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World Cup Fever

BRYANSTON – 38% of South Africans are prepared to call in sick to watch the World Cup, according to a recent global Synovate survey.

According to the survey, Brazil are the overwhelming favourite to win the 2006 World Cup and it's no surprise that Brazilian star Ronaldhino is tipped to be named the tournament's best player. But Synovate also learned that a significant number of women tune into the games so they can enjoy watching the men in shorts!

Synovate surveyed 8 075 respondents in South Africa, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Brazil, Argentina, Sweden, the Czech Republic, Poland, Serbia & Montenegro, Ukraine, Japan, Korea and Australia.

What are the odds?

Brazil are seen as favourites by 42 per cent of those surveyed, with hosts Germany a distant second at 10 per cent, followed by Argentina, England, France and Sweden. Partisanship was evident in some countries, as respondents in Brazil, Argentina, France and the UK saw their own teams as favourites.

Partisanship is not a luxury South Africa can afford. Without the option to vote for our own team, the leading vote went to Brazil (50%) as the top contender for the World Cup trophy. South Africans also displayed a fair amount of support for Germany (20%).

Interestingly, however, Germans were more likely to see Brazil as lifting the trophy than their own team by a margin of almost two to one.

That finding does not surprise Harald Hasselmann, Managing Director of Synovate Germany. "Very often Germans do not see their team as favourites before the start of a World Cup. But many of them still hope that the German team will do better than expected – as happened in the last World Cup, when Germany reached the final."

Who will win the World Cup?															
	Total	SA	Germany	France	UK	Australia	Brazil	Czech	Sweden	Serbia	Argentina	Japan	Poland	Korea	Ukraine
Brazil	42%	50%	42%	30%	25%	31%	78%	34%	35%	39%	22%	47%	26%	33%	20%
Germany	10%	20%	25%	10%	9%	9%	5%	14%	10%	8%	8%	13%	13%	9%	10%
Argentina	7%	2%	5%	2%	2%	4%	2%	2%	2%	4%	57%	5%	1%	0%	4%
England	4%	10%	2%	2%	29%	6%	1%	3%	4%	3%	1%	3%	2%	1%	7%
France	3%	6%	2%	31%	3%	1%	0%	3%	2%	2%	0%	1%	2%	3%	5%
Sweden	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	24%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Italy	2%	2%	5%	0%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	3%	1%	3%	2%	0%	8%
Korea	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	15%	0%
Australia	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	18%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Czech	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	23%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Spain	1%	0%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%
Netherlands	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%
Poland	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%
Ukraine	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	12%
Japan	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%
Portugal	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Serbia	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Others	0%	2%	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%
Don't know	8%	1%	14%	17%	27%	23%	12%	13%	17%	38%	10%	18%	37%	37%	30%

Source: Synovate In:Fact World Cup Survey

The Golden Ball

Globally, almost half of respondents predicted that Ronaldinho (who plays for Barcelona and will represent Brazil in the World Cup) would win the Golden Ball, awarded to the competition's most valuable player. 58 percent of South Africans backed this vote.

Other contenders trailed far behind: France's Zinedine Zidane and Thierry Henry polled 4 per cent each, with the former favoured by 20 per cent of that country's fans. Meanwhile, a slightly higher proportion of UK fans compared to their French counterparts gave the nod to Thierry Henry, who plays for English side Arsenal. Next with 3 per cent came Argentina's Lionel Messi and England's Wayne Rooney, both of whom, ironically, are struggling to make the competition due to injury.

Who will be named the World Cup's Most Valuable Player? (Top 10 choices)															
	Total	SA	Germany	France	UK	Australia	Brazil	Czech	Sweden	Serbia	Argentina	Japan	Poland	Korea	Ukraine
Ronaldinho	49%	58%	46%	46%	33%	29%	73%	46%	32%	76%	38%	70%	43%	43%	28%
Zinedine Zidane	4%	4%	7%	20%	4%	5%	1%	1%	2%	3%	0%	2%	3%	6%	7%
Thiere Henry	4%	4%	3%	11%	12%	9%	1%	4%	1%	4%	1%	1%	0%	7%	3%
Lionel Messi	3%	3%	1%	2%	0%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	35%	3%	0%	0%	1%
Wayne Rooney	3%	3%	1%	1%	22%	7%	0%	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	5%	2%
Michael Ballack	2%	3%	15%	2%	2%	2%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	7%	1%	2%	1%
Zlatan Ibrahimovic	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	16%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Andri Shevchenko	2%	0%	1%	4%	1%	0%	0%	1%	0%	2%	0%	2%	0%	1%	39%
Ronaldo	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	0%
Kaka	2%	3%	2%	2%	2%	4%	3%	0%	0%	1%	0%	5%	0%	0%	0%

Source: Synovate In:Fact World Cup Survey

Bafana Bafana: name in shame

Synovate also asked fans to pick a description that best matched their national team.

Displaying a large amount of disillusion with Bafana Bafana, 43% of South African respondents described our national team as ‘all talk and no action’. Although this sentiment is expressed by the Polish (65%), Germans (41%) and the French (40%) about their own teams, this is a concern ahead of our own ambitions for the 2010 World Cup.

Brazilians saw their side as “exciting” – a characteristic that the Japanese, Koreans and Argentines also attributed to their teams.

Some respondents were even less complimentary, with 15 per cent of Czechs, 11 per cent of Koreans and even 9 per cent of Brazilians viewing their sides as “thugs.” And 11 per cent of Germans and Serbians, along with 9 per cent of the British, wrote off their teams as “whiners” – although it must be noted that Synovate did not filter out Scottish, Welsh and Irish supporters from the UK respondents!

Which Description fits your Country's Team?															
	Total	SA	Germany	France	UK	Australia	Brazil	Czech	Sweden	Serbia	Argentina	Japan	Poland	Korea	Ukraine
Exciting, pulsating	32%	16%	5%	20%	24%	21%	45%	10%	25%	15%	35%	68%	6%	49%	18%
All talk, no action	20%	43%	41%	40%	37%	11%	12%	18%	13%	29%	22%	1%	65%	6%	29%
Clinical and efficient	16%	4%	18%	11%	12%	7%	17%	26%	36%	20%	11%	14%	1%	7%	1%
Dark horses, outsiders	12%	10%	18%	18%	12%	58%	1%	16%	10%	15%	8%	2%	17%	12%	10%
Posh, high class	6%	8%	7%	4%	3%	1%	12%	5%	2%	2%	5%	10%	4%	2%	10%
Thugs	5%	4%	0%	1%	2%	0%	9%	15%	2%	1%	4%	4%	2%	11%	2%
Whiners, Whingers	4%	8%	11%	7%	9%	2%	1%	5%	2%	11%	9%	0%	5%	4%	5%
Don't know	5%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	3%	6%	11%	6%	7%	0%	0%	10%	10%

Source: Synovate In:Fact World Cup Survey

Football Fanatics?

The majority of respondents – 58 per cent – said they did not normally follow football, but made an exception for the World Cup. Far from merely making an exception, 71 percent of South Africans say that they rearrange their day in order to watch the World Cup games.

The South African women are watching too! According to the survey 51 percent of South African women watch the World Cup because they just like watching the men in shorts. 62 per cent of Brazilian women also confess to such voyeurism. At the other end of the scale, only 4 per cent of Japanese and 9 per cent of Korean women acknowledged ‘talent-watching’ motives for viewing World Cup matches.

The next month may be characterised by messy and disorderly homes, considering that South Africans top the list at taking advantage of the World Cup as an excuse to avoid household chores (52%).

Other nationalities vying for top post among shirkers: the Serbians at 43 percent, the British at 41 percent, Brazilians at 40 per cent, Czechs at 39 percent and Argentines at 37 percent. Japanese and Swedish respondents were the most dutiful, with only 10 and 12 percent respectively planning to use football as a pretext for avoiding life’s mundane realities.

Finally, the World Cup poses a dilemma for some football fans: Whether to go to work and miss matches on TV, or call in sick. For more than a third (38%) of South African respondents, it's not much of a conundrum: They would call in sick to work in order to watch matches during working hours.

Attitude towards the World Cup and Football															
	Total	SA	Germany	France	UK	Australia	Brazil	Czech	Sweden	Serbia	Argentina	Japan	Poland	Korea	Ukraine
I follow the World Cup but I am not obsessed	76%	77%	84%	80%	78%	79%	80%	66%	71%	75%	65%	71%	68%	80%	70%
I think professional football players are overpaid	69%	60%	92%	89%	92%	77%	95%	56%	77%	64%	83%	24%	58%	21%	44%
I don't normally follow football but make an exception for the World Cup	58%	66%	52%	57%	50%	62%	64%	41%	49%	55%	61%	66%	47%	64%	59%
I rearrange my day in order to watch the World Cup	39%	71%	19%	22%	39%	20%	61%	37%	14%	65%	52%	26%	32%	46%	36%
thing gets between me and the TV when the World Cup is on	32%	66%	12%	17%	28%	13%	39%	28%	8%	37%	38%	65%	10%	49%	31%
The World Cup is a good excuse to avoid doing household chores	28%	52%	18%	15%	41%	34%	40%	39%	12%	43%	37%	10%	33%	22%	27%
I would have loved to be a football player	27%	63%	14%	21%	28%	22%	43%	26%	7%	41%	41%	19%	13%	21%	20%
I have / will join a fantasy football competition	17%	69%	11%	20%	16%	12%	20%	8%	2%	32%	13%	22%	6%	25%	1%
I just like watching the men in shorts (females only)	30%	51%	16%	14%	28%	31%	62%	42%	28%	44%	15%	4%	24%	9%	35%
I would call in sick to watch matches during working hours	12%	38%	3%	4%	12%	5%	11%	4%	3%	27%	18%	10%	11%	25%	8%

Source: Synovate In:Fact World Cup Survey

CURIOSITIES

- 63 percent of South Africans state that they would have loved to have been a soccer player – the highest in the survey.
- Ronaldinho is the favourite to be named the tournament's best player in all but one country: Ukraine, whose own star, Andriy Shevchenko, gets the nod for that honour.
- 69 per cent of respondents think footballers are overpaid, led by Brazil (95 per cent) and closely followed by Germany and the UK (92 per cent).

- Ends -

About Synovate

Synovate, the market research arm of Aegis Group plc, generates consumer insights that drive competitive marketing solutions. The network provides clients with cohesive global support and a comprehensive suite of research solutions. Synovate employs over 5,000 staff in 50 countries.

More information on Synovate can be found at www.synovate.com and www.synovate.co.za