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## **South African journalists' experiences of reporting at the 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa™**

LOURENS HUMAN AND STEPHEN VAN NIEKERK

*Department of Psychology, University of Pretoria, Private Bag X20, Hatfield, Pretoria 0028, South Africa. E-mail: lourens.human@up.ac.za*

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### **Abstract**

During mega-sport events, such as the Fédération Internationale de Football Association's (FIFA) World Cup and the Olympic Games, the focus is often on football players and athletes respectively. Other important role-players, such as volunteers, journalists and spectators who make mega-sport events a success, are not in the lime light. The goal of this study was to describe South African journalists' experiences of reporting at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, with the purpose of learning from their experiences in view of the upcoming 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The study was conducted from a phenomenological position with five South African journalists. The data for this research was produced by means of written essays and interviews and analysed according to the Duquesne Phenomenological Research Method (DPRM). The results indicated that the journalists' experienced the 2010 FIFA World Cup as an enormous event that challenged them to move into unfamiliar territory during their preparation for and participation in this event, which lead to the readers of their newspapers moving into unfamiliar territory. Reflecting back on the event the journalists' experienced growth in their confidence as journalists and were proud of being South African.

**Keywords:** Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA), 2010 FIFA World Cup South Africa™, journalists, phenomenology, Duquesne Phenomenological Research Method (DPRM), experience, essence.

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### **Introduction**

Every four years a football nation hosts the FIFA World Cup under the auspice of FIFA. In 2010 the event was hosted by South Africa and it will be hosted by Brazil in 2014. The FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Games are recognised as mega-sport events (Van der Merwe, 2009). During these mega-sport events attention is primarily on the football players and athletes respectively. Often, very little is mentioned about the other role-players (e.g., volunteers, journalists, spectators), who make mega-sport events a success and an unforgettable experience. Mega-sport events are distinguished by their large scale, dramatic nature, and international significance (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006).

Although the 2010 FIFA World Cup may be forgotten by some, while to others it only exists as a memory, the focus of this study is on South African journalists' experiences of reporting on this event, with the purpose of learning from their experiences in view of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil. The role of the media in such an event is vital in delivering event-related information to society (Pillay, Tomlinson & Bass, 2009). South Africa was awarded the opportunity to host the 2010 FIFA World Cup that began on 11 June 2010 and ended on 11 July 2010. There were nine host cities namely, Cape Town, Durban, Johannesburg, Mangaung, Nelson Mandela Bay, Mbombela, Polokwane, Rustenburg and Tshwane (Campbell & Phago, 2008).

From the world of journalism various studies were done on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. One study contrasted traditional journalism with its emphasis on objectivity to developmental journalism with its focus on nation building. The sportswriter as developmental journalist will give preference to nation building in his/her journalistic writings on sport, by focusing on football's role in nation building on the African continent (Peltz, 2010). Attention was also given to participation in television broadcasts during the 2010 FIFA World Cup, where it was found that the participation of the general public was limited in comparison to journalists' participation in television programmes covering this event. This means that the voice of the general public on this event was marginalized, while journalists' voices were privileged (Lopes, Loureiro & Vieira, 2012). In another study, a discourse analysis was done on the use of irony to express criticism in the cartoons of the South African cartoonist Zapiro on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. In his cartoons Zapiro used betrayal and comic dupe irony to criticize, for example South African xenophobia, Bafana Bafana and the South African government (Conradie, Brokensha & Pretorius, 2012). A critical stance was taken against the outward-orientated development model of "football now, development later" that informed the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Attention is drawn to the focus that was placed on the tournament and infrastructure during this event, implying that South African national development was deferred at the cost of corporate interest and political gains (Manzo, 2012). Criticism on the 2010 FIFA World Cup was also addressed in the articles by Ginsberg (2010), as well as Aranke and Zoller (2010).

Although studies were done in the area of journalism on the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the research did not find any research on journalists' experiences on reporting on this event. Therefore, the purpose of this research was to study the phenomenon of reporting at a mega-sport event by focussing on South African journalists' experiences of reporting at the 2010 FIFA World Cup with the purpose of learning from their experiences in view of the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil.

## **Methodology**

### *Design*

A qualitative research approach was employed in this research, with specific reference to phenomenology (Willig, 2008). Phenomenology can be traced back to the work of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938)(Lopez & Willis, 2004), while currently Amadeo Giorgi is a prominent figure in this field (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2008). Phenomenology is the study of a phenomenon through studying people's experiences of the phenomenon (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). In this study the focus was on the phenomenon of reporting at a mega-sport event, through studying South African journalists' experiences of reporting at the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The main characteristics of phenomenology are reduction, analysis, intuiting and description (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007). Firstly, reduction is the process of striving to achieve researcher neutrality during the research (Wall, Glen, Mitchinson & Poole, 2004). Secondly, research material is analysed with the purpose of discovering the essence of the phenomenon being studied (Giorgi, 2005). Thirdly, intuiting is the process whereby the researcher tries to "live in the participants' skin" while engaging with the research material (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 176). Lastly, description entails providing a description of the phenomenon being studied (Tymieniecka, 2003).

### *Participants*

Purposive sampling was used and involved selecting participants based on specific criteria (see Criteria). The most important sampling guideline for a phenomenological study is that the participants must have first-hand experience of the phenomenon being studied (Starks & Brown-Trinidad, 2007). In the case of this research, it was imperative that the participants had experiences of reporting as South African journalists at the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

As the purpose of this research was to study the phenomenon of reporting at a mega-sport event, through focussing on South African journalists' experiences of reporting at the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the inclusion criteria for participants were: (1) Participants were required to be South African citizens (Proof: South African Identity Document), (2) participants were required to be South African journalists employed by a South African newspaper based in Gauteng, (3) participants were required to have had a first-hand experience of reporting in any of the nine host cities as South African journalists during the 2010 FIFA World Cup and (4) participants were required to be competent in English (able to describe their experiences) as this was the proficiency language of the researchers.

Two female and three male South African journalists who reported on the 2010 FIFA World Cup participated in this study. Four of the journalists were Caucasian and worked for Afrikaans newspapers, while one journalist was African and was employed by an English newspaper. The average age of the journalists was 29.8 years, while the average experience of the journalists in journalism was 7.6 years.

**Table 1:** Demographic Information of Research Participants

Journalist (J)	Gender	Race	Newspaper Language	Age	Experience
J1	Female	Caucasian	Afrikaans	24	2 years
J2	Male	Caucasian	Afrikaans	28	8 years
J3	Male	Caucasian	Afrikaans	46	21 years
J4	Female	Caucasian	Afrikaans	27	4 years
J5	Male	African	English	24	3 years

### *Data*

Two sets of data were generated after the 2010 FIFA World Cup, being written essays and personal interviews.

*Essay.* The participants were requested to write an essay on their experiences of reporting as South African journalists on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Requesting participants to write an essay is a form of bracketing, which has the intent of minimizing the researcher's personal biases and prior knowledge of the phenomenon being studied on the descriptions of the participants (Giorgi, 2010). The following statement served as a guide for the participants in writing the essay: "Can you please write an essay, in as much detail as possible, describing your experiences of reporting as a South African journalist on the 2010 FIFA World Cup."

*Analysis.* The purpose of the analysis of the essays was to uncover the essence of South African journalists' experiences of reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The essays were analysed according to the DPRM (Giorgi, 1997):

- Step 1: Whole: The researchers read the entire essay of each participant to get a sense of the whole.
- Step 2: Units: The researchers delineated the meaning units in the essays of each of the participants.
- Step 3: Transform: The researchers transformed the participants' descriptions into psychological language.
- Step 4: Synthesis: The researchers synthesized and integrated the meaning units in order to describe the universal essences of the phenomenon being studied.

*Interview.* One individual interview was conducted with each participant after the analysis of the essays. The purpose of the interviews was not to collect new data, but to explore the themes identified through the analysis of the essays. The interviews were audio recorded and transcribed by the researchers for purposes of analysis. The transcription process allowed the researchers to get acquainted with the research material (Easton, McComish & Greenberg, 2000). Thereafter, the transcribed interviews were analysed by means of the DPRM (Giorgi, 1997). Once again, the purpose of the analysis of the transcribed interviews was to uncover the essence of South African journalists' experiences of reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

## **Results**

The results of this research are discussed in terms of the 2010 FIFA World Cup being an enormous event that influenced the journalists' preparation for the event, their participation during the event, as well as their reflection on the event.

### *Enormous Event*

Together with the Olympic Games, the FIFA World Cup is seen as a mega-sport event due to its magnitude, large scale, dramatic nature, and international significance (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Van der Merwe, 2009). The journalists personally experienced the 2010 FIFA World Cup as an enormous event, as described in the words of J2, J4 and J5:

J2: It was definitely something that I have never been used to, the 2007 Cricket World Cup in the West Indies, it kind of fails in comparison. So we were caught offside with just how enormous it is.

J4: The first game was on the 11th of June so the 10th of June we had a pre-match press conference at Soccer City. It could probably seat about 300 people and I promise you, say 150 people couldn't get in. So probably 300 plus journalists attended that press conference which was something I have only ever experienced in India when covering cricket.

J5: I thought the Confederations Cup was already quite huge. It was a shock to me as there were easily a thousand journalists from all over the world. I think they said it was 13 000 journalists.

It appears that the journalists experienced the 2010 FIFA World Cup as an enormous event based on comparing their reporting experiences at other sport events, such as the Cricket World Cup and the Confederations Cup, as well as the large number of journalist reporting on the event.

### **Preparation Phase**

Due to the enormity of the 2010 FIFA World Cup the journalists experienced the preparation for the event as a time whereby they as journalists and the readers of their newspapers moved into unfamiliar territory.

*Journalists.* Four journalists (J1-J4) worked for Afrikaans newspapers who traditionally did not report on the local football scene. Therefore, they experienced their preparation for reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup as being in unfamiliar territory, as depicted in the words of J2 and J4:

J2: Soccer in the past had never been one of the so called 'bigger' sports. We would not cover the local Premier League Soccer [PSL]. I had very little knowledge of the local soccer scene and this would prove to be quite a hurdle.

J4: I had never watched a live soccer game. I started going to some of the Bafana matches to get contacts within the soccer industry, but also to get to know like the players and to kind of get to know the culture.

However, one journalist (J5) worked for an English newspaper, who traditionally reported on the local football context, experienced unfamiliar territory as not related to reporting on football per se, but rather to reporting on a football event with the magnitude of the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as portrayed in the words of J5:

J5: I didn't know a lot of things about the World Cup. I didn't know what to expect going into the World Cup, for World Cup it is not the same! Like the PSL thing you just go there and do your thing.

It seems that the journalists experienced themselves as being in unfamiliar territory due the enormity of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. Four of the journalists (J1-J4) who worked for Afrikaans newspapers had no previous experience on reporting on the local football scene, which caused them to experience the preparation phase for the event as being in unfamiliar territory. For one journalist (J5) who worked for an English newspaper, reporting on the local football context was familiar territory, however, preparing to report on an enormous football event, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup, was experienced by this journalist as being in unfamiliar territory.

*Readers.* As four journalists (J1-J4) worked for Afrikaans newspapers who traditionally did not report on the local football scene, they also experienced their preparation for reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup as leading their readers into unfamiliar territory, as indicated in the words if J1, J2 and J3:

J1: What we tried to do as well is to get people a bit more excited about it. We found that our readers wanted to know and it was actually so amazing to see the readers respond like that.

J2: All the research that showed that our readers would not take an interest in the event had been completely discarded and proven incorrect. Even the most clinical of us got really caught up in the whole vibe.

J3: If we had ignored the football none of our readers would have cared that much. By doing that we felt that we sort of were propagating the 'soccer gospel.' People were very positive about the whole thing. The response from the readers was also gratifying.

It appears that the 2010 FIFA World Cup challenged Afrikaans newspapers and their journalists, who traditionally did not report on the local football scene, to be courageous and move into unfamiliar territory by covering this event. This in turn challenged the readers of these Afrikaans newspapers to enter the unfamiliar territory of reading on and supporting this event.

### **Participation Phase**

Due to the magnitude of the 2010 FIFA World Cup the journalists experienced their participation during the event as characterized by support and pressure.

*Support.* The journalists experienced themselves supporting the national football team to such an extent that it seemed to influence on their impartiality and objectivity, as described in the words of J2 and J5:

J2: There is an unspoken rule of impartiality in every media centre that journalists work in, but you know sometimes those lines do get blurry. When Tshabalala's curling shot beat Mexican keeper, Oscar Perez, I was on my feet, arms aloft, screaming at the top of my lungs.

J5: It was impossible to say well I'm going to cover this completely objectively because you can't just say well I am a journalist and I am not a South African, so it doesn't touch me.

It seems that the participants' experienced themselves as being in unfamiliar territory as their boundaries between being a South African citizen (supporter) and being a South African journalist (reporter) were challenged while participating in the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The former demands subjectivity and partiality, while the latter lays claim to objectivity and impartiality.

Besides the journalists' themselves supporting the national football team, it appears that the journalists' also experienced white Afrikaans speaking South African citizen, supporting the national football team, as depicted in the words of J2 and J3:

J2: The amount of Afrikaans white people that were supporting a football game, a South African football game, was insane.

J3: White Afrikaans speaking people sort of got swept away by the mood generated by the football team consisting mostly of Black players.

It seems that the journalists also experienced white Afrikaans speaking people, who were primarily readers of their newspapers, moving into unfamiliar territory by embracing the “football moment” and supporting the national football team.

*Pressure.* The journalists also experienced extreme pressure while reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as portrayed in the words of J1, J4 and J5:

J1: You are unsure of yourself, you are unsure because you don't cover this usually, but the soccer; it was so out of our paradigm! It was totally a shift. So yes, it will be fair to say that the pressure was there, it was more than usual.

J4: The pressure I think is kind of immense because it's so huge and you are so scared that you might miss something. I think you are competing with so many people and it's also pressure to kind of tell the story.

J5: I mean the pressure, it is not the same as the PSL games I mean all of the guys were international journalists, they write better than us and they are quick.

It appears that the four journalists (J1-J4) working for Afrikaans newspapers experienced pressure during their participation for the 2010 FIFA World Cup due to reporting on football, which was unfamiliar territory to them. Furthermore, all the journalists (J1-5) also experienced pressure due to the magnitude of the event, the number of journalists competing to get their stories about the event to their readers, as well as the impact of reporting alongside experienced international journalists.

### **Reflection Phase**

When reflecting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the journalists experienced growth in their confidence as journalists, as well as a sense of pride of being South African.

*Confidence.* Through their preparation and participation in the 2010 FIFA World Cup the journalists experienced growth in their confidence as journalists:

J2: Initially it knocked my confidence! Not being that familiar with covering soccer, having that large amount of journalists pretty much hunting for the same story does add to the pressure. I'm sure I am a much better reporter, much more rounded and able to work under pressure.

J4: Life-changing! The World Cup will, I believe, have a huge impact on my career, make me a better journalist. I realise how far I can actually push myself now and realise that I definitely want to focus on sports reporting.

J5: As a journalist, most people will say this guy has experience from the World Cup. So I think from there I have learned a lot. Also it did build my confidence, because not many people have this opportunity to cover the World Cup. So I was lucky to have the opportunity to cover the World Cup.

Reflecting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup it seems that the journalists experienced being in unfamiliar territory during their preparation for and participation in this event. Therefore, it appears that their growth in confidence as journalists was paradoxically linked to their experiences of being in unfamiliar territory.

*Pride.* A sense of pride of being South African was created amongst the journalists during their preparation for and participation in the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

J1: I already felt like a success just because we could host it. It was about our country, you could be proud of your country, of where you came from. I'm went into it discovering 'oh my word' just being South African makes you so proud.

J4: I really felt proud that we pulled it off, and nothing actually went wrong. I was actually relieved. It was also very important for me to write positively because I think a lot of the newspapers before the World Cup were really negative about stuff. A lot of our readers I would say were not really soccer fans. I felt proud at the end.

J5: It was something amazing, it was really emotional. What I like about the World Cup, from the opening match all of us were united. It was nice to see whites among the blacks, singing together, shouting something we don't see in South Africa. So it was nice to see the rainbow nation, people excited about the World Cup.

It seems that the enormity of the 2010 FIFA World Cup did not only challenge the journalists to move into unfamiliar territory, but it also challenged South Africans who are often divided to move into unfamiliar territory and to unite. Furthermore, South Africa allowed herself to move into unfamiliar territory by presenting a mega-sport event, such as the 2010 FIFA World Cup. All these aspects left the participants with a sense of pride.

## **Discussion**

Due to the enormity of the 2010 FIFA World Cup it appears that the essence of the journalists' experiences of reporting at this event can be described as being in unfamiliar territory.

Prior to the 2010 FIFA World Cup four of the journalists (J1-J4), who worked for Afrikaans newspapers that did not traditionally report on the local football scene, experienced themselves as being in unfamiliar territory. This experience of being in unfamiliar territory pertained to having no prior experience of reporting on football, as well as to the magnitude of the event. One journalist (J5), who worked for an English newspaper that traditionally did report on the local football scene, experienced himself as being in unfamiliar territory due to the magnitude of the event.

During the 2010 FIFA World Cup the journalists also experienced themselves as being in unfamiliar territory. On the one hand the journalists' experiences of being in unfamiliar territory related to the aspect of support, where their boundaries between being South African citizens (supporters) and South African journalists (reporters) were challenged in relation to subjectivity and objectivity, respectively. Furthermore, the journalists also experienced white Afrikaans speaking people as moving into unfamiliar territory through supporting the national football team during the event. On the other hand the journalists' experiences of being in unfamiliar territory pertained to the aspect of pressure. Four journalists (J1-J4) working for Afrikaans newspapers experienced pressure due to reporting on football, which was unfamiliar territory to them. However, all journalists (J1-5) experienced being in unfamiliar territory due to the pressure caused by the magnitude of the event, the number of journalists at the event, as well as the presence of international journalists.

After the 2010 FIFA World Cup the journalists were able to become aware of the growth in their confidence as journalists, despite constantly being in unfamiliar territory during the preparation for and participation in this event. It seems that paradoxically, the journalists experiences of being in unfamiliar territory challenged them to move out of their comfort zone and into their stretch zone, thereby allowing themselves to grow in confidence. On a large scale, South Africa also moved into unfamiliar territory by successfully hosting this event, something that left the journalists with pride.

A significant finding from this research is that the four journalists (J1-J4), who worked for Afrikaans newspaper that traditionally did not report on the local football scene, took up the challenge and moved into unfamiliar territory by reporting on the 2010 FIFA World Cup. This allowed the readers of their newspaper, who traditionally did not follow the events of the local football scene, to also move into unfamiliar territory by supporting the national football team and the event. Therefore, it appears that the media in South Africa played a crucial role in challenging South Africans to cross historically entrenched sporting boundaries in South Africa.

In conclusion, the question remains if journalists from all over the world will allow themselves to move into unfamiliar territory during the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil, thereby allowing themselves and the readers of their newspapers to move into unfamiliar territory of challenging historically entrenched boundaries (e.g., racism, sexism) found all over the world.

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