

# A CAMEO EFFECT ON SPONSORSHIP BRANDS?: EXAMINING THE EVALUATIONS OF TOURISTS DURING THE 2010 SOUTH AFRICA FIFA WORLD CUP

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## Abstract

A 'cameo appearance' describes the rotational hosting nature of many of these mega-events (e.g. Olympic Games, FIFA World Cup, Commonwealth Games, etc.) meaning that a single country very rarely hosts the event more than once in a person's lifetime. Therefore, different countries create the backdrop for the event itself. The phrase 'cameo appearance' is often reserved for celebrities or other notable figures who arrive on the scene, for instance, in a play or film. Mega-events are celebrities in that these events are elite characterized by the extraordinarily large presence, reach and audience of the event (Florek, Breitbarth and Conejo, 2008). The FIFA World Cup is a global sporting event with teams from 32 countries representing six different continents.

A leading motivation for hosting the mega-event is to utilize the high profile nature of the event to enhance the image of the country at home and abroad (Heslop et al. 2010). Certainly, corporate sponsor/marketers seem interested in the unique communications opportunity to broadly engage consumers with their brands in an uncluttered space as evidenced by the magnitude of current sponsorship revenues. For example, the Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympics, generated CDN\$756 million in sponsorship revenues (Seguin et al., 2010). While the views of host country tourists towards mega-events have been investigated previously, little work has examined the relationships of host country, mega-events and sponsor images. Further, this study explores the intersection for sport tourists who may be more committed to the mega-event than regular tourists or residents.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the pattern of

relationships among tourist images of the host country, the mega-event and a major sponsor for the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. These images are expected to be related as indicated through attribution theory that explains how consumers draw inferences about actors (e.g. sponsors) using character (e.g. host country) or situational (e.g. mega-event) information (Kelley and Michela, 1980). Indeed, based on the work by Heine and Buchtel (2009), character-based information is expected to have more influence on tourists' behavioural intentions towards sponsors than situational information.

## Methodology and Analysis

The data for this study was collected in Cape Town, South Africa during the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Tourists were intercepted in public areas frequented by tourists to the city. The questionnaire collected evaluative views about the host country, FIFA World Cup and Coca-Cola as a leading sponsor. The sample size for this study was 332 respondents characterized as 64.5% male, a median age in the range of 21-30, and 50.9% obtaining a post secondary degree or less.

The evaluations made about the country and people of South Africa, the FIFA World Cup and of Coca-Cola are presented in Table 1. Respondents were asked to answer the items indicated on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 was least favourable and 5 was most favourable. In this study, the highest evaluations were provided by respondents for the event itself, followed by the evaluations for the host country and its people, and the evaluations of an event sponsor. All the evaluations are significantly higher than the scale midpoint.

The SEM results are illustrated in Figure 1 and demonstrate a pattern of relationships where the host country context is important to sponsorship evaluations through the evaluation of the mega-event itself. However, the model does not support the direct relationship of country image evaluation to the sponsor evaluation. Rather, the host country impacts on sponsors are felt through their effects on overall event evaluations. This model is a good representation of the data as indicated by the goodness of fit statistics (e.g. GFI, CFI and NNFI are all well above acceptable thresholds, and RMSEA and normed X2 are within accepted ranges).

## Conclusions

These results reflect the expectations of attribution theory that inferences about sponsors are drawn from the situational-based information of the mega-event and the indirect character-based information about the host country. The relationships are important despite FIFA only recently changing its communication strategy to emphasize the host country rather than the traditional focus of the sport itself. While the mega-event 'cameo appearance' in a host country may seem like a short-term commitment for sponsors, there is a long term message in these findings. The country context may be more aptly described as the 'cameo appearance' for this group of consumers as sport tourists are travelling to experience the event that may be better known to them than the destination itself. For this group of consumers, sponsors are seeing the positive effects of this 'cameo appearance'.

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