

# South Africa's World Cup media win

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"They came. They saw. We conquered," says Oresti Patricios, CEO of Ornico, who claims that the international media who experienced this country first-hand became Brand South Africa converts.

Another country - that is what it is like living in South Africa after the final whistle blew on the 2010 Soccer World Cup. Not only has the event proven a major contributor to restoring national pride and confidence, it placed Brand South Africa centre stage in front of a harsh and critical media, and this country triumphed.

Cast your mind back a couple of years and months ago and try to remember the damaging headlines coming from the international media. There were severe doubts about South Africa's readiness and infrastructure, Australia was suggested as a 'plan B' and there was hysterical reporting about a race war.

The English media were particularly alarmist and vociferous in their scathing attack, driven by the tabloid nature of that country's reporting. *The Daily Star* carried a frightening headline that warned of a "[Machete Race War](#)", and the *Daily Mail* stated "[South Africa World Cup 2010... and the shooting's already started](#)". That kind of media reporting had its seed in South African conservatism and the predominantly English media reacted by turning ultra conservative sources into influencers of the media agenda.

More accurate reporting came from Canada where CBC News which used a more objective headline: "White supremacist sees race war in South Africa". This showed more mature journalism that better contextualised local political issues after the wake of Eugène Terre'Blanche's death. Yes, there was racial tension, but a machete race war was nothing more than the fear mongering of ultra conservatives.

Regardless of their point of origin, the international media contingent to South Africa was massive and their response to South Africa's 2010 Soccer World Cup was homogenous. The global media declared the event a successful celebration, with journalists from the world's most influential media showing that they had been significantly changed by their experience of South Africa.

Whether you called it 'gees', ubuntu or South Africa's indomitable spirit, as a nation we rose like a phoenix from the ashes of bitter racial tension, service delivery riots and divisive political conflict to unite and get the show on the road. Something South Africa did so spectacularly that we surprised even ourselves. We certainly silenced the naysayers.

International media reports of the 2010 Soccer World Cup have been glowing. BBC Sports Editor David Bond reported that "[fears about crime and security were largely unfounded](#)"; Peter Pedroncelli of Goal.com declared "[South Africa's World Cup was a great success and receives Goal.com's stamp of approval](#)"; the UK *Guardian's* Owen Gibson said "[South Africa leaves a World Cup legacy to remember](#)"; and Rob Hughes of the *New York Times* opined "[South Africa's triumph in being host to the World Cup can no longer be questioned](#)".

Before the world media descended on South Africa's beautifully built soccer stadiums there was doubt and scepticism. However the media contingent left transformed by South Africa's ability to triumph over the toughest odds, and the contagious spirit that exists in every South African.

Media have the biggest influence on what people think and say because the media sets the agenda for a country and the world. The world has largely seen South Africa, and Africa, as a caricatured cliché, because for the most part the media haven't had direct experience of the diversity of this continent, nor have they enjoyed South Africa at its very best.

The global media got the opportunity to do so during the 2010 Soccer World Cup and the effect on Brand South Africa has been overwhelming. There is a galleon of hugely influential brand converts out there, but now comes the challenge. Sustaining the positive perception of this country and continually buoying Brand South Africa.

This can only be achieved if the South African government steps up to the plate with the help of the private sector and keeps on delivering with the same commitment, vigour and at the same pace that it produced for the World Cup.

- *Oresti Patricios is the Chief Executive Officer of Ornico, the editorial and brand monitoring, intelligence and analysis company with offices in Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg and Lagos.*

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