

# Will viewing numbers hold until world cup final?

"From the perspective of TV audiences, the 2010 FIFA World Cup has been an unqualified success. The opening match between South Africa and Mexico, with a combined SABC 1/SuperSport 3 viewership of 7 million attracted over 20% more viewers than the 6.2 million local viewers who watched South Africa playing Brazil in the 2009 Confederations Cup," says Brett Hobbs, business unit head at SA media company Carat.



According to Hobbs, prior to the FIFA World Cup, the 2009 Confederations Cup was by far the greatest sports broadcast event in the country's history.

By way of comparison he points out that since the beginning of this year, Nedbank Cup football matches in SA attracted an average of 1.7 million viewers each, while the Telkom Knockout Cup attracted an average of 2 million viewers per match. Local viewers also watched the Africa Cup of Nations, but here the figures were slightly lower with an average of 1.4 million viewers per match.

All viewership figures quoted are sourced via Telmar's 'Transmit' television network planning and optimisation tool, and are based on adult viewers over the age of 16. The numbers refer to 'at home' viewers and therefore exclude viewers watching the matches at pubs and taverns.

## Viewing success against other games

Hobbs says that in comparison to other sports involving international competitors - notably cricket and rugby - the FIFA Football World Cup has been a runaway success from the perspective of TV viewers.

"If we look at the Cricket T20 World Cup in 2007, which was hosted in SA, TV only managed to peak at about 2.7 million viewers. This was for the match between SA and India, and unfortunately we were knocked out of the tournament at that stage. Needless to say, the rest of the tournament consisted of non-SA games, with the result that audiences dropped, and even the final (India vs. Pakistan) only managed to reach approximately 1.8 million viewers.

"A far more important event not only compared to the T20 World Cup but for our country was the IRB Rugby World Cup

2007, even though we did not host it. The first SA game generated a collective local audience of about 1.9 million viewers and this gained momentum, naturally based on the Springboks success, right through to the final (in which SA defeated England), which achieved 4.4 million viewers.

"In 2009, we hosted the ICC Champions Trophy, but this is one event we would rather forget, as the highest number of viewers achieved was about 2 million for the SA vs. England game, and our tournament ended there," he says.

## **Will viewership sustain?**

That the 2010 FIFA World Cup has been a huge success from the perspective of TV viewers, relative to any other local sporting event or sports event involving a local team, is obvious. With Bafana Bafana having failed to make it into the next round of the tournament, however, the worrying question for marketers is whether the interest amongst TV viewers can be sustained until the final on 11 July.

Hobbs points out that, during the successful 2009 Confederations Cup, viewership remained relatively high, despite the fact that South Africa was knocked out well before the end.

"Some 4.7 million South Africans watched the first game (SA vs. Iraq) of the Confederations Cup in the country, representing a reach of just over 20% of all adults 16+ years TV audiences, and the SA vs. Brazil game exceeded this by quite a stretch at 6.2 million. However, what is very important is that the final of that tournament also attracted significant audiences - slightly over 4 million - even though it was played between the USA and Brazil. Clearly these figures reflected the fact that people enjoyed a great end to a well executed locally-hosted tournament," he says.

Despite the fact that Bafana Bafana did not qualify for the second round of the World Cup, Hobbs believes that interest in the event will remain high and that marketers should be reasonably satisfied. He points out, however, that, as a statistic, numbers of viewers alone does not paint the full picture and that the huge costs of TV advertising during the World Cup need also to be taken into account.

"Ultimately what is important for marketing people is the cost/viewership ratio. With advertising costs rising significantly, as we approach the final, and South Africa out of the Cup, local advertisers will naturally be anxious to know whether they have made the right choice and spent their budgets wisely. Much depends, therefore, on the continuing interest of TV viewers in the World Cup, despite the absence of their local team," he concludes.

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