

World Cup creates long-term winners

AUDREY D'ANGELO

Cape Town – By hosting the soccer World Cup last year, Germany had attracted business and investment that transformed its sagging economy, changed the negative mood of its population to one of optimism and improved its image as a tourism destination, marketing guru Nikolaus Ebert said yesterday at the University of Cape Town Graduate School of Business.

Germany had developed the event to mean “much more than soccer”, he said. Although the German team did not win the World Cup, “the true winner was Germany”, which became the second most valuable country brand in the Nation Brand index. The country lifted tourism bookings by a third and reduced unemployment by 20 percent.

If South Africa used this example to provide “the best World Cup ever”, as President Thabo Mbeki had promised, it would enjoy the benefits for years to come.

Ebert said that two years before the event, Germany’s population was suffering collective depression, with consumers not buying and jobs being lost.

The euphoria of taking down the Berlin Wall and reuniting the country had gone. People from



GET THE BALL ROLLING Construction of the 2010 soccer World Cup stadium in Green Point is proceeding at pace

PHOTO: GARY VAN WYK

eastern Europe wanted to share in the prosperity, and the west Germans resented the influx.

But Germans were persuaded to understand the grand vision of what hosting the World Cup could mean and the nation changed its image from one of cold, unfriendly efficiency to outgoing, hospitable and innovative.

One of the most inspired innovations was the Fan Festival, which compensated for the fact

that only 4 percent of tickets to matches were available to Germans by setting up giant television screens on which millions of people from all over the world who could not get into the stadiums watched games together.

Volunteers were trained in how to greet and welcome foreigners from different countries, and the police treated fans not as potential hooligans but as visitors who had come to have fun.

