7 World Cup Lessons for Retail, Dining & Real Estate

World Cup gains were highly localized, occasion-driven, and shaped by activation – revealing how mega-events can create value beyond the main venue.

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This report was produced in collaboration by Placer.ai and Colliers. Because the underlying foot traffic data excludes international visitors, the findings reflect the tournament's impact on domestic (U.S.) visitation rather than total event-driven traffic.

The Event Effect

The 2026 FIFA World Cup brought millions of fans to eleven host markets across the United States – and with them, high expectations of a summer boom for local retailers, restaurants, and property owners.

While the tournament delivered a substantial economic boost, foot traffic data reveals a more nuanced picture. Rather than generating broad-based gains, the tournament concentrated demand in the categories, locations, and experiences most closely tied to the fan journey – stadium-adjacent blocks over metro-wide corridors, bars over full-service restaurants, and sporting goods over general apparel.

This report uses location analytics to unpack where World Cup value actually materialized – and what those patterns mean for retail, dining, and real estate stakeholders. It examines which businesses and locations were best positioned to capture event-driven demand, and what cities and brands can learn as they prepare for the next major event.

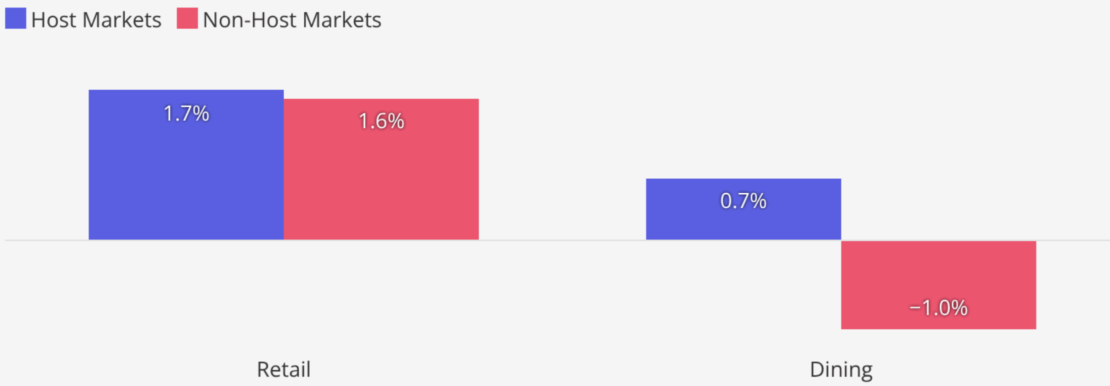
Lesson 1: Mega-Events May Not Lift Metro-Wide Traffic

The 2026 FIFA World Cup resulted in only a slight overall retail visit lift at the metro level, with YoY brick-and-mortar retail visits in host markets outperforming non-host markets by just 0.1 percentage points throughout the tournament period.

Dining saw a more pronounced relative boost, but as discussed later in this report, those gains appear to have been highly localized and concentrated in specific venues and occasions.

Metro-Wide, the World Cup Lifted Dining More Than Retail

Year-over-Year Change in Retail & Dining Visits Over the Tournament Window,* Host Markets vs. All Other US CBSAs



*2026 tournament window (Jun 11 - Jul 19) vs. the same weekdays in 2025 (Jun 12 - Jul 20). Host Markets = 11 markets / 12 CBSAs (San Jose & San Francisco treated as one market); Non-Host Markets = all other US CBSAs.

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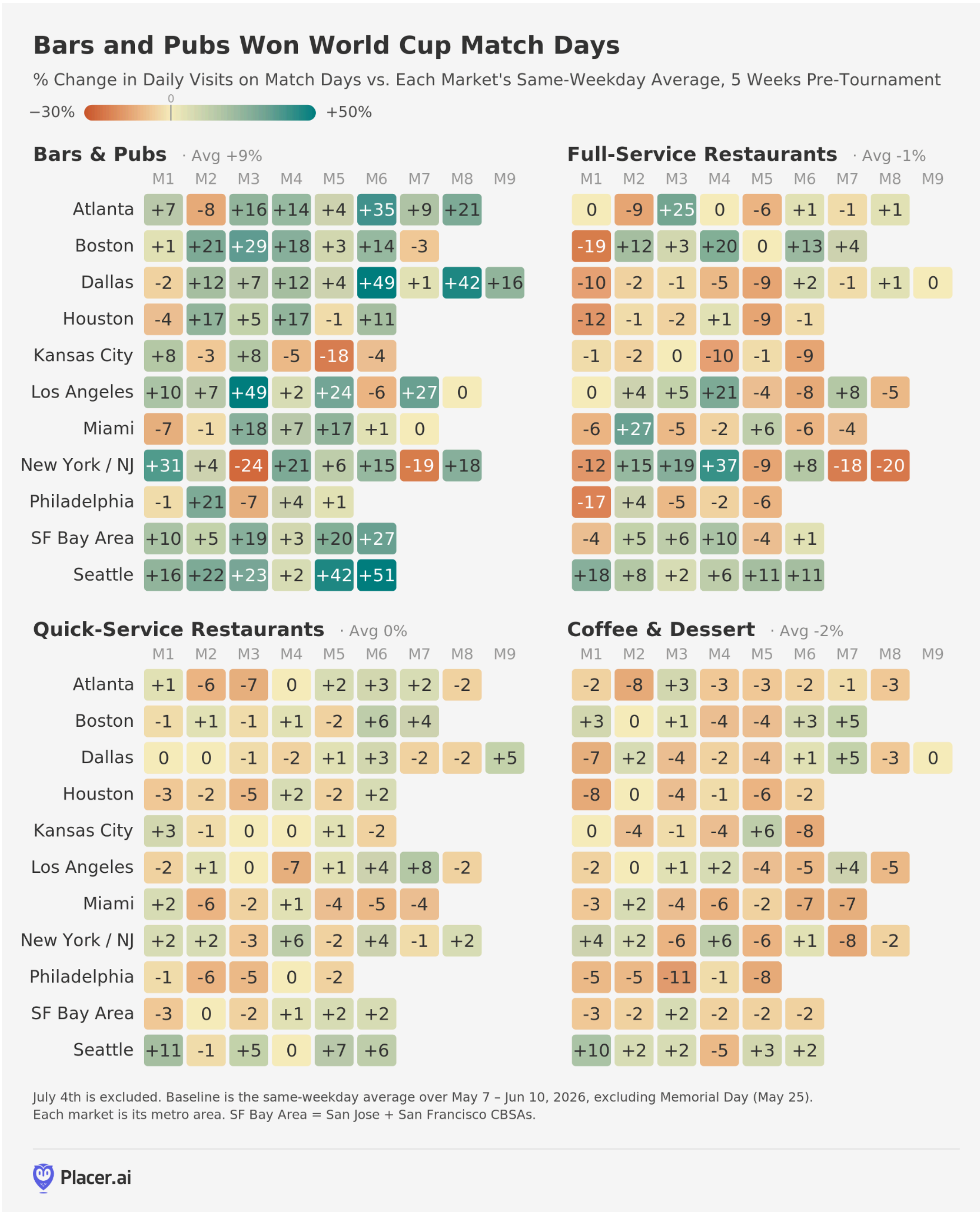
Why It Matters

- Being located in a host market is not, by itself, a strategy.
- Planning should focus on the specific occasions, locations, and consumer missions a major event creates.
- Aggregate metro-level forecasts can obscure very large opportunities – and risks – at the neighborhood, property, and category level.

Lesson 2: Well-Timed Social Occasions Drive the Biggest Dining Upside

Diving into the dining data indicates that the modest metro-wide dining lift during the overall tournament window was far from broad-based. Bars and pubs were the clear outlier, averaging a 9% increase on match days across host markets. QSR, meanwhile, was flat, while coffee & dessert shops and full-service restaurants averaged slightly negative.



Why It Matters

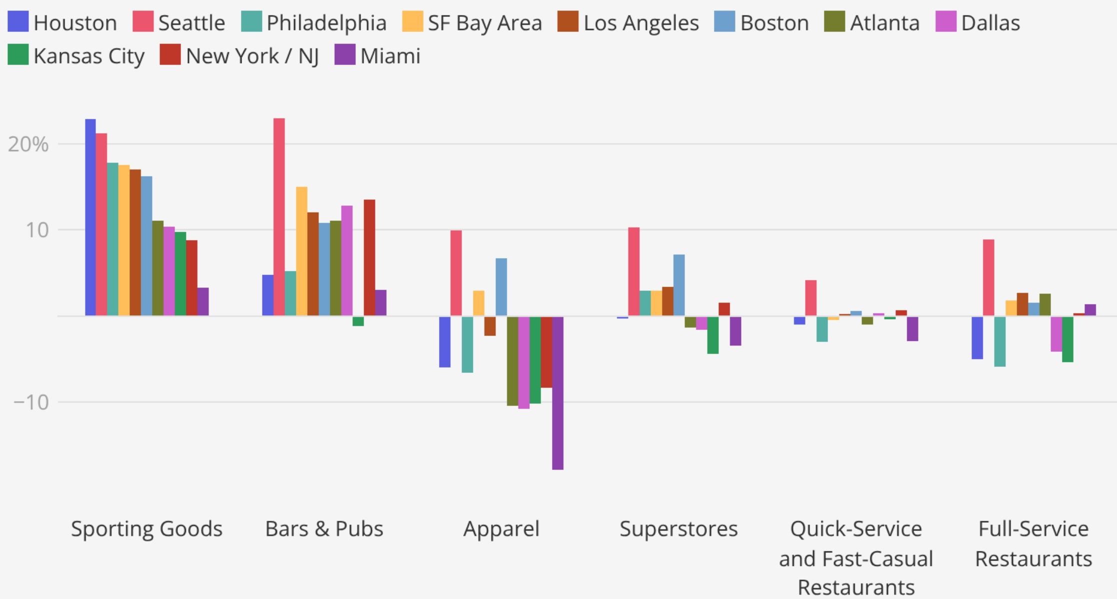
- Restaurant concepts like bars and pubs that naturally support communal viewing and socializing are best positioned to capture event-driven demand.
- Operators should plan around specific high-interest moments rather than the full event window.
- Concepts without a natural event connection can create one: Screens, group seating, themed menus, watch parties, and event-specific offers can give consumers a reason to choose a restaurant as part of the experience.
- Property owners should consider how tenant mix aligns with major-event occasions. Properties with bars, entertainment, and gathering-oriented concepts may be better positioned to capture event-driven traffic than those dominated by routine dining uses.
- Average category performance can mask substantial short-term opportunities. Even when overall dining gains are modest, the right concept in the right market can see very large spikes around individual event days.

Lesson 3: Event Relevance Determines Which Retail Categories Capture the Upside

Retail performance also varied significantly across categories. In addition to bars and pubs, which generally benefited from match-day traffic, sporting goods retailers posted consistent gains across every host market, while apparel stores and superstores saw far more mixed results.

Sporting Goods Only Category to See Consistent Lifts Across Host Metros

Average Change in Daily Visits on Match Days vs. Each Market's Same-Weekday Average Over the 5 Weeks Before the World Cup



The July 4th holiday weekend (Jul 3–5) is excluded. Baseline is the same-weekday average over May 7 – Jun 10, 2026, excluding Memorial Day (May 25). Each market is its metro area. SF Bay Area = San Jose + San Francisco CBSAs.

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The pattern suggests that major events do not create a broad retail tailwind, even on match days; instead, incremental visits tend to concentrate in categories most directly tied to how consumers participate in the occasion.

Why It Matters

- A large influx of visitors does not guarantee broad retail gains, so operators should avoid planning inventory or staffing around market-level attendance alone.
- Categories without an obvious event tie-in may need to create one through relevant merchandise, promotions, displays, partnerships, or experiences.

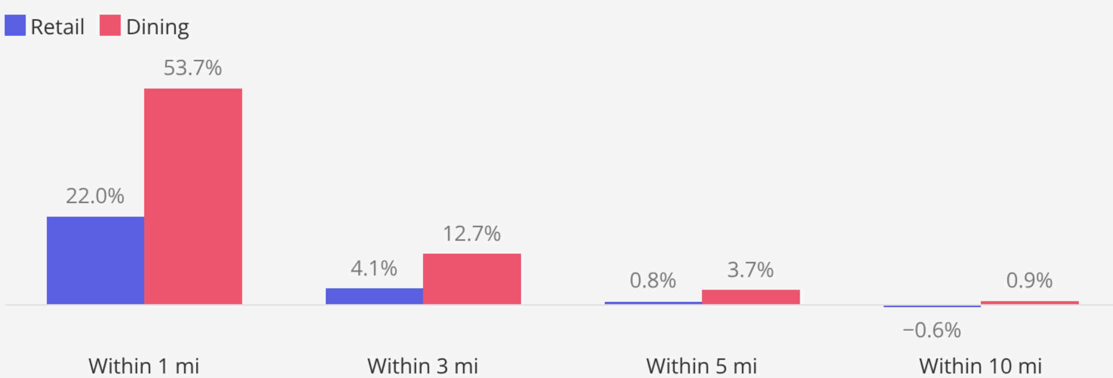
- Event strategies should focus on creating a specific consumer mission, rather than assuming higher foot traffic nearby will translate automatically into store visits.
- Property owners and operators should think about whether their tenant mix matches the occasion, since event-relevant businesses are more likely to convert nearby crowds into visits.

Lesson 4: Mega-Events Create a Powerful Hyperlocal Economy Around the Main Venues

The tournament's strongest retail and dining effects were concentrated in the areas immediately surrounding match venues. Within one mile of stadiums, dining visits rose by 53.7% and retail by 22.0% – but those gains fell sharply as distance increased, although dining continued to benefit farther out.

Retail & Dining Surged Near Stadiums – But Dining Gains Were Bigger and Reached Further

Average Match-Day Visit Lift vs. the Day-of-Week-Neutralized Pre-World Cup Baseline (May 7–Jun. 10, 2026), by Distance From Stadium – Retail vs. Dining



Analysis includes all 11 U.S. host stadiums.

So major events can dramatically reshape demand within a small trade area, without producing anything close to the same effect across the broader market.

Why It Matters

- Event-day opportunities can vary sharply depending on distance from the venue – and businesses closest to major venues should plan for unusually sharp, short-lived demand spikes.
- Restaurants may have a larger event-day catchment area than retailers, since dining gains remained stronger farther from the stadium.
- Site selection, staffing, inventory, hours, and promotions should reflect a location's position within the event-day fan journey.

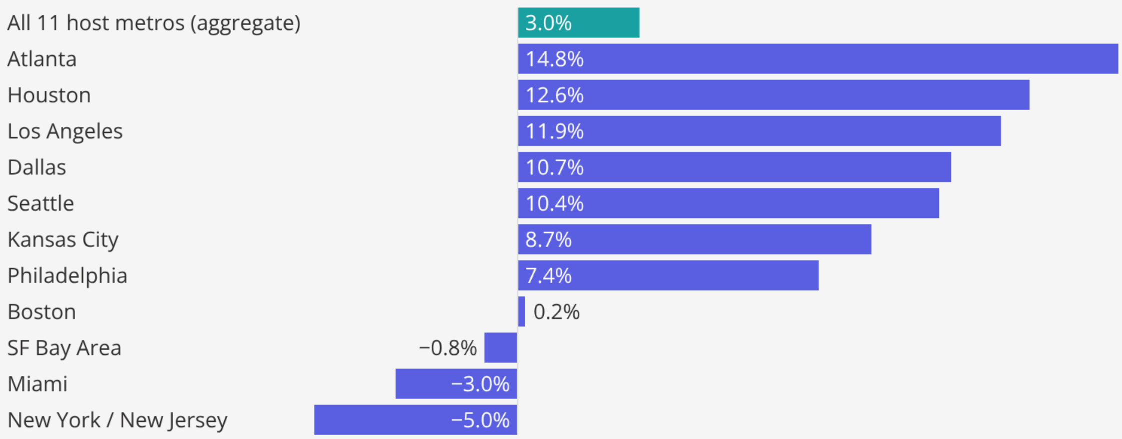
Lesson 5: Central Stadiums Help – But Aren't Essential

Where the stadium sits may influence how widely mega-event traffic benefits a city. Some of the markets with the strongest retail and dining corridor gains – including Atlanta, Houston, Seattle, and Philadelphia – hosted matches within the principal city rather than at more distant suburban venues, allowing match-day activity to overlap more naturally with existing commercial districts.

But Dallas and Los Angeles show that a central stadium isn't essential. Both saw double-digit corridor gains despite hosting matches outside the city center, while creating major fan destinations and World Cup programming elsewhere in the market. The broader lesson is that cities may be able to extend the economic footprint of a mega-event by giving fans multiple places to gather, move through, and spend beyond the stadium itself.

Corridor Traffic Rose Most Where the Stadium Sat Inside the City

Day-of-Week-Neutralized Change in Retail & Dining Corridor Visits, Full Tournament Window (Jun 11 - Jul 19) vs. 2025, by Host Metro



Aggregate of the 45 street-level retail/dining corridors over the full tournament window, day-of-week-neutralized: 2026 (Jun 11 - Jul 19) vs. the same weekdays in 2025 (Jun 12 - Jul 20).

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Why It Matters

- Stadium location can shape how naturally event-day traffic flows into existing retail, dining, and entertainment districts.
- When venues sit outside major commercial areas, cities can broaden the opportunity by creating additional fan hubs in established activity centers.
- Property owners and operators should evaluate not just proximity to the venue, but whether their properties sit along the routes and destinations fans are likely to use throughout the event.
- For civic stakeholders, the goal should be to design a network of connected fan destinations rather than relying on the stadium alone to generate spillover.

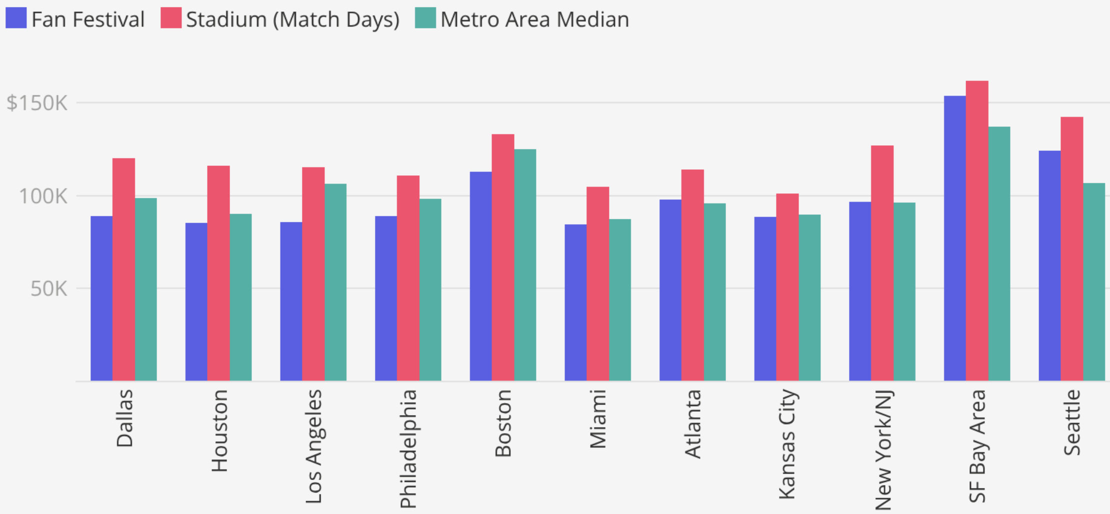
Lesson 6: Public Activations Can Broaden Participation

From official FIFA Fan Festivals to multi-site fan zone programs, every host market paired its stadium with free or relatively low-cost public gathering places where fans could gather to watch the matches together.

Even when the main event is exclusive or capacity-constrained, public activations can broaden participation and create new hubs of activity. Across the markets analyzed, activation visitors came from lower-income trade areas than did stadium visitors.

Fan Festivals Broadened the World Cup's Consumer Reach Beyond the Stadium

Median Household Income in Captured Market of Official FIFA Fan Festival & Stadium on Match Days, With the Metro-Area Median for Reference



In the eight cities with a single official FIFA Fan Festival, traffic metrics for the official site are analyzed; in New York/NJ, SF Bay Area and Seattle, which ran more distributed, multi-site fan-zone programs, the largest flagship venue is used: New York/NJ = Queens HQ (USTA Billie Jean King NTC), SF Bay Area = Thrive City (Chase Center Plaza), and Seattle = Seattle Center Event Lawn. Each site is measured over its own fan-fest operating window on World Cup match days only.

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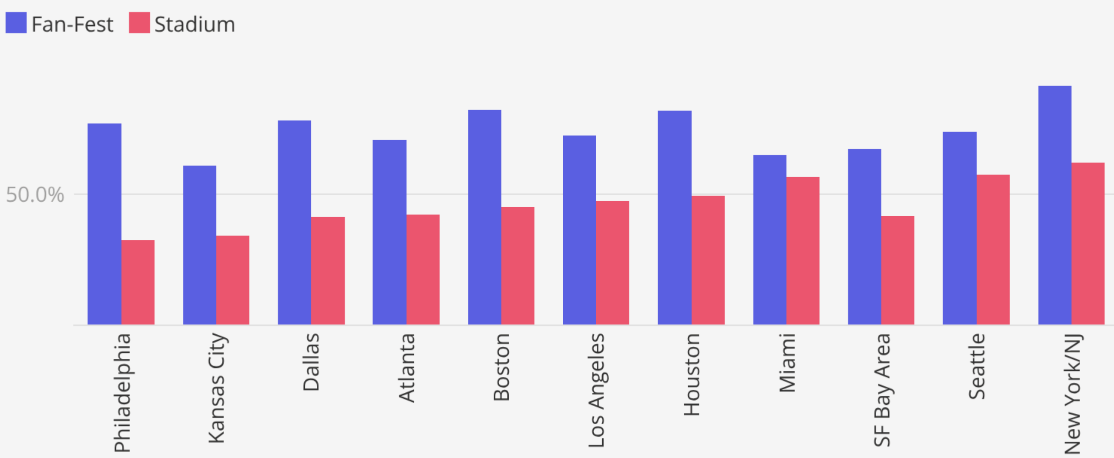
The public activations were also much more likely to attract locals – suggesting that free or more accessible programming can engage a broader cross-section of the host community and make otherwise exclusive mega-events more locally inclusive.

Fan Fests Brought the World Cup to a Broader Local Audience

Share of Visitors Traveling Under 30 Miles to Fan Fest (on Event Days) and to Stadiums (on World Cup Match Days)



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Why It Matters

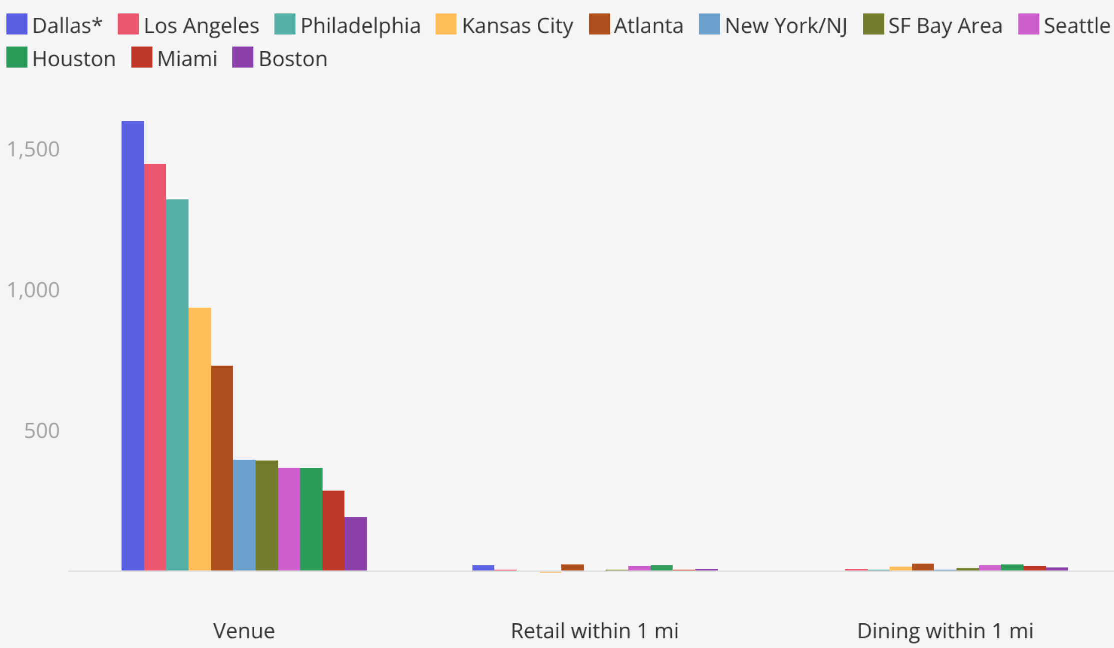
- Public activations can give local residents who are less likely to attend the main venue another way to take part in a major event.
- Satellite activations can make mega-events feel more local.
- Audience strategy should differ by venue type. Stadiums and public activations may attract meaningfully different consumer profiles, so programming, pricing, sponsorships, and merchandising should be tailored accordingly.

Lesson 7: Activations Can Extend Reach – But Spillover Isn’t Automatic

World Cup fan sites drew enormous traffic increases, but nearby retail and dining saw much smaller – and highly variable – lifts, showing once again that crowds do not automatically translate into commercial spillover.

Fan Fests Packed the Venue; Nearby Retail & Dining Saw a Smaller Lift

Avg. Daily Visits on Each Fan Fest’s Operating Days* vs. the Five Weeks Before the World Cup, Day-of-Week-Adjusted – Official FIFA Fan Festival Cities



*Dallas venue is capped at +1600+ in the chart to not skew the visual, since the Pavilion sat essentially unused pre-World Cup and its lift is off-scale (~+43,811.1%). In the eight cities with a single official FIFA Fan Festival, traffic metrics for the official site are analyzed; in New York/NJ, SF Bay Area and Seattle, which ran more distributed, multi-site fan-zone programs, the largest flagship venue is used: New York/NJ = Queens HQ (USTA Billie Jean King NTC), SF Bay Area = Thrive City (Chase Center Plaza), and Seattle = Seattle Center Event Lawn. Each site is measured over its own fan-fest operating window on World Cup match days only.

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The contrast across markets points to the role of site context and event design. Houston's Fan Fest, for example, [sat](#) in EaDo, a neighborhood with an existing mix of businesses, and allowed attendees to leave and re-enter freely – which may have contributed to the 22.4% and 24.0% increases in nearby retail and dining traffic, respectively. Los Angeles, meanwhile, took a more self-contained approach – its Coliseum activation prohibited re-entry and offered extensive food and beverage on-site – and the retail and dining traffic within a one-mile radius only increased 7.2% and 8.0%, respectively. These examples suggest that site context and event design can influence whether visitor spending remains inside an activation or spreads into the surrounding district.

Why It Matters

- Even highly trafficked activations may generate only modest gains for nearby businesses if visitors remain concentrated within the event footprint and can purchase food, beverage, and merchandise on site.
- Re-entry policies, pedestrian connections, wayfinding, and the balance of on-site versus off-site offerings can all affect how much visitors circulate beyond the activation.

Capturing the CRE Opportunity

The World Cup demonstrated that mega-events can create meaningful commercial opportunities, but careful analysis is needed to identify where, when, and for whom those opportunities are most likely to materialize.

For investors and occupiers, that means focusing on neighborhood-level opportunities rather than assuming a citywide boom. The biggest winners were properties and businesses that aligned with the fan journey in terms of location, tenant mix, experiential offerings, and event activation strategy. Simply being in a host city was not enough; creating a compelling reason for consumers to engage was the defining factor behind performance.

Major Investor Implications

1. Specific location matters more than market selection.

The report's strongest finding is that World Cup-related demand was highly localized. Retail and dining gains were concentrated around stadiums, fan zones, and other key gathering places rather than spread across entire metropolitan areas. Investors should focus on assets near venues, entertainment districts, pedestrian corridors, and activation sites, as these properties were best positioned to capture event-driven spending.

2. Experience-oriented properties are likely to outperform.

Bars and pubs – which function as natural gathering places for communal viewing and socializing – captured some of the largest visitation gains during the tournament, while most traditional retail and restaurant categories saw limited benefits. Mixed-use properties with experiential tenant mixes may therefore be more resilient and better positioned to capitalize on future major events.

3. Tenant mix is a critical value driver.

The World Cup did not create a broad retail tailwind. Sporting goods was the only analyzed retail category that consistently benefited across all host markets. This suggests that investors should assess whether a property's tenants align with event-related consumer behavior rather than assume nearby crowds will translate into sales.

4. Placemaking and activation create value.

Markets with established fan districts, public activations, and connected entertainment corridors often extend spending beyond the stadium. Investors should view major events as opportunities to activate public spaces, develop programming, and strengthen district identity rather than rely solely on venue proximity.

Major Occupier Implications

1. Relevance to the event matters more than proximity.

Businesses benefited when they became part of the fan experience. Bars and pubs dramatically outperformed other dining categories because they offered communal viewing opportunities. Occupiers should focus on creating a clear event-related reason for consumers to visit.

2. Plan for peaks, not the entire event.

Traffic gains were often concentrated around specific matches rather than sustained over the full tournament. Staffing, inventory, marketing, and promotions should be aligned with key event dates and anticipated high-interest games.

3. Create experiential offerings.

Restaurants and retailers without a natural event connection can still participate through themed merchandise, watch parties, digital displays, special menus, sponsorships, and fan-focused experiences. The report suggests that occasion-driven demand can be created rather than simply inherited.

4. Fan zones are opportunities, not guarantees.

Some activation sites generated strong retail and dining spillover, while others did not. Occupiers near fan events should not assume that crowds will automatically translate into sales. Connectivity, visibility, event design, and ease of movement between the activation and surrounding businesses are major determinants of success.