

Brazil can still capitalize on good vibes from World Cup

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Brazil can still make the positive glow from hosting the 2014 FIFA World Cup last for years if it starts right away building programs that will unite citizens long after the event is over, a University of Florida study has found.

That's the opportunity South Africa missed after it hosted the 2010 World Cup, and Brazil has even more to lose if it does the same, said Heather Gibson, a UF tourism, recreation and sport management professor.

"There's obviously a lot of dissent over hosting and the amount of money being used to host the event when there are many more pressing social issues," she said. "Tread lightly and show the people that they also get a share in any of the benefits."

In the run-up to the World Cup, Brazil saw large-scale protests across the country that focused on the government's decision to spend billions on the event instead of on correcting social ills such as homelessness. While the number of participants has dwindled with the games underway, some demonstrators have continued their activities.

The government needs to harness the pride and unity Brazilians feel by encouraging relevant social initiatives in areas such as education, health and housing, Gibson said. Those programs must be implemented at the community level for them to work.

"The key to social development is involving the local people," Gibson said. "Any long-term social benefit also has to involve the grassroots."

In many cases, the countries hosting big events such as the World Cup or Olympic Games are still developing their identity. Although the media focuses on the events' costs and economic impacts, governments often use them to strengthen communities.

"That's what these events have become: a world showcase," Gibson said. "To what extent, in hosting these events, can they bring the people together over the long term?"

Residents' pride significantly increases after hosting a major sporting event, according to Gibson's analysis of the 2010 World Cup. The findings appear online in the journal *Tourism Management* and will be published in its October issue.

Gibson's team measured South Africans' psychic income, which researchers defined as a sense of patriotism, and social capital—community cohesion. Researchers interviewed about 2,000 people three months before and eight months after the 2010 World Cup, asking for input on statements such as "The World Cup helped bring people together in celebration" and questions such as "Do you feel safe walking down your street after dark?"

The results showed South Africans' psychic income was high before the event and improved afterward. Gibson said Brazilians' psychic income is likely high as well – especially because they're known for their passion for soccer.

"There's a sense of excitement, pride, in that the rest of the world seems to be enjoying the party that you're putting on," she said.

But South Africa's social capital results showed long-term effects on community cohesion were negligible eight months after the World Cup. Data showed decreases in areas of collective action, social connections and tolerance of diversity.

That's where government programming could help in Brazil.

Community events build social capital. If the country leverages the excitement the games generate, it can create long-term social good. Brazil should show its people it cares about them, Gibson said, especially when the World Cup is over.

Provided by University of Florida

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