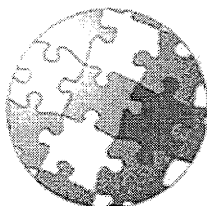
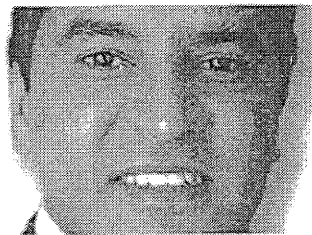


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Many start to ask what 2010 means for them



2010
COLUMN



UDESCH PILLAY

FEWER South Africans believe SA will benefit through job creation and economic growth from hosting the 2010 Fifa World Cup than did so a year ago.

These results are contained in the Human Sciences Research Council's second 2010 longitudinal survey, which measures public attitudes towards this international showpiece. While 62% of respondents — across all racial and economic groups — in the 2005 survey felt the country would benefit from job creation and economic growth opportunities, this figure fell more than 10% in last year's wave of the survey.

Similarly, fewer people today believe that the poor and disadvantaged will benefit from hosting the event. This figure fell from 8,1% in 2005 to 5,2% last year.

Conversely, there was an appreciable increase in the number who believe that a combination of the wealthy and business interests will benefit from the 2010 event, with the figure rising from 68,2% in 2005 to 74% last year.

On the other hand, quite surprisingly given the trends above, when respondents were asked how they expected to personally benefit from the event, more than one in three said they expected to benefit from a job creation

opportunity. This figure was up more than 3%, from 33% in 2005, to 36,5% last year.

A first plausible explanation at what seems a contradictory set of responses is that South Africans are starting to feel less optimistic about the 2010 event being a national one that will deliver opportunities for SA as a whole.

In other words, the appeal of 2010 as a national project is giving way to a more realistic sense of what the event may offer for

'South Africans are starting to feel less optimistic about the event being a national one'

the country as a whole.

Decision-making inertia over the past year, delays in the construction of stadiums and infrastructure, and bureaucratic bungling all play a role in this. In addition, a greater understanding on the part of the public — and the prospective entrepreneur, in particular — of the complex set of Fifa regulations and specifications (especially around marketing and merchandising), and frustration at high levels of crime (which mitigate economic opportunities for those prepared to do business honestly), may have a

lot to do with dwindling expectations for the country as a whole on the part of its citizens.

On the other hand, people — particularly those of colour and classified in low living standard measure categories — seem to be saying that even if the fortunes for the country as a whole do not look as encouraging as they first did, there is still hope to fulfil personal ambitions and fortunes.

This could partly be a function of the situations these people find themselves in, putting most — if not all — of their economic fortunes in the 2010 delivery "basket", and partly a function of a still-robust government campaign urging all South Africans to take advantage of entrepreneurial opportunities around the event.

In other words, people are starting to care less about what the event has to offer the country as a whole, and are beginning to put their primary interests first.

A second reason for the seemingly contradictory set of results has to do with competition for scarce resources.

Let's take the public works programmes and the service industry as examples. While the construction and building industry, through public works programmes, are likely to create jobs, these will be of a finite amount and will certainly be time-bound.

Similarly with the service industry. There will be catering, accommodation and tourism opportunities, but these, too, will be limited, and in accordance with a very strict set of Fifa regulations.

The competition for these opportunities will be huge, and it will eventually be the market that decides who benefits and who loses. In such a hugely competitive context, your individual fate, again, becomes far more important than a collective enterprise.

■ Pillay heads the HSRC's 2010 Fifa World Cup Research Project.

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