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**KZN:20070801 The Mercury  
Success of soccer festivals has changed rules about attracting visitors**

Nikolaus Eberl, the co-author of BrandOvation:How Germany Won the World Cup of Internal Branding, writes that fan festivals have changed the World Cup experience for ever

FAN festivals during the 2006 German World Cup were necessitated by simple arithmetic: out of the 2.9 million available tickets, less than 24% had been allocated to German fans. That meant that fewer than 700 000 of the more than 45 million soccer fans would get to see the matches, putting pressure on the German local organising committee to "reinvent" the viewing experience.

Hosting fan festivals, an innovation introduced to soccer fans four years earlier at the South Korea/Japan World Cup, was met with scepticism from both Fifa and local stakeholders.

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 match, observers were cautioning rain might not only drive spectators away, but could also ruin the expensive giant screens. In the end, more than 2 000 public viewing events - in addition to the 2.9 million ticket-holders - saw more than 21 million visitors experiencing the matches, thus extending the reach of the event more than sevenfold.

Dr Hans-Jürgen Schulke, the head of the taskforce 'Public Viewing 2006', said the overwhelming success of the fan festivals was due to the following factors:

- Excitement generated about the World Cup before the games started;
  - Superior technology allowing crystal clear pictures and clear sound even in bright sunlight and within 200m<sup>2</sup>;
  - The consistently great weather (no rain, plenty of sunshine until the evening hours);
  - International visitors from all over the world;
  - The host team that displayed great passion and stunned the spectators with their lightning fast attacks;
  - Free admission to the events;
  - The prospect of joining a mass event and being able to walk around freely, without being confined to a predetermined space and time; and
  - A large percentage of female visitors, which removed the antagonism so often encountered in stadiums.
- The huge fan festival success 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. Germany has changed the rules of the game by enhancing the experience.
- Previously the host nation held the keys to attracting World Cup visitors exclusively, now any destination can host fan festivals, and, in fact, Germany 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), entertainment goes beyond providing 90 minutes of soccer only. South African venues will have to reinvent the fan festival experience to draw visitors to our shores.
- Fan festivals offer the greatest opportunity and threat for South African destinations in 2010. 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. New competitors are staking their claim on the millions of soccer fans.
- The fan festival phenomenon is calling for branding the soccer experience uniquely through other dimensions of entertainment and the natural beauty of the South African landscape.

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