



NOT FOR PUBLICATION

Youth, Xenophobia and the FIFA Soccer World Cup

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Gauteng youth have a potential of expressing latent racial prejudices against visitors to the World Cup in 2010, which could damage South Africa's reputation and future tourism trade. If visitors to the World Cup have and report back on negative experiences this could undermine the marketing of Gauteng as a tourist destination. Since tourism is a key driver of job creation in the Province its economic development is potentially at stake. Will Gauteng be as good a host as it needs to be?

A SANPAD funded research project points to the presence of xenophobia. The study indicated that about 20% of black teenagers would prefer Africans from other African countries not to settle in South Africa. White teenagers were against Australians coming in. A large proportion of the whole population would prefer expatriate South Africans not to re-immigrate. Generally in-group preference is high. What will happen when these youths, supporting their own team, come into contact, often for the first time, with large numbers of supporters from these countries, or returning South Africans. A number of scenarios are possible.

1. Negative image. Historically, soccer has been plagued with hooliganism; the

worst case scenario would be incidences of xenophobic violence before or after major matches. This would confirm the stereotype of South Africa as a violent and dangerous place to visit and the country could lose some of the positive image it currently enjoys as a place of reconciliation.

2. Exclusion. It is also possible that a widespread latent xenophobic tendency might be read as racism, tribalism or a South African superiority which could dent relationships, particularly inside the NEPAD orbit. This could have political implications for the struggle to build a Pan-African relationships.

3. On a positive note, the theory that preconceived negativity is the result of projections onto an imagined 'other' suggests that personal contact with real individuals might reduce or melt the youth's aversion to foreigners and their prejudices and this might decrease negativity between South Africa and the rest of the continent.

Recommendations:

1. Personal sporting contacts should be increased as much as possible before and during the World Cup; a Youth Inter Africa cup might show any potential problems before they occurred in the full glare of the world press as well as reducing animosity resulting from ignorance.
2. Focused research is necessary, exploring how and why South African teenagers have acquired their dislikes of other nationalities. Such research could help forestall any further entrenchment of prejudice in Gauteng youth culture.