

Framing the Football Fan as Consumer
*A Content Analysis of the Coverage of Supporter in
The Star During the 2010 World Cup¹*

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As a global sports event, the men's World Cup of football offers an opportunity to dig into the contradiction between the idealising rhetoric of the Fédération International de Football Association (FIFA) and commercial realities, where the quest for profits is essential. According to FIFA, the purpose of the tournament is to "foster unity within the football world and to use football to promote solidarity, regardless of gender, ethnic background, faith or culture" ("FIFA Brand" quoted in Aranke and Zoller 2010: 132). In order to run a successful tournament, FIFA needs a host nation which can cultivate profound local emotional attachment to the game, and at the same satisfy the neoliberal interests of investors (ibid.: 135). With this in mind, our purpose in this article is to explore how supporters were framed in the media coverage of the 2010 men's football World Cup in South Africa. The research question which informs our article is: "Are supporters mainly interesting for the media as football-lovers or as consumers?" or "Are the supporters mainly presented in the media as football-lovers or as consumers?"

As a case study, we analysed how supporters were framed in the daily coverage of the Johannesburg-based newspaper *The Star*. We examined the news coverage and the representation of supporters in the advertisements, and interviewed the chief editor of *The Star*, Moegsien Williams. We also conducted a survey among supporters, but in this article we focus primarily on a content analysis of the newspaper material, although some findings from the survey and the interview are included for contextual purposes. By choosing only one newspaper, we can hardly claim to have proved how the media in general framed such a global event, so this must rather be seen as a case study that highlights some examples of how a media outlet framed the supporter culture during the period in question.

Bringing the nation together?

In an overview of South African media coverage of the World Cup, Guy Berger points out that forces were at work urging journalists to adopt a “positive” news agenda. To some extent this was initiated by public relations agencies at work on behalf of the organisers (Berger 2010: 179). It is not surprising that a recurring theme in talking with supporters, listening to official speeches, and reading the media was the expectation that the World Cup would be a catalyst for “bringing the nation together”. This partly reflected the political ambitions of the ANC-led government (Jacobs 2010: vii-viii). In addition, FIFA president Joseph (Sepp) S. Blatter made it clear that not only was South Africa hosting the event as a country, but it also represented the whole continent of Africa (Aranke & Zoller 2010: 136). The organisers and the government hoped that a “positive angle” could compensate for some negative press during the run-up to the World Cup warning both local and international supporters about the possibility of conflict, crime and bad organisation (op.cit.: iX).

The dilemma for journalists in such environments is to be part of a nation-building process, to represent a continent, and to be critical (Ottosen 2001). This dilemma was also mentioned by the editor of *The Star* during our interview: “There are three main sport codes in Africa, rugby – which is politically important – and then cricket which tends to speak to English speaking white South Africans. And then soccer (football), the sport for the black South Africans, so it’s a bit of a sports apartheid.”² When asked if he saw parallels to the 2006 World Cup in Germany and bringing Germans together to rally behind the flag for the first time since the Second World War, he said:

Precisely. This was an opportunity to go beyond the differences between the sports and look at a unifying future. But it would require a commitment by South African fans and the general public to be supportive. Take the match against Uruguay in Pretoria as an example. Ten minutes before the end, some people walked out in disgust. This is wrong. We have to support local soccer, support the professional soccer league, premier soccer league, and then build up to the next World Cup.

Claims for the Cup as a contributor to nation building were made in several articles in *The Star*, in both editorials and commentaries. In this study, we will show that *The Star* newspaper largely identified with the nation-building hopes attached to the World Cup and largely covered it in a supportive manner, while being critical of certain aspects. Notably, not all local media adopted the same stance and, in some cases, were even more critical.

Different opinions in the media

The vast majority of South African media lived up to the expectation of a “positive” framing in their coverage (Berger 2010). But it would be wrong to talk about a unified media in this respect. The idea of “bringing the nation together” through the World Cup was harshly opposed by Zola Maseko in the weekly *Mail & Guardian*’s first edition after the opening. Under the title “Rainbow-nation patriotism, pah”, Maseko points to the class differences, poverty among the blacks, and a country divided *de facto* along race lines. He writes: “To divert the attention of the masses huge fortunes and corruption runs wild, while poverty and non-delivery are the order of the day. All this as the masses are overcome by one month of delirious flag-waving and patriotism (kiss the Boer!)” (*Mail & Guardian* 18-24 June 2010).

Overall, the *Mail & Guardian* took a more critical approach to the whole World Cup event than did the *The Star*. They gave voice to those South Africans who protested against the World Cup, and serve as an example of the variations within the media in attitudes towards the Cup. Without getting much attention from the global media, thousands of South Africans protested against the government’s massive spending on the Cup at a demonstration in Durban on 16 June. These activists were joined by hundreds of stadium stewards caught up in an ongoing dispute over low wages. They were met by riot police with tear gas. The *Mail & Guardian* wrote:

“Get out FIFA mafia!” chanted the crowds in a Durban park, their ranks swelled by stewards who were involved in clashes with riot police on Monday after protests over their wages.

Monday’s protests triggered walkouts by other stewards, which have led South Africa’s police to take control at the World Cup stadiums in Cape Town, Port Elizabeth, Johannesburg and Durban.

Ever since it was awarded the staging rights, South Africa’s government has faced accusations it should not be spending hundreds of millions of dollars on stadiums when about 40% of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.

Spending on the World Cup has cost South Africa around \$4.3 billion, a significantly higher figure than was estimated in their initial bid, and due to a variety of factors, early hopes of a financial windfall for the country have largely been dashed ... FIFA expects its own World Cup profits to approach \$3 billion from television rights alone (*Mail & Guardian* 16 June 2010)

Even though *The Star* chose a more positive approach than the *Mail & Guardian*, in our interview, *The Star*’s editor said that in the build-up to the tournament his paper ran critical stories on corruption, problems with getting sites ready on time and so on. But when the World Cup finals started the paper adopted a positive and supportive angle. *The Star* hoped to increase circulation from

the event and a special supplement called “Shoot”, sponsored by the largest national telecommunications firm, Telkom. The editor of *The Star* admitted in our interview that the supplement could not have come about without sponsorship by Telkom, which was also a sponsor of the World Cup. Although there was a multitude of self-promotion by Telkom in the supplement, it was not clearly stated in the supplement that this was a sponsored product and a *de facto* advertising supplement. This mixture of journalistic article and sponsorship is ethically questionable and symbolises the commercialisation of journalistic coverage during a global event. The front page of the Shoot supplement on 23 June had this message on the front page: “Telkom – a proud national supporter – go do it for Africa”. Alongside this text were two photos of footballers. Whether this was a front page or an advertisement was not clear. By blurring distinctions in the media between supporters and consumers the supplement certainly provided motivation for the current study.

Background and previous research

In order to understand media globalisation, the expression the “world as one place” was introduced by Roland Robertson (1992). A major football tournament is an important “laboratory” for digging deeper into issues such as cultural identity and national media representation of a global event (Helland 2003).

Our approach was partly inspired by the claim that sport “is an ideal field for interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary approaches” (Mehus and Osborn 2010:90). Our hypothesis is that nationalistically-oriented sports journalism misses such basic questions as why football supporters travel to big tournaments and which aspects of the event they cherish. Perhaps supporters travel primarily to satisfy their identity *as* football supporters, but FIFA and, to a certain extent, the media, find them most interesting as consumers in a market (Desbordes et al. 2007), understanding consumers to be buyers of products such as tickets to matches; media products (access to matches on television, newspapers carrying reports from the tournament); supporter equipment and clothing; and food and drink at the venues. Up to this point, most studies of major sporting events have concentrated on opening ceremonies and their media coverage, without addressing fan reactions (Miller 2010). And football in South Africa received little attention from academics before the run-up to the World Cup (Alegi and Bolsmann 2010). Our research indicates the sticky indexicality of nationalism as well as supranational organisation and global finance.

A theoretical approach to fan culture

It is important to consider the Cup and its coverage in the media in the context of dominant discourses of fandom. The last century and a half of scholarship, policy and punditry has seen obsessive attempts to correlate the popular classes with antisocial conduct, emphasising the number and conduct of crowds, fans, and audiences: where they came from, how many there were, and what they did as a consequence of being present. This psy-function (psychiatry, psychology, psychoanalysis, and psychotherapy) has created what the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel called the “cultural dope”, a mythic figure who “produces the stable features of the society by acting in compliance with pre-established and legitimate alternatives of action that the common culture provides”. The common sense rationalities ... of here and now situations” used by ordinary people are obscured and derided by such categorisations (1992: 68).

German-British figurational sociology mixes the psy-function and sociology to comprehend sport. Norbert Elias analysed sport and social structure synchronically and diachronically, coining the term “figuration” to designate how people inhabit social positions in ways that vary over time and space. The figural keys to sport that he identified are exertion, contest, codification and collective meaningfulness. Without these factors, its magic attractions – tension and catharsis – cannot be guaranteed. Elias asks why there is such fascination with rule-governed contests between individuals and teams, evident in a trend that fans out from the European ruling classes after the sixteenth century (Elias 1978; Elias and Dunning 1986).

Sentiment and behaviour were codified from that time, supplanting excess and self-laceration with temperate auto-critique. The displacement of tension and the search for ordered leisure allocated to organised sport the task of controlling and training gentry, workers, and colonists alike. High tension and low risk blended popular appeal with public safety – a utilitarian calculus of time and joy (Elias 1978; Elias and Dunning 1986). These trends have been subject to local customisation and struggle. Henning Eichberg (1986) points to contradictory, non-linear shifts in European sport between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, with enclosure and openness in an ambiguous relationship. The spatial separation of sport from nature in late nineteenth-century industrialisation marked a trend whereby bodies in motion were progressively contained, enraging hygiene movements but permitting surveillance, spectacle and profit:

Battle lust and aggressiveness, for example, find socially permitted expression in the infighting of groups in society or, for that matter, in competitive sports. And they are manifest above all in “spectating”, say, at boxing matches; in the daydream-like identification with some few people who, in a moderate and precisely regulated way, are allowed to act out such affects. This living

out of affects in spectating or, for instance, just watching a murder film, is particularly characteristic of this kind of civilised society. It is crucial for the development of books and theatre, and decisive for the role of the cinema in our world. Already in education, in the prescriptions for conditioning young people, originally active, pleasurable aggression is transformed into a more passive and restrained pleasure in spectating, consequently into a mere visual enjoyment (Elias 1978: 240).

Following the figurational model, Joseph Maguire (1993) typifies today's sporting body as a model of discipline, a mirror, a site of domination, and a form of communication with the crowd. The disciplined body is remodelled through diet and training. The mirroring body functions as a machine of desire, encouraging mimetic conduct via the purchase of commodities. The dominating body exercises power through physical force, both on the field and, potentially, off it. Finally, the communicative body is an expressive totality, balletic and beautiful, wracked and wrecked. The fan invests in these bodies both as extensions of him or herself and as sites where repressed desire can be played out.

These taxonomies bleed into one another, and can be internally conflictual or straightforwardly functional. They are carried by human, commercial, media, and governmental practices that stretch and maintain boundaries between athletes, performances, aspirations and audiences. Twentieth-century social reformers sought to harness such energies to nation-building and economic productivity at the same time as capitalism was transforming sport into a practice of spectatorship that was as rule-governed as the games being watched – part of the spread of biopower. Biopower made the relationship of populations to their environments a central strut of governance, as productivity and health were linked to work and leisure both performatively and indexically. Each part was subject to human intervention and hence governmental interest, via forecasting, measuring, and estimating.

The figurational account, whereby sport is a release for otherwise unruly forms of public life as well as a means of generating profit, ran into problems when sport returned to its ungoverned origins in the 1970s. In Western Europe, live football became the crucible of such concerns, often impelled by concerns about nationalistic, racist, misogynistic, and hyper-masculinist conduct and the desire to control such urges as part of state power and commercial expansion. This “problem” was largely contained through *embourgeoisement* and governmentality. As stadia became all-seaters, the policing of everyday conduct grew more intense; and rival groups of fans were institutionalized in separate zones at matches (Brimson & Brimson 1996; Armstrong 1998; Robson 2000).

By the 2010 World Cup, the discourse on football supporters was split between figuration, the psy-function, resistance, commodification, and governmentality, which formed the backdrop to the Cup and its address to fans and

coverage of them. At a popular level, the core issue was a romantic attachment to a pre-commodified lifeworld where organic ties linked fans to clubs and players had affective rather than contingent connections to their teams. In their work on media representation of fan culture during the World Cup in France in 1998, Hugh O'Donnell and Neil Blain note “a variety of themes – media-tization; commodification; the fate of ideology in the world of consumption; the relationship between the local and the global; the nature of the symbolic value of public behaviour – which may require analyses from postmodern as well as modern standpoints” (1999: 211). With for-profit club sides of increasing importance to the game, the Cup remained a zone where some of these attachments to nationalism were seen to outweigh the mammon of salaries and the masculinist energies of hyper-nationalism were uncomfortably juxtaposed with a pacific, universalist discourse of beauty.

Content analyses of supporter-coverage in *The Star*

We chose *The Star* newspaper for a content analysis of fan culture during the World Cup in 2010 as a typical representative of the mainstream daily press in South Africa. *The Star* has its core market in Johannesburg, in 2008 it had a readership of 840 000, and it comes out six times a week. *The Star* is regarded as the leading “serious” or “quality” morning paper in Johannesburg, the main centre of the World Cup, where the opening match and the finals were played. The content analysis was conducted by a research assistant whose coding instructions defined the task as identifying articles and advertisements where supporters were mentioned in articles and visuals.³

The sample

The material collected covers the period 11 June – 25 June 2010, during the tournament’s qualifying round. It must be underlined that this sample does not claim to give a representative picture of the *The Star*’s overall coverage of the Cup. It is purely an analysis of how supporters were represented in *The Star* during this period.

The total sample of the items (advertisements and articles) was 527 units. In the two weeks during which the research was conducted, *The Star* carried hundreds of articles about the World Cup and the South African team nicknamed “Bafana Bafana”. Most of the front pages during this period were dominated by articles on the World Cup. An example is the front page of 11 June, the tournament’s opening day. The main story was a tribute to the World Cup itself, with the headline only the historic day of the beginning of the tournament “11/6 /2010” (with the colours of the South African flag shading the text). The

article graphically surrounded a photo of the World Cup trophy in the middle, between two titles for the two top articles: “The world in Bafana’s hands” and “Next moment of greatness”. The connotations of this front page are national pride, optimism and expectations, sentiments that were quite representative of many South Africans at this stage of the tournament.

The Star did not hide the fact that the newspaper supported the tournament. In the interview, the editor expressed this quite clearly:

We took a very positive stand from the beginning. We always had the view that the World Cup been given to South Africa to host, the World Cup was a right decision although some media elements across the globe were quite pessimistic about our ability to host an event of this magnitude, nature and size. We always believed that we would be able to host a successful World Cup, that we would be ready in time, and I think we were right.⁴

This outlook expressed itself in some enthusiastic, almost patriotic articles in *The Star*. One of these was printed on the first day of the World Cup under the title “Sing, South Africa the beloved country sing!” (*The Star*, 11 June 2010), making reference to the internationally-acclaimed novel *Cry the Beloved Country*, written by the South African author Alan Paton about the apartheid era. However, by altering “cry” to “sing” *The Star* clearly associates the Cup with a different sentiment, promoting nationhood and unity. Foreign supporters also became a part of this patriotic framing through an article after the first match between South Africa and Mexico. Despite the fact that South Africa only played draw 1-1 in the first match against Mexico, some comfort could be found in the positive statement: “Foreign visitors love us and love our Bafana boys” (*The Star* 12 June 2010) although there was some criticism of the organisers, especially at the beginning of the tournament when there were problems with transport to arenas. This was expressed through the title on the front page after the opening match, “Fans outraged at train delay” (*The Star* 11 June). Later in the week, industrial action among stadium stewards at the arenas received some attention; low wages among the staff and discontent among the bus drivers over wages and working conditions was highlighted in an article on 15 June with the headline “Rea Vaya bus drivers quit over transporting soccer fans” (*The Star* 15 June 2010).

The size of articles

This overview of the size of the articles gives an impression of how the 527 units in the sample appear in the overall editorial context of the paper.

Table 1. Size of analysed units (articles and advertisements)

Size of unit	Number	Percentage
A Main story front page	5	0,9
B Main story inside	1	0,2
C Big front page story (1/2 page or more)	12	2,2
D Big story inside (1/2 page or more)	84	15,9
E Medium story front page (less than 1/2 page)	7	1,4
F Medium story ininside (less than 1/2 page)	71	13,4
G Small front page (less than 1/4 page)	8	1,5
H Small inside (less than 1/4 page)	278	52,8
I Brief	61	11,7
Total	527	100

Most articles were small stories placed inside the newspaper; only one per cent made it to the front page. Only one front-page lead focused on supporters. That was on the day after South Africa lost its second match to Uruguay 3-0. The title was “Bafana dream on knife-edge”, with a huge picture of depressed supporters in costume, their faces in agony.

Table 2. Categories/units where supporters were mentioned

Category	Number	Percentage
A News article	186	35,4
B Commentary	59	11,2
C Editorial	10	1,9
D Reportage	3	0,6
E Interview	1	0,2
F Match report	17	3,2
G Brief	50	9,5
H Advertisement	139	26,5
I Readers' opinion	27	5,1
J Supplement	2	0,4
K Other	33	6,1
Total	527	100

The vast majority of the units comprised news (35,4 per cent) and advertisements (26,5 per cent). The latter percentage is quite interesting since the impression was that images of supporters were used in all kinds of advertisements in newspapers, posters and commercials. Framing the cheering supporters with a brand connotes that the cheering crowd salutes not only the game and their team, but also a specific product such as Budweiser, Hyundai, Adidas, or Visa.

Many sponsors tried in different ways to capitalise on the tournament. One example from *The Star* during this period was an advertisement in which a waitress dressed as a footballer posed in front of the logo for her restaurant (*The Star* 18 June 2010). Here we see the force of commodification of the spectator, with fans providing implicit endorsements of particular businesses.

If we place the advertisements in one table, we find that almost all of them framed supporters posing as supporters of a *product*. In contrast, very few articles in *The Star* during this period included interviews with supporters, reports about them, or a focus on them in match reports. This finding supports the hypothesis that the supporters' own expression of their love for the game played a minor role in coverage.⁵

However, the table below (Table 3) shows that supporters were a principal or important theme in 70,1 per cent of those units. This finding tells us they were represented but not invited to speak for themselves in interviews or through cited comments.

Table 3. Supporters' position in the articles

Supporters' place in articles	Number	Percentage
A Supporters main theme	160	30,3
B Supporters important theme	217	41,1
C Supporters less important	76	14,5
D Supporters peripheral	74	14,1
Total	527	100

Framing the supporters

An analysis was undertaken to find out in detail how supporters were framed. Some preset frames were tested on the sample of units.

Table 4. Framing of supporters within units

Framing	Number	Percentage
A Foreign supporters praising organisation of the World Cup	4	0,8
B Enthusiasts for Bafana Bafana	55	10,4
C Critics of FIFA commercialism	23	4,4
D Supporters expressing love of the game	50	9,5
E Supporters in a commercial framing	164	31,1
F Strange or funny supporters	21	4
G Supporters interviewed about the match	0	0
H Supporters in a violent/criminal frame	11	2,1
I Vuvuzela7 frame	51	9,7
J Supporters and charity	5	0,9
K Disappointed in Bafana Bafana supporters	12	2,3
L Other	131	24,8
Total	527	100

It is not always easy to place articles in a preset framing scheme – the fact that twenty-five per cent of the units did not fit into the preset frames underlines this. It represents an obvious methodological problem and reduces the value of our analysis. That said, we can see some interesting patterns. Bafana supporters are more likely to be framed as enthusiastic supporters before the match, than “depressed” supporters following a defeat. After the 3-0 loss to Uruguay, fans were censured for not taking losses in a sportsman-like manner: “Don’t ever let the vuvuzelas be silenced”, *The Star* wrote in an article on 18 June after observing that “Bafana fans left Loftus [the stadium], even before the third goal was scored”. The story continued: “The mighty vuvuzela was silent. Was it plain disappointment or are we really that fickle as supporters?”

When we interviewed the editor after South Africa’s first two matches, against Mexico and Uruguay, he said that the results were a problem for both the football nation South Africa and for the commercial interest of *The Star*, because it tended to sell more newspapers with an optimistic than a negative front page. In the light of our article’s initial hypothesis, it is worth noting that nearly ten per cent expressed a love for the game in the article and many of the Bafana enthusiasts framed also expressed their emotions as football fans. But none of the supporters were asked about their views of the match – that job was monopolised by journalists and expert commentators. The largest category is the frame in which supporters are placed in a commercial setting, mostly in advertisements. Thus there seems to be a certain contradiction in the material: the hypothesis of a commercial use of supporters is confirmed but is combined with supporters expressing their love for the game. On this point the hypothesis was only partly confirmed; in ten per cent of the articles in our sample, supporters express their love of the game.

The vuvuzela frame

Spectators’ use of the vuvuzela (a plastic horn) was much debated during the tournament. Many supporters enthusiastically played the vuvuzela and talked positively about it. But many in the stadiums complained about the noise level and numerous players complained that they found it disturbing, sometimes drowning out the referee’s whistle. Argentine superstar Lionel Messi was one of those who complained (*VG Net* 14 June 2010). TV viewers across the world also complained about the noise; a survey revealed that thirty-five percent of British adults watching the World Cup did so with the volume of their televisions turned down because of the vuvuzelas. This worried the advertisers, who had bought valuable time during broadcast matches (*The Star* 18 June 2010).

It is no wonder, then, that close to ten per cent of the articles had a vuvuzela frame. In *The Star*, similar criticism was expressed through a statement by the Portuguese player Ronaldo: “Ronaldo hits at deafening vuvuzela” (*The Star* 14

June 2010). Overall, the vuvuzela was framed in a positive manner in *The Star*, because it was a sales success, and when threats to ban the vuvuzela were rejected by FIFA, the business section of *The Star* wrote approvingly: “Vuvuzelas make it to next round of World Cup” (*The Star* 14 June 2010). The vuvuzela was a commercial success for the producers of the controversial instrument, including Australian retailers, and Sydney’s Appaloosa Toys enjoyed a “1000 percent rise in sales of the trumpet since the start of the World Cup” (*The Star* 22 June 2010). The vuvuzela therefore represents resistance to the biopolitical incorporation of fans, a refusal of governmentality and commodification, and an imposition of difference via expressive totality outside corporate and state endorsement.

Balance in the visual representation of Bafana Bafana fans?

Pictures of fans from different countries with their T-shirts, flags, face painting, caps, and glasses represented a popular, colourful way of representing fan culture. On a daily basis, *The Star* presented such pictures in the news, sports, and business sections, and in advertisements. What can these pictures tell us about the representation of fans in the light of gender and race?

As background, it is worth noting that according to the editor of *The Star*, sixty-two per cent of its readers are black Africans, 30 per cent are white, and about eight per cent are coloured or Indian [Asian]. It was mentioned in the opening section that football has traditionally been a black sport in South Africa – and it will probably continue to be so despite the wishful rhetoric of “bringing the nation together” expressed by organisers and the media. It was obvious that many whites attended a football match for the first time during the World Cup. But it takes more than a tournament to change patterns rooted for generations in social and class structures (Hylland Eriksen 2004). In the survey among the 877 football fans we conducted during the World Cup as a part of this research project, 29 per cent identified themselves as black, 37.2 per cent as white and 23 per cent as coloured.⁸ The first two categories were relatively evenly split between South Africans and those from other countries.

An analysis of fifty-two pictures of football fans in *The Star* during the analysed period shows that the black Africans are much more dominant than the figures above would suggest.⁹ In all stories and photographs of fans in arenas, parks, and public transport, there is hardly a white face to be seen. A lot of visuals show supporters posing for the camera – both sexes fairly represented – to show their enthusiasm and colourful clothing. In just five of the pictures (ten per cent) do we see a mixture of white, coloured and black supporters together – in most of the pictures all the supporters are black. On 14 June we find a rare picture, taken at a fan park, of a white and black, smiling and pos-

ing actively together, swinging their vuvuzelas. In the stands in the arena it is possible to identify a few white faces, but they can be counted on one hand. This is especially interesting as prior to the World Cup there were concerns that the local black population would be unable to attend owing to the cost of the tickets.

Only in the advertising can we see a balance between white, coloured and black, leaving the impression that advertisers appeal to all races by identifying their products with fans through a balance of gender and race. It is noteworthy that the only white player on the South African team, Boot, posed in commercials for a pharmaceutical product (*The Star* 12 and 19 June 2010). The visual content of supporters' representation in *The Star* seems to indicate that football appeals to black people in the main, despite all the rhetoric about "bringing the nation together". The statistics from the survey, and the impressions we gained from talking to many white fans in the fan parks and arenas, suggest that the visuals in *The Star* under-represent the white presence among fans.¹⁰ Advertisements, by contrast, were careful to stage the supporters as a multi-ethnic crowd.

Ambush marketing and gender

In the 2006 World Cup, Anheuser-Busch was famously ambushed, to use marketers' *argot*, by smarter opposition. It held exclusive beer promotion rights to the event, but a Dutch brewer circumvented that by giving thousands of branded *lederhosen* tin team colours to Dutch fans. FIFA's intellectual property regime has strengthened since then, and World Cup lawyers even obtained an injunction preventing Kulula, a South African airline, from advertising itself as "Unofficial National Carrier of the You-Know-What". Meanwhile, MTV, which does not have the rights to carry games, ran spots around the world during the Cup with the tag line "We understand why you aren't watching MTV". ESPN Deportes, Disney's US Spanish language channel, also lacked the rights to direct coverage, but nevertheless dispatched twenty-five reporters to South Africa for the Cup, and ran a promotion called "*90 minutos no son suficientes*" (90 minutes aren't enough), specifically referring to the duration of matches, to indicate the importance of background and synoptic material as well as play-by-play coverage.

An episode during the match between Netherlands and Denmark on 14 June received a lot of attention in *The Star* and in other media. Thirty-six sexily dressed women were forced out of the Soccer City stadium, accused of ambush marketing, and held in a FIFA office for several hours for wearing an orange outfit designed by a Dutch beer company. A small logo for the beer brand on the side of the dress was barely visible. After refusing instructions from a FIFA

delegate to leave the stadium, the women were surrounded by forty stewards who forced them out. Thirty-four of the women were kept for three hours in FIFA detention; two spent several hours more in custody.

Most of the women were South Africans, hired by a local events company on the basis that they could pass for being Dutch by their blonde hair (*The Star* 17 June). The tight orange miniskirt, known as the “Dutchy dress”, was part of a gift pack bought with Bavaria beer in Holland during the build-up to the World Cup. On 15 June, *The Star* ran a front-page story interview with Peer Swinkles from the Bavaria beer company; he denied any attempt at branding, but FIFA representatives insisted that this was ambush marketing. One of the women interviewed by *The Star* claimed: “We were sitting near the front, making a lot of noise, and the cameras kept focusing on us. We were singing songs and having a good time” (*The Star* 15 June).

Since three of the detained women were Dutch citizens, the episode caused a diplomatic dispute when the Netherlands embassy in Pretoria questioned the legality of their detention. Dutch foreign ministry spokesman Aad Meijer claimed that “We are not aware of any South African legislation that allows people to be detained for wearing an orange dress” (*The Star* 17 June).

This drew attention to changes in South African legislation during the Cup to secure the commercial interests of FIFA. In terms of FIFA’s rights-protection programme, spectators could not wear mass-produced, commercially-branded clothing or accessories prior to the matches or during the finals. Special courts were set up to deal with violation of FIFA regulations. According to National Prosecuting Authority spokesman Mthunzi Mhaga, none of the seventeen cases brought before the courts at the time involved the detained women (*ibid.*). Most cases related to theft and fraud, while courts in general remained empty most of the time – there was less street crime during the World Cup than many had expected. Some stories in *The Star* focused on supporters being robbed, among them an Irish reporter: “An Irishman who was hoping to wave his flag throughout the World Cup had his trust in humanity dented when he was robbed of all his belongings – including his match tickets”, *The Star* wrote on 18 June.

FIFA had prosecuted two incidents of market ambushing before the incident with the orange-clad women. One case concerned Eastwood Tavern in Pretoria displaying World Cup flags on the roof, while another involved Metcash Trading Africa selling “2010 POPS” lollipops. The company avoided a court case when the lollipops were removed from the market (*ibid.*)

The orange dress incident cost Britain’s ITV World Cup host, Robbie Earle, his job when the tickets made available to the women were traced to him; he had allegedly made them available through a third party (*ibid.*). When two of the Dutch women appeared in the World Cup court on 15 June, a spokesperson for the Dutch foreign minister, Maxime Verhagen, protested and asked why ordinary citizens walking around in orange dresses were arrested, rather

than the beer company. The two women were released on bail of R10 000 each, and told to appear in court on 23 June to face charges under a special measures regulation (*The Star* 16 June), but the charges were dropped after a court settlement on the day before the trial. Mhaga announced that the matter had been resolved: “FIFA was not interested in proceeding with the matter,” he said. “There was a settlement that was reached between the parties and we ... decided to exercise discretion and not proceed” (guardian.co.uk 22 June 2010).

Even though FIFA was successful in removing images of the women from television production, many letters in the newspaper, on Internet blogs and social media expressed sympathy for the women (*The Star* 17 June).

The story about the orange clad “Dutch-looking” female supporters is an example of how the battle for commercial use of supporters drew attention away from the game itself. FIFA’s handling of the matter embodies the fact that supporters’ images are commodities in their own right.

Visa’s monopoly

Corruption within FIFA has been an issue for many years, as documented by John Sugden and Alan Tomlinson (1999) and Andrew Jennings (2006). In 2010, FIFA vice-presidents Reynald Temarii from Tahiti and Amos Adamu from Nigeria were suspended because of corruption prior to the vote for hosting the World Cup in 2014 and 2018. The Norwegian newspaper *Dagbladet* documented how FIFA vice-president Jack Warner was involved in a huge operation to channel tickets to the black market during the World Cup in 2010 (*Dagbladet.no* 19 October 2010). Jennings documents in his book that Warner did the same in 2006, but was protected by Sepp Blatter and kept his position, while he made further revelations in a *Panorama* television programme immediately prior to the 2010 vote.

One of the authors of this chapter has written before about how the commodification of the game has changed irrevocably (Miller 2010). One aspect of its market-driven mechanisms was the battle to grip fans as consumers. If spectators wanted to buy food, drinks or supporter equipment inside the World Cup arenas, they could only purchase products from the companies that had the status of sponsor. If you wanted a soft drink you had to buy Coca-Cola; if you wanted a beer you could only buy Budweiser, and so on. To pay for these overpriced products, only cash or Visa cards were accepted. On the counters, huge signs read: “We are proud to accept *only* VISA”. Jennings shows how FIFA manipulated MasterCard, which had a binding contract with FIFA as a sponsor, in order to get a better contract with Visa in the run-up to the 2006 World Cup. In 2003, FIFA president Blatter hired Jérôme Valcke, a Frenchman, to get more money out of contracts with sponsors (Jennings 2006: 361). Despite the fact

that MasterCard had made the best offer, with a value of 180 million USD, in bidding for the sponsorship contract for the 2010 and 2014 World Cups, Visa got the contract. Blatter's man Valcke apparently offered Visa an opportunity to get the contract by manipulating the whole bidding process (Jennings 2006: 360-65). As a result, MasterCard sued FIFA. In New York, US District Judge Loretta Preska sided with MasterCard, ruling that FIFA had breached its contract, and in the settlement following the case, FIFA had to pay MasterCard 90 million USD in damages, half the value of the entire sponsorship contract (Reuters 22 June 2006).

When the idea of applying for the World Cup was sold to the South African public, the potential economic externality was an important argument. In the propaganda in favour of hosting this event, people were promised income from tourism, foreign visitors, and so on, and the fact that sponsors had *de facto* monopoly on products before, during and after the matches was not part of the propaganda. That FIFA forced the South African government to abstain from imposing taxes on any of the expected three billion dollars FIFA would earn from television rights and sponsor contracts was not mentioned to the public before the decision to host the World Cup was taken (E24.no 19 June 2006). FIFA was also sued, and had to go to court for not paying its bills during the tournament (Dagbladet.no 19 October 2010). The upshot was that during the period we investigated *The Star* did not focus on corruption and greed in FIFA. The fans were framed as supporters of selected products through advertisements, and not shown as victims of exploitation by multinational companies.

Conclusion

Our findings confirm that the supporters in the coverage of the World Cup 2010 in *The Star* were deemed "interesting" and appeared frequently as consumers.

The overall picture also confirms the hypothesis that the organisers saw the fans primarily as consumers in a market. The story of the women dressed in orange being part of an ambush marketing operation symbolises commercial abuse of supporters. The mixture of branding and supporter culture, and the fact that the ambush marketing succeeded in getting a lot of attention, puts an ironic light on how FIFA was able to implement laws and regulations to secure profits. In the end, the Association's attempt to enforce these laws failed, probably because the attempt to punish the orange clad "supporters" would have backfired on FIFA, highlighting its greed. Even though *The Star* covered this in a critical manner, the incident was not contextualised to draw public attention to the commercialisation of supporter culture. The empirical evidence from our study therefore shows a discrepancy between the rather idealistic attitude of the editor and the brutal commercial policy of FIFA.

It is also clear that the business community understood the value to its products of framing supporters as fans through advertisements. In contrast, the news coverage of fans largely downplayed the fans' own voices expressing their love of the game. It is clear that, overall, fans in *The Star* were hostage to consumer culture, with few references to the genuine interest in the game that fans expressed when we interviewed them.¹¹

As a result, this study refutes previous work on news representation of fan culture which found that the media downplay the fan role as a commodity in a market. Sadly, this diversification has decreased in the news content around the World Cup in South Africa, and this, in turn, raises serious questions about the commercialisation of sport and the subsequent effects on the public interest.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this article was presented to the IAMCR-conference in Istanbul, 12-17 July 2011.
2. Interview with editor Moegsien Williams conducted by Rune Ottosen on 21 June 2010.
3. Many thanks to Tonje Eide for doing an excellent job as research assistant and to Ketil Heyerdahl for constructing the database for coding.
4. Transcript from interview with editor Moegsien Williams conducted by Rune Ottosen on 21 June 21 2010.
5. One example of such interviews was to be found in the Shoot section on June 12, thus not in the period of our sample. One fan praised the cup for "being such a fascinating experience. I have been to four World Cups, including in Germany and I must say South Africa takes the cake".
6. Bafana Bafana is the nickname of the South African football team.
7. Vuvuzela is a horn about 65 centimetres (2 ft) long, which produces a loud monotonous note. The vuvuzela has been the subject of controversy when used by spectators at soccer matches. Its high sound pressure levels at close range can lead to permanent hearing loss for unprotected ears after exposure. Despite the criticisms, FIFA agreed to permit their use in stadiums during the 2009 FIFA Confederations Cup and 2010 FIFA World Cup.
8. A Southern African term used to refer to mixed-race descendants, usually associated with, but not limited to, the Cape Malay culture. In 2010, it was estimated that coloureds accounted for 8.8% of the South African population – the two other main race groups were identified as 79.4% Black Africans and 9.2% Whites (Statistics South Africa 2010: 7).
9. Many thanks to the research assistants Marianne Santos Alvær and Natalie Preminger for an excellent job in coding the content analyses of pictures and advertisements.
10. Rune Ottosen interviewed several white fans during the matches who had never been interested in football before, but used the occasion to develop the interest for football and support the World Cup as a national event.
11. The full survey and the interviews will be presented in another publication by the authors.

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