

# Fan fests to take centre stage in 2010

 By [Dr Nikolaus Eberl](#)

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When LOC chief executive Dr Danny Jordaan announced the sites for hosting the official 2010 Fan Fests earlier this week, he referred to the 2006 fan experience at the German fan festivals, [saying that](#) “this is where we want to carve the real event experience, outside the stadiums... the fan fests will provide an opportunity for millions of our people to watch the matches in a festival environment for free, and will also provide an opportunity for small businesses and our musical talents to benefit from this event.”

## Lessons from 2006 Fan Fests

Looking back at the German fan fests from 2006, Germany's 2006 public viewing strategy was necessitated by simple arithmetic: Out of 2.9 million World Cup tickets, only 1.2 million were available to the German public. Contrast this with 45 million Germans known for having an interest in watching the world cup games, and it quickly became apparent that the German LOC was hard pressed to reinvent the viewing experience of the 2006 World Cup.

This is when an innovation - introduced to football fans four years prior at the 2002 World Cup held in South Korea/Japan - presented the solution: hosting fan fests where the only limitation was the size of the viewing area. However, as obvious as this appears in hindsight, at the time the LOC's proposal encountered scepticism and doubt from many a stakeholder, including the host cities.

At an average €2000 to 3000 per square metre of video screen per week, the financial risk appeared overbearing for many, considering that bigger cities like Berlin would need up to 14 screens to fill up a single fan mile (ie 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 game, observers were cautioning against the vagaries of the German summer, pointing out that rain might not only drive spectators away but could also ruin the expensive giant screens that were required.

## Success factors

In the end, more than 2000 public viewing events ensured that - in addition to the 2.9 million ticket-holders - nearly 18 million visitors to the world cup could experience the games in public, extending the reach of the event more than six-fold and creating a new culture of public viewing. According to Dr Hans-Jürgen Schulke, head of the task force 'Public Viewing 2006', the overwhelming success of the fan fests was due to the following factors:

- Excitement generated about the world cup before the games started (so-called 'vorfreude' or anticipation);
- Superior technology that allowed crystal clear pictures and clear sound even in bright sunlight and within 200m2;
- The consistently great weather (no rain, plenty of sunshine until the evening hours);
- International visitors from all over the world, offering the opportunity to make friends from 32 nations;
- The winning hosting team that - contrary to expectations - displayed great passion and stunned the spectators with their lightning-fast attacks;
- Full alignment and integration of all stakeholders;
- The innate desire of Germans to congregate and celebrate big events together rather than sit at home in front of their TV set.

## Satisfying the human need for belonging

According to Dr Schulke, the tremendous success of the 2006 fan fests was to a large extent due to the sentiment of fraternity that arose among the spectators and satisfied the human need for connection. Thus, the fan festivals created a new culture of experiencing the games - peacefully, celebratory, in a conciliatory manner where even the losers would join the winners in unseen jubilations.

In an era of the virtual reality many times overtaking the physical realm of the individual, the fan fests proved that the human being harbors an innate desire to be part of a greater community and tapped into the collective unconscious by morphing the individual psyche into the collective psyche of joyous celebration.

Thus Franz Beckenbauer, the chairman of the 2006 LOC, was apt in summarising his experience at the 2006 fan festivals when he said: "Watching the fans celebrate jointly at the fan miles... this is how the dear lord wanted the world to be."

Undoubtedly, the fan fests will be the defining feature for many 2010 visitors and locals alike. In fact, this is where the real opportunity resides, both for spectators and business - in building relationships at the very heart of the 2010 celebrations that will last long beyond the final whistle.

## ABOUT DR NIKOLAUS EBERL

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