

SA comes out tops in FIFA surveys

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PRETORIA: The successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup has done wonders for South Africans' national confidence and the country's image abroad.



This was revealed by two surveys commissioned by FIFA before and after the tournament.

Post-tournament results showed a major lift in South Africans' national confidence, with 9 out of 10 South Africans feeling that their country had a stronger sense of self-belief, while 87% felt more confident in the nation's capabilities.

The good feelings about South Africa had spread beyond the country's borders. Almost three-quarters of those polled said that they were visiting South Africa for the first time. Fans chose to stay in the host nation for an average of 12 days and combined their stays with other tourist activities.

In terms of international guests, 84% of them rated the host nation in an even more positive light after the World Cup than they did before.

About 83% of international fans polled said they would return to the country, while 94% said they would happily recommend a visit to South Africa to their friends and family.

Another aspect rated highly by the international fans was the extent of South Africa's preparations for the tournament.

The country's stadia, all of which were either newly built or renovated for the FIFA World Cup, were appreciated by 99% of visitors - a clear show of gratitude for the efforts made by the thousands of workers involved in the event's construction phase.

93% of local residents said before the World Cup, they expected the tourism sector to benefit the most from hosting the event, with 98% commenting positively on the atmosphere in South Africa.

The proportion of South Africans who felt that crime would be an issue for the international visitors, plummeted from 66% pre-tournament to 27% post-tournament.

The overriding emotion reflected by the surveys is that of pride, and a touch of defiance. About 91% of South Africans said they were proud that their country was able to prove all the doubters wrong.

When asked in 2008 whether they thought the FIFA World Cup would be able to bring the South African people even closer together, 75% of those asked said they believed this was possible.

Post-event findings suggest that the event strengthened this sentiment, with 91% of South Africans claiming their country is now more unified.

FIFA secretary general Jerome Valcke said: "These findings highlight what we felt all along, that hosting the event in South Africa would prove to be a huge success. I am pleased to see that our confidence is clearly reflected in public opinion, as expressed in these surveys."

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