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Insight:

Fan Festivals key to making 2010 a People's World Cup

At the recent 2010 Opportunities Conference held at the Emperor's Palace in Johannesburg, the FIFA marketing director, Alexander Koch, made it clear that a large percentage of the business opportunities for 2010 will arise from and revolve around the so-called fan festivals.

At the 2006 FIFA World Cup held in Germany, the introduction of fan festivals was necessitated by simple arithmetic: Out of 2.9 million tickets, less than 24% had been allocated to German fans in other words, less than 700,000. Contrast this with 45 million Germans known for having an interest in watching the world cup soccer, and you quickly understand that the German LOC was hard pressed to re-invent the viewing experience of the 2006 World Cup.

This is when an innovation that had been introduced to soccer fans four years prior at the South Korea / Japan World Cup, presented the solution: Hosting fan festivals where the only limitation was the size of the viewing area. However, as obvious as this appears in hindsight, at the time the LOC's proposal encountered scepticism and doubt from many a stakeholder, including FIFA.

At an average €2,000 to 3,000 per square metre of video screen per week, the financial risk appeared overbearing for many, considering that bigger cities like Berlin would need up to 14 screens to fill up a single fan mile (i.e. a fan festival stretching from one point of the city centre to another, in this case over a distance of 1.4km). Considering that Germany had experienced heavy rainfalls just days before the opening game, observers were cautioning against the vagaries of the German summer, pointing out that rain might not only drive spectators away but could also ruin the expensive giant screens that were required.



Dr Nikolaus Eberl



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The New Rules of the Game

In the end, more than 2,000 public viewing events ensured that in addition to the 2.9 million ticket-holders more than 21 million visitors could experience the games in public, extending the reach of the event more than seven-fold and creating a new culture of public viewing. According to Dr Hans-Jürgen Schulke, head of the task force 'Public Viewing 2006', the overwhelming success of the fan festivals was due to the following factors:

- Excitement generated about the World Cup before the games started (so-called 'Vorfreude' or Anticipation);
- Superior technology that allowed crystal clear pictures and clear sound even in bright sunlight and within 200m²;
- The consistently great weather (no rain, plenty of sunshine until the evening hours);
- International visitors from all over the world, offering the opportunity to make friends from 32 nations;
- The winning hosting team that contrary to expectations displayed great passion and stunned the spectators with their lightning fast attacks;
- Free admission to the events (in sharp contrast to the high prices for stadium attendance);
- The prospect of joining a mass event and being able to amble around at free will, without being confined to a predetermined space and time;

- Large percentage of female visitors (nearly half of fan festival spectators were women) which removed the antagonism so often encountered in stadia;
- The innate desire of Germans to congregate and celebrate big events together rather than sit at home in front of their TV set.

The tremendous success of the fan festivals (which took everybody involved by surprise) was to a large extent due to the sentiment of fraternity that arose amongst the spectators and satisfied the human need for connection. Thus, the fan festivals created a new culture of experiencing the games peacefully, celebratory, in a conciliatory manner where even the losers would join the winning side in unseen jubilations.



In an era of the virtual reality many times overtaking the physical realm of the individual, the fan festivals proved that the human being harbors an innate desire to be part of a greater community and tap into the collective unconscious by morphing the individual psyche into the collective psyche of joyous celebration. Thus Franz Beckenbauer was apt in summarizing his experience at the fan festivals when he said: "Watching the fans celebrate jointly at the fan miles ... this is how the dear lord wanted the world to be."

Ironically, the huge success of the fan festival concept at the 2006 World Cup has created a host of new competitors for 2010: no longer do fan festival venues require the physical games to be held within the borders of their city or country.



Skwatta Kamp

Implications for South Africa 2010

Germany has changed the rules of the game in that the third dimension of experiencing soccer besides the stadia and on TV has enhanced the experience, by replacing the elements of altercation and aggression many times found inside the stadia with the emotions of joyous celebration and peaceful jubilation.

Whereas previously the hosting nation held the keys to attracting World Cup visitors exclusively, now any destination can host fan festivals, and in fact Germany alone has hosted five soccer fan festivals with more than 100,000 visitors each since the world cup. Since fan festivals typically run throughout the day (and late into the evening), the entertainment aspects are much different from providing 90 minutes of soccer only. Already Switzerland and Austria are working feverishly on surpassing the German bench-



marks next year at the Euro 2008, and South African venues will have to reinvent the fan festival experience in order to draw visitors to our shores.

No longer are we holding a monopoly on visitors by virtue of hosting the World Cup. The rules of engaging the global soccer fraternity have changed for good and new competitors are on the horizon that are staking their claim on the millions of fans that want to experience the beautiful game on the big screen and be part of the action that the large festival crowds provide.

The good news is that fan festivals provide a unique form of destination branding: no longer are spectators and TV viewers restricted to views from inside the stadia only (which show little more than crowds and advertising billboards, with minimal exposure to the hosting city); as evidenced by Germany, this is a unique opportunity for the hosting destination to choose venues in close proximity to tourist attractions (such as the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin).

Fan Festivals Made in South Africa

It was not quite Munich or Berlin, but Gauteng got its first real taste of the fan festivals recently at the Dorothy Nyembe Park in Dobsonville, Soweto, where several thousand football fans revelled in the Telkom Charity Cup tournament (which was held in Mmabatho, about 100 kilometres away). While two giant screens provided all the match action, vendors sold food, drinks and football memorabilia

and local community radio station Jozi FM joined in on the action by setting up a mobile radio station.

At the same time, a Joint Operations Committee, which comprised of the local policing forum and the South African Police Services, monitored the entire fan festival from a vantage point outside.

Entrances to the festival were manned by scores of security personnel and all cars driving into the designated parking area were thoroughly searched. "We are not allowing any glass containers into the fan festival. Fans can bring in alcohol, but only in plastic containers," one vigilant guard said, opening up the boot of a car.



First Fan Festival, Dorothy Nyembe Park, Soweto

In the lead-up to the match, a DJ pumped out house music hits, adding a carnival atmosphere to the scene. A few inebriated fans stripped themselves to the waist, waving their T-shirts and taunting their rivals. During the two-hour interval between matches, the hip-hop outfit Skwatta Kamp, Choppa and other musicians entertained the jubilant Pirates and Celtic fans.

After his team lost in the final, a disappointed Tumi Seele, a Pirates fan from Meadowlands, said that even though his team lost on the day,

he had enjoyed himself tremendously.

The fan festival provided a good atmosphere for soccer fans who couldn't make it to Mafikeng. "Even though my team lost I had a good time and was free to move around, a pleasure which I can't afford in a packed stadium," he said. Gauteng Government Sports Department spokesperson Nomazwe Ntlokwana said there were no security problems and the event was an important exercise for 2010 rolemakers. 'The fans were well behaved and we can now take some of the lessons forward.'

The implications for South Africa 2010, and Africa for that matter, are clear: It is no longer enough to entertain visitors with soccer alone. The fan festival phenomenon is calling for branding the soccer experience uniquely through other dimensions of entertainment, such as music, arts and culture and the natural beauty of the South African landscape. The backdrop of the majestic Drakensberg or the vineyards along the Garden Route, the beaches of KwaZulu-Natal and the rolling hills of the Eastern Cape provide for unique touchpoints that have the potential for turning visiting fans into raving supporters of Brand South Africa.

Competing on attitude rather than scenery

However, sight-seeing landmarks alone are not enough for successful destination branding in an era of globalization, where many a destination can boast



their beautiful beaches, pristine mountains and crystal clear lakes, people have become the key differentiator and it is the people-to-people dimension that makes the difference between a memorable experience and an average one.

This is the reason why Paris, recently ranked the world's third-most attractive city (behind Sydney and London) in an international opinion poll, came only 52nd out of 60 for friendliness. The haughty indifference of Parisians to tourists is especially troublesome, since a recent brand loyalty survey conducted by IBM showed that the reason for clients to quit a brand, is not so much quality of the product (14%) but rather "an attitude of indifference experienced from an employee".

The stakes are high and the cost of unfriendliness measures in billions. With 16 million people staying in Paris hotels every year, it is the world's most popular urban tourist destination. Tourism in Paris is worth more than €14 billion (R138 billion) a year and employs 150,000 people.

Recognizing the massive opportunity cost associated to unfriendliness, French tourist officials declared the 9th July 2007 the first Paris Tourist Day, encouraging local residents to be polite, welcoming and helpful for 24 hours. Tourist staff clad in orange was sent to city's most visited sites, bearing the slogan "Paris est a vous" (Paris is yours) and handing out a commitment charter reading, amongst others, "I will take the time to give information to tourists".

The latest destination to join the friendliness competition has been China, which recently announced guidelines for Beijing police to clean up Beijing's image ahead of the 2008 Olympic Games. Police officers are under new orders to lose their arrogance, clean up their foul language, and are told not to hang up when citizens call to report crimes.

According to police surveys the common complaint against officers in big cities like Beijing is bad attitude, with authorities often responding to calls for help by saying "It has got nothing to do with me. Go and bug someone else". Or "No evidence? Then don't bother us".

The municipal police authority has circulated a code of conduct pamphlet

that shows how to project a "sympathetic and police image", and bans officers from sounding sirens unnecessarily, hanging up on people who report crimes, or responding with indifference to people needing help.

To convert visitors into brand advocates for South Africa, a national friendliness campaign is required that will unlock the massive people potential South Africans are known for.



Beijing Police told to clean up their act

Dr Nikolaus Eberl is the author of "BrandOvation™: How Germany won the World Cup of Nation Branding" (Academy Press 2007). His forthcoming sequel is called "BrandOvation™ 2010: How Africa can win the World Cup of Destination Branding" (scheduled for release in November 2007). He can be contacted for semi-nars and keynote addresses at www.brandovation.com or email at nikolaus@brandovation.com

21 Million visit 12 Fan-Festivals



1. Hamburg
2. Hannover
3. Berlin
4. Gelsenkirchen
5. Dortmund
6. Leipzig
7. Köln
8. Frankfurt
9. Kaiserslautern
10. Nürnberg
11. Stuttgart
12. München