



ViewerTrack

FIFA World Cup 2002

Key Findings

Initiative, a leading global communications company

A World Cup like no other

Introduction

Throughout the 20th Century, the FIFA World Cup was always hosted in either Europe or the Americas. However, for the first World Cup of the 21st Century, Japan and South Korea were awarded joint-hosting rights, as FIFA continued its efforts to spread soccer to all corners of the globe.

Holding the World Cup in Asia had a massive effect in several respects, both on and off the pitch. This summary report outlines the most important of these, and their effect on global viewing figures. Taken together, it is no exaggeration to say that FIFA's unprecedented decision to give the hosting rights to Asia led directly to the tournament being a World Cup like no other.

Global audiences fell compared with 1998 World Cup

Soccer's appeal has grown over the decades as the game has spread to more countries, continues to attract different demographic audiences, and broadcast coverage becomes more comprehensive. Consequently, each World Cup has traditionally attracted a larger global audience than the previous one.

However, this ViewerTrack survey of the 2002 FIFA World Cup, which covers TV viewing habits in 41 major markets, shows that TV audiences fell sharply in most countries, compared with the 1998 World Cup. The total global audience fell by a third across markets surveyed in both 1998 and 2002.

Unfavorable scheduling arrangements depressed TV viewing

With the World Cup held in the Far East, matches were broadcast live in the morning in Europe and at night in South America. Audience loss was greatest in these two regions as fans struggled to fit matches into their daily routines.

The largest declines in average live audience per match were in major soccer countries such as the UK (-53%) and France (-39%). This had a huge effect on the value of the World Cup to broadcasters, advertisers and sponsors in those countries.



Early exit of tournament favorites hit viewing numbers

The relative success of each national team always has a huge effect on the size of the viewing audience from that country. Many fans are very fickle and their interest in the World Cup disappears as soon as their team is eliminated. Hence the 'Local Hero Syndrome' has a large influence on viewing figures.

The 2002 World Cup had more 'shock' results than ever before, with a number of the pre-tournament favorites, such as France, Argentina and Italy, knocked out surprisingly early. This had a significant negative effect on viewing figures in these countries.

Hosting the World Cup in the Far East was partly responsible for their early exit. In order to avoid the rainy season in Japan and Korea, the 2002 World Cup was held earlier in the year than normal. As a result, there was little time for the star players from the European leagues to recover from the exertions of playing over the previous nine months. A number of the world's best players, such as Zinedine Zidane and David Beckham, arrived injured at the World Cup, diminishing their countries' chances of success.

Asian countries top of global viewing league

The large differences in time zones between the Far East and Europe / South America led to Asia topping the World Cup global viewing league for the first ever time. Huge audiences were achieved in both Japan and South Korea, with the two host nations enjoying fanatical partisan support as both countries' teams exceeded expectations on the pitch. Very good audience figures were enjoyed throughout the Far East, for example in China, Vietnam and Thailand. For the first time ever the World Cup was broadcast in prime time in those countries.

Out-of-home media assumed unprecedented importance

In Europe and South America, where the World Cup was broadcast far from prime time, many fans found alternatives to watching on TV at home. The growing importance of soccer in most countries as part of popular culture led to a boom in the number of places where the World Cup could be watched out-of-home. Many workers gathered round televisions in their offices, in addition to the more traditional pub viewing.

The time zone differences also afforded greater opportunities for non-TV media, such as radio and the internet. European workers driving into the office could listen to the morning's matches in their cars. Once they arrived at work, the internet enabled them to keep track of the latest developments. In both cases, this provided new routes for advertisers to reach World Cup fans.



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