



“Win in Africa, With Africa”: Social responsibility, event image, and destination benefits. The case of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa

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ABSTRACT

Applying image transfer related to sponsorship theory and the cognitive–affective model of consumer behavior, this study explores how the deployment of a socially responsible program by a multinational (non-governmental) sport organization impacts the image of a mega sport event. Using the 2010 FIFA World Cup as the research context, the hypothesized model is tested among a sample of international sport tourists ($N = 6606$) from all nine host cities (ten stadiums) in South Africa during the tournament. The structural model results demonstrate that: (1) tourists' familiarity with the 'Win in Africa, with Africa' program, and (2) the perception of FIFA as a socially responsible organization influence event image and one form of consumer patronage.

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1. Introduction

Over the past two decades, nations from around the world have competed to host mega sport events because countries (and increasingly cities) perceive such events as potential re-imaging opportunities (Hiller, 2006; Smith, 2005). Particularly for developing nations, mega-events can be integral to redefining a country's global status and socio-political composition (Cornelissen, 2008). For example, the 19th FIFA World Cup held in June 11–July 11, 2010 was an opportunity for South Africa to not only achieve the domestic goals of social cohesion and economic impact, but also help the African Continent establish higher international prominence (Swart & Bob, 2007). Irrespective of the country's hosting objectives, event owners such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) also associate their organizational plans with the event's image (FIFA, 2010; IOC, 2010). However, there is little empirical support demonstrating if certain organizational strategies (e.g., sustainability, social responsibility, environmentalism, etc.) impact event owner perceptions and whether these perceptions in turn influence the event's image have not been tested.

Scholars have suggested that mega-event hosting decisions should be justified in terms of social, feel-good, and/or image effects

(Maennig & Porsche, 2008; Preuss, 2007; Shoval, 2002), which has bolstered researcher enthusiasm for understanding the intangible legacies of such events. Historically, however, these intangibles have been viewed only as footnotes (Maennig & Porsche, 2008), including the concepts of national pride and host country image. As more attention is focused on the overall image of the event, it is likely that certain ancillary benefits of hosting might include consumer event perceptions, which Chalip (2004) argued are integrally related to both the image of the event and host nation.

In the case of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the event's image was especially important for FIFA. Since South Africa is a developing nation with significant poverty, health, and safety issues (Allmers & Maennig, 2009), among the most historically troubled, and lowest on the Nation Brand Index of any previous host (NBI, 2009), bolstering the event's image was regarded as a critical success metric. From FIFA's perspective, the way South Africa managed the tournament was an important test case for other developing nations with similar characteristics. Given the international exposure of the World Cup, leveraging the social programs associated with the event was one way of enhancing the perception of FIFA and the event.

The primary social effort used to enhance the World Cup was the 'Win in Africa, with Africa' program, established to help the African continent beyond the event (FIFA, 2010). Boasting a \$70 million budget, the program was comprised of three primary objectives: (1) develop the game of football in Africa; (2) use football to touch the

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African Continent; and (3) use football to build a better future for Africa. Kott (2005) noted that organizing committees and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) use events such as the World Cup as catalysts to address pressing social issues and demonstrate their commitment to (corporate) social responsibility (SR). The appeal of the World Cup provided FIFA with a global stage to promote a program with both developmental and socially responsible underpinnings, in a country where the prevailing social conditions were present for such interventions.

While SR scholarship is gaining momentum in the sport and tourism literature, limited attention has been devoted to large-scale mega sport events (exceptions include Babiak & Wolfe, 2006; Walker, Heere, Parent, & Drane, 2010), and studies of how social program familiarity and perceptions of an event owner can influence event image perceptions have not been conducted. In addition, it is unknown whether efforts by the event owner to bolster the event's image will influence the behavioral intentions of consumers. Given this gap in the literature and the relative infancy of SR research in sport and tourism, the purpose of this study was to test whether familiarity with the 'Win in Africa, with Africa' program influenced the perception of FIFA as socially responsible, and subsequently the image of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. We also tested whether a positive event image had a trickledown effect to other areas of consumer behavior exhibited by international visitors to South Africa.

2. Research setting: FIFA World Cup and social responsibility

Hosting the World Cup yields a variety of impacts on both the host region and FIFA as the event owner. For the host destination, tourism, infrastructure, and economic benefits are the most notable (Bohlmann & Van Heerden, 2008; Kim & Morrison, 2005; Ritchie, 1984), while the social and cultural impacts of the event are also evident (Kim & Petrick, 2005). For FIFA, notwithstanding the direct fiduciary benefits derived from the event, image-related outcomes are particularly salient — especially if the event is to be viewed as operationally successful. In addition, the World Cup is more than just football; it is about social progress, political unity, and cultural understanding (FIFA, 2010). Accordingly, FIFA proclaims a responsibility "... to touch the world using football as a symbol of hope and integration" (FIFA, 2010; para. 3). In their Activity Report (2004, p. 33), FIFA noted that their social responsibility is not simply restricted to 'doing good', but rather:

... to achieve a lasting effect [in social responsibility]. To this end, FIFA has maintained numerous partnerships, in some cases over several years, with various United Nations organizations, as well with various Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). In the areas of the rights and protection of children, equality, health and education, FIFA is helping to tackle some of the biggest social challenges"; and "... More than 40 percent of FIFA's income goes directly towards supporting the grassroots of the game, developmental work, and partnerships with relief organizations.

Beyond their global 'Football for Hope' campaign (i.e., a movement using football to achieve social development), the 2010 World Cup was used as a stage to broadcast FIFA's commitment to regional social responsibility (FIFA Activity Report, 2009). For example, the 'Win in Africa, with Africa' program was their most promoted and financially supported initiative to provide tools and skills for South Africa (and the African Continent) to continue its own development. Through this program, FIFA greatly improved the conditions for football in all of Africa by providing specialized football turf for 52 African nations prior to the start of the 2010 tournament. In addition, FIFA also created programs that use football for human

and social development, health promotion, and the promotion of peace by supporting local organizations around South Africa and the African Continent. These programs, coupled with FIFA's additional commitments to the African Continent (and world), helped showcase their socially responsible mission that aligns with their core product of football.

The examination of FIFA's social responsibility is important since sport (particularly football) has the capacity to serve as a meaningful vehicle to promote and deliver socially beneficial programs (Smith & Westerbeek, 2007). The extant research has shown that embracing SR can stimulate positive image perceptions (e.g., Maignan & Ralston, 2002; Margolis & Walsh, 2003); enhance an organization's reputation (Walker & Kent, 2009); and drive consumer purchase behaviors (e.g., Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Mohr & Webb, 2005). However, while altruistic intentions may guide social program development, the predominant understanding is that most SR activities are responses to demands from consumers who can directly benefit the firm (Siegel, 2009). Porter and Kramer (2002) agreed that while SR can provide a competitive organizational advantage, it will only do so if the cause reciprocally benefits the organization. Therefore, it is not surprising that FIFA would financially support and vigorously promote a program that has direct benefits for both the organization and the image of their marquee product (i.e., the FIFA World Cup). This perspective is particularly germane in a World Cup context because of the significant media attention and public awareness that encompasses the month-long tournament. This attention affords FIFA the opportunity to communicate socially desirable messages to a global audience, which should influence consumer attitudes toward the organization and its mission.

The perception of SR refers to the understanding of how effective an organization meets its societal obligations (Lichtenstein, Drumwright, & Braig, 2004), and evidence that perceived SR influences the organizational variables of credibility, advocacy, and behavioral intentions has been well-documented. For example, Becker-Olsen, Cudmore, and Hill (2006) demonstrated that SR had a positive effect on organizational credibility. Brown, Dacin, Pratt, and Whetten (2006, p. 105) maintained that the associations consumers assign to organizations on the basis of SR "... serve as the 'reality' of the organization for an individual", and what they believe can ultimately influence other organizational perceptions. Further, Rifon, Choi, Trimble, and Li (2004) identified that consumers perceive an organization as more credible when it supported a cause congruent with its operations. The following theoretical framework supports the proposition that social program familiarity and favorable organizational perceptions can enhance the perceived image of a mega-event.

3. Theoretical framework

The literature is replete with examples of how and why sponsoring events can build product awareness, strengthen brand image, and stimulate association transfer between the event and the sponsor (Gwinner, 1997; Gwinner & Eaton, 1999). This transfer of perceptual cues aids to shape consumer (or potential consumers') overall event perceptions (Wohlfeil & Whelan, 2006). For information transfer to take place, however, event sponsors and owners must reach consumers at a cognitive level.

Researchers have both theoretically opined and empirically demonstrated that consumer product knowledge and product-related experiences stimulate information processing, product evaluations, and behavioral responses to sponsorship messages (e.g., Cornwell & Maignan, 1998; Lacey, Close, & Finney, 2010; Pope, Voges, & Brown, 2009; Tsai, 2007). Researchers have also recognized that both cognitive and affective states can significantly influence responses to organizational messages (Eagly & Chaiken,

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