

# “Moodvertising” during the World Cup – first half

Why is the mood of the crowd so important? How can it influence the ROI of your advertising?

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Barcelona FC did something unique by putting together an Argentinian (Messi) and a Brazilian (Neymar Jr.) to play together. It was epic. It is also unexpected to combine one Brazilian and one Argentinian advertising researcher to write (and agree) on how to maximise communication efforts during the World Cup. It won't be epic but hopefully this will be useful.

## The football World Cup triggers emotions

Sporting events such as the World Cup involve passion, highly emotional content and can provide incredible moments. Many marketers take the opportunity to invest in communications that build and/or reinforce traits such as pride, patriotic values or just a sense of belonging that a national team can help convey, hoping to fully leverage these values to build and reinforce their brands.

Our focus in this article, (which like any good football\* match is a game of two halves), is to first explore the risks and benefits for the advertisers when making such a bet, because as Vance Law, former professional baseball player, said, “It is amazing how quickly emotions can change.”

In this first half, we want to show you what we have learned by testing many ads during these huge events; determine which objectives and challenges seem to apply and share some evidence that makes us believe that the mood of the crowd can play a critical role in how your consumers will respond towards your brands. Right after the World Cup, we expect to show you further evidence of how the mood factor can indeed influence consumer nonconscious responses.

\*The authors will be using throughout this article the term “football”, because this is how this sport is known everywhere in the world, except in the US where “soccer” is used.

## Where are we coming from?

At Ipsos, we have been measuring and understanding how brands can effectively bring return on marketing efforts before, during and after many important sporting events including the football World Cup since 2002. We have been running continuous studies for our clients and published key findings over time.

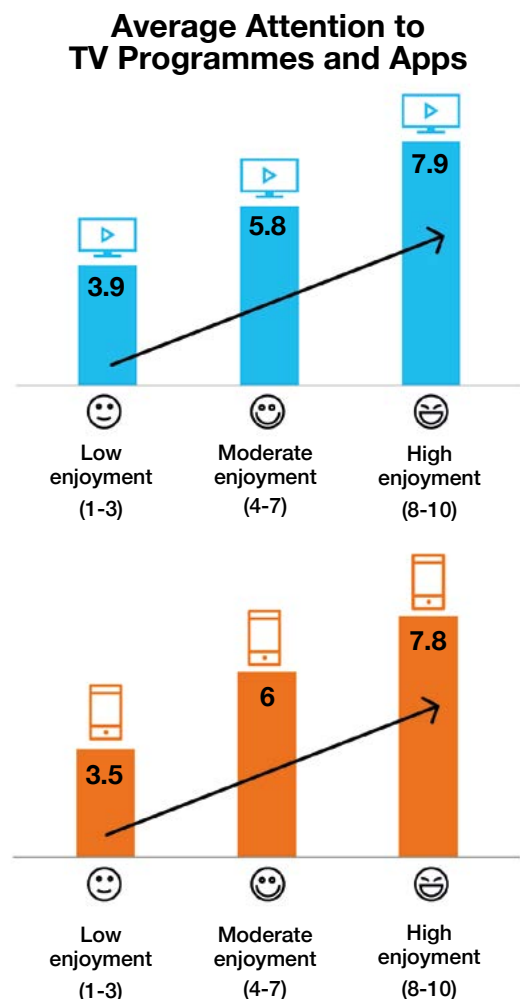
As uncertain as who is going to win the World Cup, the reality is that anything can happen for the advertisers that are willing to play. We have identified some of the most important objectives and challenges any brand will need to consider in order to play and win in this highly competitive tournament.

## Objective number 1: “Getting the attention of the crowd”

One of the reasons that advertisers are attracted to events like these is because they are aware of the very large audiences they can reach. In 2014, over 3.2 billion people watched the World Cup, breaking several TV audience records in key international markets, including the United States and Germany. An estimated 280 million people around the world watched matches online or on a mobile device, a sign that more and more fans are embracing new technology for sports content. There are uncertainties as to whether or not Russia will match or surpass the World Cup in Brazil in 2014, because of important eliminations such as the American and Italian teams, but no one disputes the potential for yet another year of impressive numbers. With many brands willing to play and win, and consequently, fierce competition for people’s attention, one important question to raise is:

## Will my brand overcome the attention hurdles?

When we look at all the ads we tested during the World Cup, we have observed that on average, attention levels are higher than our benchmarks for different levels of investment. Aligned with our general learning that shows the strong influence enjoyment of TV programmes and apps have on recall (as seen on picture 1), this seems to imply that enjoyment provided by the World Cup might indeed help brands’ communications stand out in the crowd.



Picture 1 – Ipsos Media Study NA, 2017

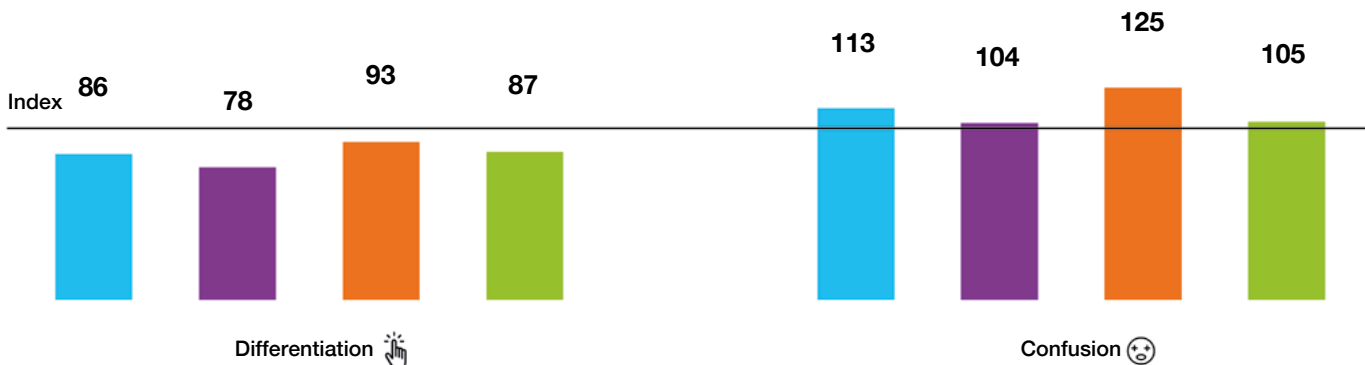
We like to tell our clients they should be “smarter than the average bear”. It is good to know that the high enjoyment of the event might help, but by no means can this guarantee that people will be in the spirit of paying more attention to all brand communications during the World Cup. The reality is we have seen many challenges brands face that might represent significant hurdles.

### Challenge number 1: “The copycat syndrome”

In the spirit of supporting common goals (national pride, the warrior’s analogy, perseverance, etc.) many brands attempt to use very similar communication codes, hoping they will be transferred back to the brand... There is a big problem with this approach: unless you have been using this strategy for quite some time, you are not alone – dozens of brands tend to use a very similar strategy; people end up not seeing much differentiation among branded messages and get very confused (as seen in picture 2), tending to recall the ones that are most familiar. For this reason, being first to communicate can represent a real advantage.



■ All Regions ■ Western Europe ■ LATAM ■ CEEMEA



Picture 2 – World Cup 2010 – among 112 tested ads in 15 markets

## Challenge number 2: “The mood of the crowd”

Something that has always intrigued us when testing World Cup communications has been the “mood” factor of the crowd.

Think about it. The audience’s different mood starts even before the World Cup begins, depending on the performance of national teams during qualifying games. For Russia World Cup 2018, some of them were expected to do well and delivered: Brazil, Germany, France, Spain... Others were less convincing in their latest games like Argentina, England and even Russia; and some usually strong teams fell short and did not make it: Chile and Italy!

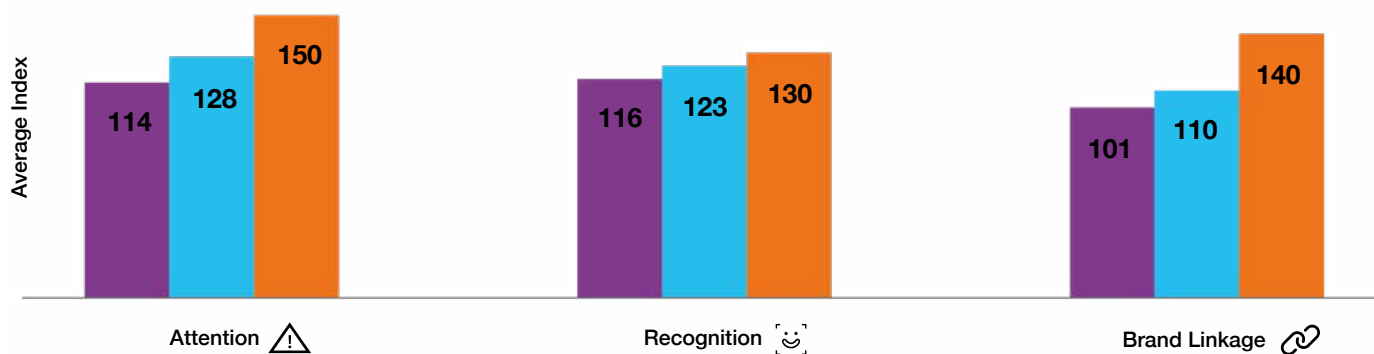
If we make a parallel to what we see in the enjoyment factor of different TV programmes and apps, can the (good) mood determine whether people will be, or not be, more likely to recall brand communications?

In our first attempt to isolate the “mood” factor in World Cup communications, in 2010, Ipsos tested 112 TV ads across 15 different markets. We used the same metrics and individual country norms. Results were indexed to their respective norms, being therefore comparable. The evaluation was done in the last week before the finals of the World Cup. At that time, we had already identified losers and winners. England, Italy, France, Brazil and Argentina were already eliminated. Spain and Germany had great chances. Mexico and Chile, although out of the World Cup, performed according to expectations. Accordingly, we divided ad performance into three different groups:

- High mood: Spain and Germany
- Neutral mood: Mexico and Chile
- Low mood: England, France, Italy, Brazil and Argentina

Ads tested in high mood markets (the ones with real chances to be the big winners) suggest there seems to be a correlation of how receptive consumers were to World Cup ads compared to neutral or lower mood markets (as seen in picture 3).

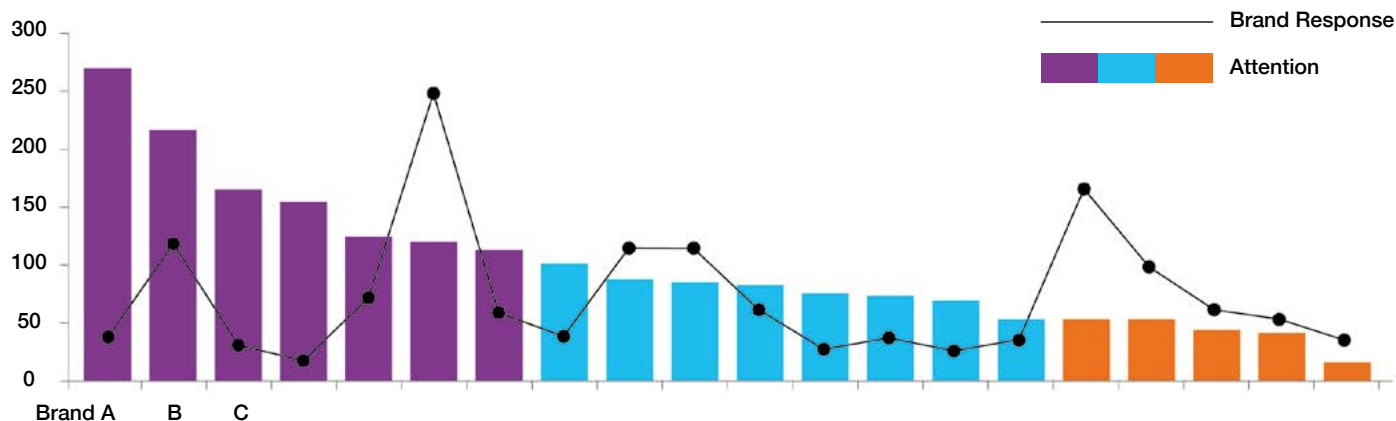
Low mood Neutral High mood



Picture 3 – World Cup 2010 – among 112 tested ads in 15 markets

**This suggests that when people are happy (in a good mood) they may be more likely to pay attention to advertising.** Interestingly, the largest effect is seen on Brand Linkage, which seems to imply **consumers will indeed pay more attention to the recipient of the communications message if their national team is doing well.** It might be intuitive... you probably have a good recollection of many aspects that surrounded the last time your team won an important championship: the location, the friends and family that were with you, and maybe even the beer brand you drank to celebrate the victory.

Attracting the crowd is very important, but there is a bigger and more important objective; advertisers expect viewers to be very engaged and highly motivated to receive their brand messages; they want a large crowd to pay attention to the game but ultimately, they want to score a goal! As one might expect, bringing the largest crowd to the game is not a guarantee the home team will be the winner! During the World Cup 2014, we measured different communications for multiple brands and many of the winners who achieved higher attention levels, did not score a brand response goal. Other communications did score, even though they did it with lower attention levels(as seen in picture 4).

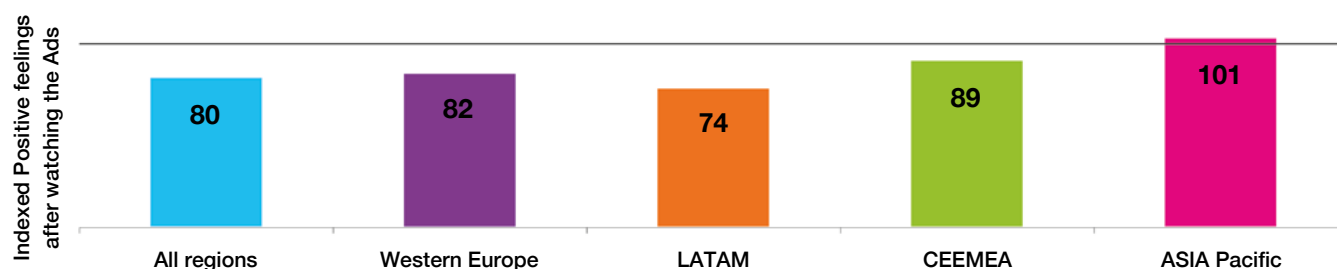


Picture 4 – tested ads during World Cup 2014

## Objective number 2: “Your goal is people response”

The ultimate objective of any advertising “game” is to build strong brands based on effective brand communications that are able to activate a response. This could be to change consumer behaviour, stimulate sales, seek information, prompt discussion, etc. It is equally important for brand communications to build brand relationships. We know people gravitate towards brands with little conscious thought once people have established that a brand is

one they feel good about. We have seen different World Cup ads activating a response in different or combined ways, however, participation in the World Cup is not a guarantee your brand will activate Brand Response. In fact, the average response for the global ads we tested in the World Cup in 2010 was lower than our benchmarks, with the exception of the Asia Pacific region (as seen in picture 5).



Picture 5 – World Cup 2010 – among 112 tested ads in 15 markets

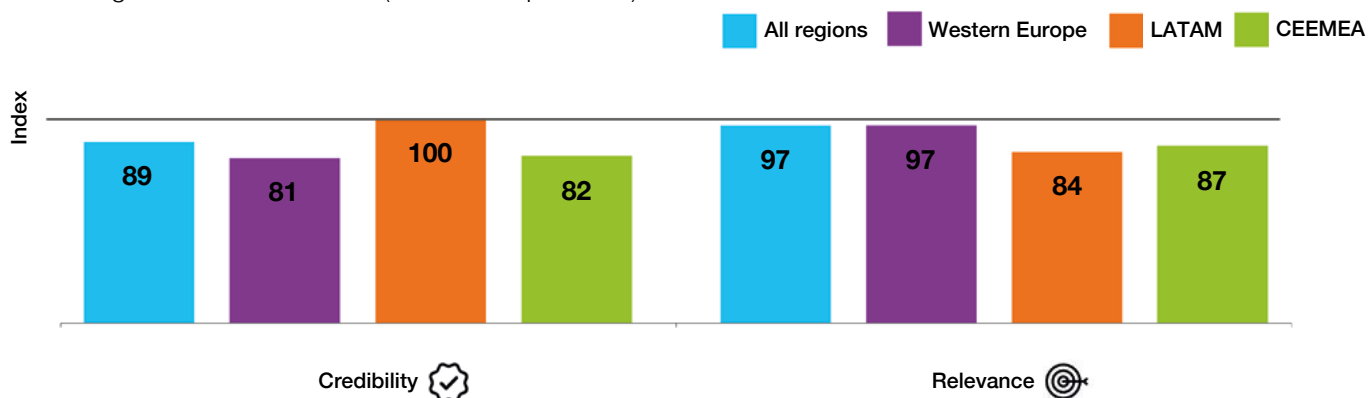


Next, we will cover some of the challenges that can undermine Brand Response.

### Challenge 1: “The false hope syndrome”

Many of these brands believed they could transfer the positive event and national team values just by being present throughout the event, ignoring that these values were distant from their core brand values. Because of this distance, the brand communications resulted in not being credible and the messages were not relevant (as seen in picture 6).

In these cases, there is no surprise that all Brand Mental Networks (i.e. the brand perception in consumers’ minds) remained unaltered – no desired associations were reinforced or changed.



Picture 6 – World Cup 2010 – among 112 tested ads in 15 markets





## Challenge 2: “The mood of the crowd (again)”

Our evidence so far reveals that a positive or negative mood might in fact not only compromise attention, but also people’s response toward the advertised brands.

If you are a football fan, you might recall some interesting stories that apparently influenced some positive and negative results we measured during the World Cup.

### France and Spain 2010

The French team faced enormous internal problems among their players, staff and press – coming out poorly in the public eye. At the end, one player was expelled from the group and the team faced an early elimination in the first round. You should not be surprised - most French ads did not perform particularly well. Likewise, Spain (the World Cup winner), as part of the high mood group, achieved high response scores.

***It might be obvious that the risk in pursuing the strategy of reinforcing values such as pride and passion for the team might backfire in the eventual defeat, or even worse, in case of any misconduct like the one that happened to the French team in 2010. But will advertisers learn a lesson from the last two World Cups?***

### The 2014 Brazil World Cup

In 2014, the unexpected happened. In the semi-finals, Brazil lost to Germany... but it was not a simple defeat. It was the most embarrassing one (7-1). At half time, Brazil was losing 5-0... if you get a chance, watch the [Brazilian TV ads](#) that were run at the first break. It is quite sad... and even if you do not speak the language you might understand that these ads were not aligned with the Brazilian’s mood at that time. It starts with one of the sponsor brands saying: “Where there is Brazil, there is a party”! Another brand featured some young children stating they had never seen Brazil win a World Cup, so they begged the team to play for them. Clearly, there was no flexibility to change them. The truth is – who could have imagined such a disaster? But advertisers need to!

You might argue that the French and Brazilian cases are extreme, but going home early, is, for most teams, a real possibility! At the very least the risk is an early termination of the brand campaign. With many more touchpoints to explore, the authors wonder... ***why don’t advertisers minimise the risk by using touchpoints such as digital platforms and social media that can be flexible and easily adapted to the different moments and moods their national team might experience during the tournament?***





## To conclude: “Great to be lucky, but nothing replaces preparation and effort”

Succeeding in the marketing World Cup takes as much as preparation as a bit of luck for how well the national team will perform. So, if you want to increase the odds, first be certain your strategy targets the encountering point of a) consumer engagement with the event; b) the values the event portrays; and c) the fit of your brand’s purpose with the latter two.

- a) Consumer engagement with the event. Know the audience; know the role of your brand and category for this audience. Know where the audience will follow the event (media, platforms, conversations and places) to make your brand relevant in the most engaging moments.
- b) The World Cup can be associated to very noble values. The idea is that the brands should work on bringing the event closer to them, to transfer these values, and not the opposite. This is not about how much your brand is present during the event. It is all about how the event can play in your brand’s favour.

- c) Lastly, and most importantly, make sure what your brand stands for and aligns with your consumers and the event. **Avoid adjusting your positioning due to the World Cup!**

As already mentioned, luck is also important for any national team. Results suggest that your supporters’ moods can skyrocket your ROI, if all goes well. But make sure you have a plan B, especially if your strategy is to bet on victory; in this case, you may need to adjust the speech as the mood evolves throughout the competition. **We believe advertisers should produce more than one execution version across various touchpoints so they stay relevant whatever the tournament may bring. For 2018, we are happy to hear that some have learned this lesson.**

Stay tuned for our “second half” article to be published at the end of the World Cup. There we intend to complete the analysis exploring how consumers’ nonconscious responses can change according to people’s different moods depending upon the outcome of the games. Good luck for all the football fans, but with all due respect, especially for the Brazilian and Argentine ones!

*If you want to know more about this content or to evaluate your World Cup creative executions, please contact [Alan Liberman](#) or [Diego Pagura](#)*