

The tarnished image of South Africa's brand

 By [Rebhone Masemola](#)

11 Jun 2015

I am certain most people can agree that the alleged report of South Africa's involvement in the FIFA scandal could prove to be the straw that broke the camel's back. A spectacle of this nature involving SA being played out on a wide scale via international media is long overdue; since we trade outside our shores it was just a matter of time before the internal rot began to sting outside the cocoon.

It is beside the point whether our representatives had any hand in the alleged bribery of FIFA officials; thus the fact of the matter is as a country SA is slowly being perceived as a failing state. The country has become that place where husbands get away with plotting wives' murders, international terrorists enter undetected, our spys get outsourced to Russia and our banks harbour money of overthrown dictators.

Even if our eyes have yet to see and our hands are yet to touch the insides of the cookie jar in question, our track record could see us being scapegoats - we could easily be thrown under the bus. The 'Proudly South African' brand has become synonymous with corruption and shady practices. In the light of recent events, it's fair to say we are neither the picturesque image of a clean audit nor the epitome of a nation with a great deal of integrity.



Would 2010 change things for 2022?

The 2010 World Cup in question was in a class of its own, and so, there is no question about South Africa's hosting capabilities. We surpassed expectations by leaving many critics in awe. But do the accusations of bribery that resurfaced recently change the way people think about or perceive the actual 2010 World Cup? I may be biased but it wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that those who participated, attended and watched the class act spectacle raved about it long after it ended; it

brought the nation together because everyone became one to ensure its success.

It was so great that South Africa was an option if Brazil hadn't met the requirements expected by the FIFA committee for the 2014 World Cup. Whatever the case might be concerning the allegations of corruption; South Africa went beyond the standards as hosts to such a spectacular worldly event. That is to say in theory our capabilities as hosts shouldn't be in question when we bid for future events.

Being awarded rights to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games would certainly showcase our showmanship skills, because Durban has what it takes to make the Olympic Games a memorable event. With 2010 looming over the nation, a lot is at stake for brand South Africa, hence despite popular belief, citizens of this nation have a welcoming spirit, which would make for a successful and unique Olympic Games. Winning the bid for the Games would mean South Africa is the first country on the continent to host the Olympic Games; we would once again make history as we did with the 2010 Football World Cup. Allegedly Morocco won the world cup we hosted, but that's a story for another day.



Durban is one of South Africa's leading tourist destinations and was previously used as a venue for major sporting and entertainment events. They have rolled out their #Readytoinspire social media campaign that is meant to motivate and assist in ensuring that they win the bid fairly. In all honesty, the chances of winning could be diminished or slightly affected by the storm that is swooping through the nation's image, but only time can tell if we can surf safely to shore. And even if we are not implicated, the brand has been tainted by just mere association with a possible corruption scandal.

It's one thing to scoop things under the carpet when such allegations surface internally, but it's a whole different ball game

when this could change perception on a global scale. It would be foolish to think that FIFA's skeletons wouldn't affect South Africa's bid for 2022; the committee will not make their decision in isolation of the greater context that might potentially impact how the rest of the world imagines the Summer Olympics. It got me wondering whether if we win at this point people would always question if the process was fair, and that's despite the fact that we don't have competitors. It would be distasteful to lose against ourselves after a team of campaigners worked tirelessly to ensure that the Games came to Durban. Would 2010 change things for 2022? Others alleged that the accusations against South Africa could be a conspiracy to ensure that we don't win hosting rights!



Source: Twitter

South Africa's brand

The 'Proudly South African' brand has been exposed to many hits over the years, it's currently being tarnished by all the mudslinging with FIFA officials and this could potentially reduce our chances of winning the 2022 bid and other future investments. The leaders and expats are in charge of ensuring that brand South Africa's image is portrayed in a positive light to the rest of the world. The lack of consistency and coherence from the narratives being shared by our leadership isn't helping the situation, they individually seem to be voicing out different stories that make them a source for suspicion. Is there something left to salvage, where the brand is concerned? What can be done to change how the world thinks of South Africa, the brand?

It's safe to say people living in the country use humour to make sense of the state of things, laughing things off helps people cope with unpleasant realities. In recent years, social media has been used as the platform that people can go to, to make remarks and joke about what they see around them. With the soccer world cup in the spotlight, citizens took it upon themselves to find humour in the not so funny allegations of bribery, #denyeverything trended all over social media as mud was being slung against South Africa.

Others have said 'if we can't defend our own, no one will', certainly neither the FBI nor the FIFA committee have our best interest at heart. It is potentially survival of the loudest and social media users are currently having the loudest laugh. South Africans are very equipped in the art of creating counter-narratives to help them cope with social issues, and this time around the trend was plausible deniability.

ABOUT REBONE MASEMOLA

Rebone Masemola is the founder of a digital Feminist platform called the WokeProject, she's a Marketer, and writer who advocates for equality and fair representation. She's a TEDx Speaker who currently works as a Digital Marketing Manager for an international TV Network.

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