots
 - Easy booking and cancellation
 - Clear instructions and meeting points

BUILD THE EXPERIENCE

Visitors remember how a place made them feel.

- Create World Cup-Themed Experiences
 - Soccer-themed tours and events
 - Cultural celebrations tied to participating countries
 - Fan-focused experiences beyond the stadium
- Lean Into Local Identity
 - Highlight:
 - Kansas City BBQ
 - Jazz and music heritage
 - Regional history and neighborhoods
- Design for Shareability
 - “Instagrammable” moments
 - Unique visuals and storytelling
 - Experiences that encourage social sharing

MAXIMIZE THE REVENUE

- Use Tiered Experiences
 - Basic → premium → VIP packages
 - Private tours and group experiences
- Drive Direct Bookings
 - Reduce reliance on third-party platforms
 - Build direct relationships with customers
- Extend Customer Value
 - Offer add-ons:
 - Food and beverage packages
 - Merchandise
 - Multi-experience bundles

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BE WORLD-READY

- International visitors will expect:
 - Clear communication and instructions
 - Easy digital booking and payment
 - Cultural awareness and inclusivity
- Small details matter:
 - Multilingual or visual guides
 - Simple check-in processes
 - Staff trained for diverse audiences

FIVE THINGS TOURISM & EXPERIENCE PROVIDERS MUST DO WELL

- Deliver Authentic Experiences
 - Focus on real local culture and storytelling
- Be Digitally Discoverable
 - Show up where travelers are searching and browsing
- Simplify Booking & Access
 - Remove friction from purchase to participation
- Create Shareable Moments
 - Encourage social media engagement and visibility
- Build Repeat & Referral Business
 - Turn visitors into advocates for Kansas City

STILL HAVE QUESTIONS?
CONTACT ECJC TODAY!



The World Cup is more than a surge in visitors — it is a global showcase opportunity.

- For tourism and experience providers in Kansas City and Johnson County, it is a chance to:
 - Define the city's identity for international visitors
 - Create memorable, story-driven experiences
 - Build long-term tourism demand
- The providers that succeed will focus on:
 - Authenticity and storytelling
 - Digital-first engagement
 - Seamless customer experience
 - Creating moments visitors will share and remember