

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STRATEGIC DESTINATION BRANDING THROUGH LEVERAGING HOME-GROWN SPORT EVENTS

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ABSTRACT

The destination branding discourse remains widely contested among academics and practitioners, as there is, as yet, no commonly accepted framework for the destination branding theory. Moreover, the theory underpinning sport event leveraging towards informed branding practices, especially in the developing destination context, is lacking. This paper conceptualises the leveraging of home-grown sport event leveraging for the South African destination brand. Empirical findings of an in-depth qualitative study conducted with key industry stakeholders is presented. The findings reveal the significant effect of home-grown sport on destination branding through competitive brand positioning. It further conceptualises the role of leveraging strategies and activities of stakeholders during the hosting of a sport event to achieve augmented destination branding benefits. Although the above applies to both the developed and the developing contexts, distinguishing socio-economic factors affecting developing nations has led to the adaptation of a sport event leveraging framework. The paper makes a contribution from a developing country's perspective on topics investigated largely in the developed, global north contexts. Further research questions are identified to inform future destination branding studies that wish to derive more definitive concepts on strategic destination branding informed by sport event leveraging.

Keywords: Destination branding; Home-grown sport events; Sport event leveraging; Emerging nations; South Africa.

INTRODUCTION

The application of branding techniques to destinations is rapidly growing as a result of the advanced global competition between places in both domestic and external markets (Dinnie, 2003). There are extensive studies that reveal the significance of sport for destination brands (Burgan & Mules, 1992; Lee & Taylor, 2005; Nicolau, 2012; Swart & Bob, 2012). Mainly linked to their economic impact through tourism, these studies reveal that sport mega-events in particular remain important for both developed and emerging nations. Most studies have tended to focus on single-place case studies. For example, Truno (1995) found that the city of Barcelona managed to successfully use the 1992 Olympic Games to achieve brand awareness, with the mega-event seen as a catalyst for the rejuvenation of the city as a top European destination. Similarly, Zhang and Zhao (2009) documented how the city of Beijing also capitalised on the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to achieve similar brand benefits. More

recently, Knott *et al.*, (2017) described the brand-related benefits for the emerging South African destination brand as a result of hosting the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

However, mega-events have attracted much criticism in recent years as a result of high profile scandals affecting FIFA and the IOC. This has led many academics, practitioners and the general public to become more sceptical as to the brand-related benefits for a host destination (Knott *et al.*, 2017). Furthermore, brand-related opportunities that destinations achieve through hosting sport mega-events may be short lived or come at a high price for destinations (Dimanche, 2003). For this reason, there is an increasing awareness of the potential role and value of home-grown sporting events that could still draw significant economic and brand benefits at a lower cost and contribute to the longer-term success of a destination brand (Jago *et al.*, 2003).

While legacy studies have increased in frequency, there is a suggestion that they are becoming rather outmoded, with several authors (most notably, Chalip, 2006) preferring to investigate 'leveraging'. Chalip (2002) introduced the concept of leveraging events, highlighting the recognition of the event as an opportunity to implement particular tactics that may foster and nurture desired long-term impacts to serve a strategic destination branding purpose. Since then, others (Grix, 2012; Smith, 2014; Knott *et al.*, 2017) have used this conceptualisation to investigate the strategic activities of key event stakeholders in leveraging strategic objectives. Furthermore, Rein and Shields (2007) reviewed case studies on destinations that achieved lasting branding benefits through leveraging home-grown sport teams, events and leagues. One of these was how New Zealand used the All Blacks (national rugby team), their black uniforms together with the Haka (an opening game ritual based on the Maori culture), to re-invent the New Zealand destination brand. Since the early 20th Century, when this strategy was first implemented, the All Blacks remain an integral part of their brand identity. In the same way "Scandinavian countries have branded skiing, the Dutch speed skating, and Japanese sumo wrestling", to achieve similar results (Rein & Shields, 2007:75). Chalip (2006) extended the area of research by acknowledging leveraging for benefits beyond mere tangible economic ones, to include more "social" benefits for a host city. However, the contribution of sport events to destination branding still remains largely under-researched as an isolated, intangible element.

Elsewhere, from a developing destination perspective, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil has acquired a primary competitive position among Brazilian metropolitan cities and other developed cities that have competed to host a series of mega-events, including the 2007 Pan-American Games, the 2011 Military Games, the final match of the 2014 FIFA World Cup and most recently, the 2016 Olympic Games (Bienenstein, 2012). In the developing African context, and the context of this study, the Cape Town city brand has adopted an events strategy which includes home-grown domestic sport with an international participation and global media appeal to position the city and nation as a destination for events through Africa (Hemmonsbeey & Knott, 2015).

Notably, numerous South African cities are also hosts to a series of home-grown recurring events. Prevalent examples include: the Cape Town Cycle Tour; the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon; and the ABSA Cape Epic mountain bike stage race (held in Cape Town); the Comrades Marathon (Durban); annual Super Rugby, Currie Cup (rugby) and ABSA Premier League (soccer) games in various South African cities; the Soweto Marathon (Johannesburg);

the Ironman African Championship (Port Elizabeth). A less conspicuous South African city for sport event hosting, Mangaung (formerly Bloemfontein) has recently become a thriving host to home-grown sport. Exemplifying their efforts are the Mangaung city authorities' strategic investment into building world class sport facilities, namely the National Training Centre (used to prepare South African athletes for the Olympic Games), as well as strategic partnerships formed between event- and commercial stakeholders, specifically the central South African leading commercial radio station (OFM radio) as a title sponsor for the annual Mangaung Classic cycle race (which is aimed at greatly promoting the event and city brand). Other major local sport tournaments hosted in South Africa include the South African Open (Golf tournament) and a large majority of the Sunshine Tour Golf events. Moreover, in December 2018, South Africa is set to host a new cricket league, namely #T20 Global Destination League. This local league will in part, directly promote South Africa as a leading destination for sport tourism.

Indeed, there is a rise in various disciplines of home-grown sport tourism events in South Africa. As is the case with large scale international sport events, the home-grown domestic sport events highlighted above are known to equally contribute associated socio-economic benefits for host destinations. With the emergence of wide-ranging sport tourism events as a powerful agent for achieving brand-related benefits for long-term destination branding purposes, it begs the question on how strategic destination branding is leveraged by stakeholders of home-grown sport events.

A number of studies have attempted to develop a specific framework for destination branding which links to that of product, service and/or corporate branding theories (Morrison & Anderson, 2002; Hankinson, 2004; Anholt, 2005; Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Yet, there is still a need for a commonly accepted framework for destination branding theory (Koneznik & Gartner, 2007). Theoretical frameworks linked to strategic destination branding that informs imminent research has been especially neglected. More specifically in the context of sport and destination branding studies, there is a dearth of research relating to the emerging Global South context. As more recent studies on the developing destination have emerged, such as (Swart & Bob, 2012; De Almeida *et al.*, 2015; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015; Knott *et al.*, 2017), the large majority of studies still centre on the developed Global North context. Certainly, developing nations cannot be excluded from other nations who have sought after sport for destination branding (Knott *et al.*, 2013). To comprehend the developing context, this study addresses the theoretical gap in destination branding discourse by extending the context towards developing destinations. What is more, the overwhelming work on sport event leveraging focuses on the sport mega-event (Green & Chalip, 1998; Chalip, 2002, 2004, 2006; Gibson *et al.*, 2003; Chalip & Costa, 2005; O'Brien & Gardiner, 2006; O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). None have specifically focussed explicitly on the home-grown event. Thus, what remains less understood in the theory is the concept of home-grown sport leveraging for strategic destination branding, which this study proposes to address.

Finally, without conclusive empirical evidence reinforcing these branding opportunities, stakeholder efforts to leverage these events to achieve such benefits may go unrealised. Especially in the context of a developing African nation, there is very little literature that indicates leveraging strategies for stakeholders. The findings and recommendations of this study addresses these gaps in literature, policy and practice of event and destination brand

stakeholders in the developing nation context, as it aims to inform policies and practice for leveraging home-grown sport events for destination branding benefits.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Destination image concept

It is clear that brand differentiation plays a key role in destination branding in the absence of perceived differences between alternatives. Certainly, destinations can be regarded as a perceptual concept that can be interpreted subjectively by the consumers (Buhalis, 2000). With perceptions generally being associated with image formation, confusion between brand and image seems to exist, especially in the tourist destination context (Tasci & Kozak, 2006). Cai (2002) and Pike (2009) affirmed that destination branding be distinguished from destination image management and that, although not explicitly examined in the context of branding, the destination image should be considered as a pre-existing concept corresponding to destination branding. According to Daye (2010), the destination image theory contends that the persuasive effects of organic image agents are greater than the induced image agents prompted by the destination. The objective of destination image management is to close the gaps between organic image and the induced image of the destination, with the intention of compensating for any deficiencies or negative perceptions that might be formed at the organic level. Cai (2002) and Daye (2010) argued that the concept of destination branding exceeds the generic level of image management, towards the idea of building a distinct image of the country, or region (location). For the above-mentioned reason, Blain *et al.* (2005:337) defined destination branding as “a collective set of marketing activities to create a destination image and positively influence consumer destination choice”.

Corporate branding concept

For tourism destinations, Blain *et al.* (2005) strongly support the idea that the concept of the visitor experience needs to be incorporated into the process of branding. Noticeably, earlier definitions expressed that destination branding is, in part, set “to convey the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination” (Ritchie & Ritchie, 1998:17). The concept is also what distinguishes the destination concept from the corporate branding concept, albeit the two are frequently compared. Hankinson (2005) and Hosany *et al.* (2007) clearly state that existing corporate branding frameworks cannot be applied linearly to the destination context, due to the multidisciplinary foundation and terminology interpretations of the latter. Beyond the unique and memorable visitor experience that destinations offer over corporate brands, Balakrishnan (2009) further distinguishes destinations from corporate brands in advocating for destinations to employ a different branding strategy. The making of such a distinction is due to tourism destinations being dependent on such macro-environmental factors as politics, terrorism, disease outbreaks, weather/natural conditions and currency fluctuations over which the brand manager has very little, if any, control.

Secondly, the geographical constraints of the destination affect its accessibility, weather and access to resources. Also, the inherited names and past history of the location, be it country, region, or city, are infused in the destination, and cannot be changed easily. The most commonly cited characteristic of locations is the diverse stakeholder groups and their influences when it comes to destination brand management (Hankinson, 2005; Pike, 2005;

Balakrishnan, 2009). Furthermore, the diversity of target markets, the complex decision-making and the multiple-choice offerings involved make destination branding still more complicated than it might otherwise be. Another distinguishing factor is that destinations are service- and people-dependent, depending heavily on the infrastructure, the technology, the communications and the required global investments that are in place. Lastly, the feedback and control issues that accompany destination management, as a result of its influence on the publicity and promotion of destination image, are of critical importance to the overall ultimate success of such management (Pike, 2005).

Despite the above-mentioned distinguishing characteristics, Trueman *et al.* (2004) debate the similarities of destination and corporate brands, stating that such brands act as umbrella brands for a portfolio of leisure, investment and business tourism, as well as stakeholder and citizen welfare, products. Anholt (2007) asserts that, despite there being more differences than similarities between the countries and corporations concerned, if they are intelligently and responsibly applied, some of the theories and techniques of branding can be powerful and competitive tools and agents for change for both the immediate country and beyond. Subsequently, Trueman *et al.* (2004) argued that the concept of corporate branding is applicable to the destination context, due to the goodwill that is created by means of the unique brand image, which is obtained through considering the diversity of stakeholder needs and through the increasing market complexity that occurs as a result of globalisation. Consequently, the above warrants the development of a corporate branding approach (Xie & Boggs, 2006).

Sport events and strategic destination branding framework

The concept of destination branding can be understood as a strategic element. Baker (2007) advocated strategic branding in the 'deliberate development' of a destination's brand. Such branding is necessary to attain a vision in terms of which the reality experienced by the customers matches the positive expectation, or the promise, being conveyed by the destination and its partners. Underpinning this, Balakrishnan (2009) advocated that the branding of destinations begins with the development of a strategic vision of the place, with a strong vision resulting in dynamic performance. A relatively new strategy among destinations is to use events as strategic brand-building initiatives (Jago *et al.*, 2003; Trošt *et al.*, 2012). Sport events tend to generate substantial benefits for the host city, region and country involved. Tourism is one of the key industries to benefit from the hosting of sport events. Event visitors (participants and spectators) pay for accommodation, food, souvenirs, tickets and sightseeing (Xing & Chalip, 2006). The sport event media coverage concerned tends to increase the brand awareness of the host as a tourism destination (Jago *et al.*, 2003; Brown *et al.*, 2004). Events with well-established brands can be used to enhance the brand identity of a destination (Trošt *et al.*, 2012). Despite the gleaning of such substantial benefits, Jago *et al.* (2003) observed that the impact of a sport event might be short-lived if the benefits involved are not sustainable beyond the period during which the event takes place. To achieve sustainability, Bramwell (1997) and Chalip (2004) suggest strategic destination branding, in terms of which the image of the host destination could be enhanced as a tourist destination before, during and particularly after the staging of an event. The essence of leveraging events to improve destination image lies in transferring elements of the event image to the destination image, which is known as co-branding (Brown *et al.*, 2004; Chalip & Costa, 2005).

The co-branding theory is also defined as a “brand alliance” (consisting of agreements between companies that combine two or more individual brands, products or other assets) (Xing & Chalip, 2006:52). Co-branding research indicates that the degree to which two brands fit together is positively related to the evaluation of the brand alliance and, consequently, to the individual partnering brands (Xing & Chalip, 2006). Therefore, destination marketers should choose to host events that fit the existing image of the destination, with event owners holding their events at locations that fit the image of the event. The destination branding objectives achieved through co-branding are linked to: reaching an extended number of new target groups beyond the existing markets; improving perceptions of the product’s quality; providing a buzz around the brand; and inspiring confidence in the brand (Kapferer, 2012). According to Westerbeek *et al.* (2002) and Brown *et al.* (2004), destinations seek to change their image through the hosting of events, with event owners seeking to enhance their event brand by means of capitalising on a favourable location.

A recent example of the above, in the South African context, is the Cape Town Cycle Tour and the City of Cape Town’s brands (with the event having undergone a name change from the Cape Argus Pick n Pay Cycle Tour to the Cape Town Cycle Tour, primarily so as to enhance the event and city brand image) (Hemmonsbeey & Knott, 2015). Indeed, the co-branding theory presents a foundation for destination branding through the hosting of sport tourism events. However, since the key focus of co-branding is on the transferability of brand ‘image’ to, and from, event and destination, other brand elements accompanying destination brands, such as personality and brand identity, experience and equity, is implicit. As a result, the co-branding concept does not consider the commonly viewed conceptual frameworks of destination branding, as postulated by Hankinson (2004:110), who conceptualised destinations as “relational brand networks”, in terms of which the destination brand is represented by a core brand with it, in addition, performing four main functions: brands as communicators in the form of logo’s and trademarks; brands as perceptual entities that appeal to the senses and emotions of visitors; brands as value enhancers leading to brand equity; and brands as relationships that communicate the brand personality.

While sport events have been used to promote host communities in the global marketplace, the fierce competition between destinations for a share of the heart, mind and wallet of tourists is growing significantly (Baker, 2007). The above indicates the need for an extended strategic approach to destination branding, as brand position leads to greater economic value. The model of strategic leveraging of sport events created by Chalip (2004) is supported by a number of authors (Kellest *et al.*, 2008; O’Brien & Chalip, 2008; Karadakis *et al.*, 2010; Beesley & Chalip, 2011; Grix, 2012; Knott *et al.*, 2013; Tichaawa & Bob, 2015). The concept of leveraging obtained particular potency around the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, in the form of the efforts made by the Australian stakeholders concerned to employ strategies for repositioning the country by means of capitalising on media, seeking convention business, minimising the diversion effect of the Games and promoting both pre- and post-Games touring (Chalip, 2002). ‘Leverage’ rather broadly refers to “those activities... which seek to maximise the long-term benefits from events” and “the processes through which the benefits of investments are maximized” Chalip (2004:228). Smith (2014) recognised that the notion of leverage is not merely a normative, theoretical one, but that it is one that has been identified by means of analysing emerging practices. He described leveraging as (Smith, 2014:15-16):

An approach which views events as a resource which can be levered to achieve outcomes which would not have happened automatically by “staging an event”; and where “events are reconceived as windows of opportunity within which to undertake initiatives”.

The focus on leveraging, therefore, represents a shift to a more forward-thinking, proactive, strategic approach (Chalip 2004; Smith 2014), explained in the following quotation from Chalip (2004:228):

Unlike impact assessments, the study of leverage has a strategic and tactical focus. The objective is to identify strategies and tactics that can be implemented prior to and during an event in order to generate particular outcomes. Consequently, leveraging implies a much more pro-active approach to capitalising on opportunities rather than impacts research, which simply measures outcomes.

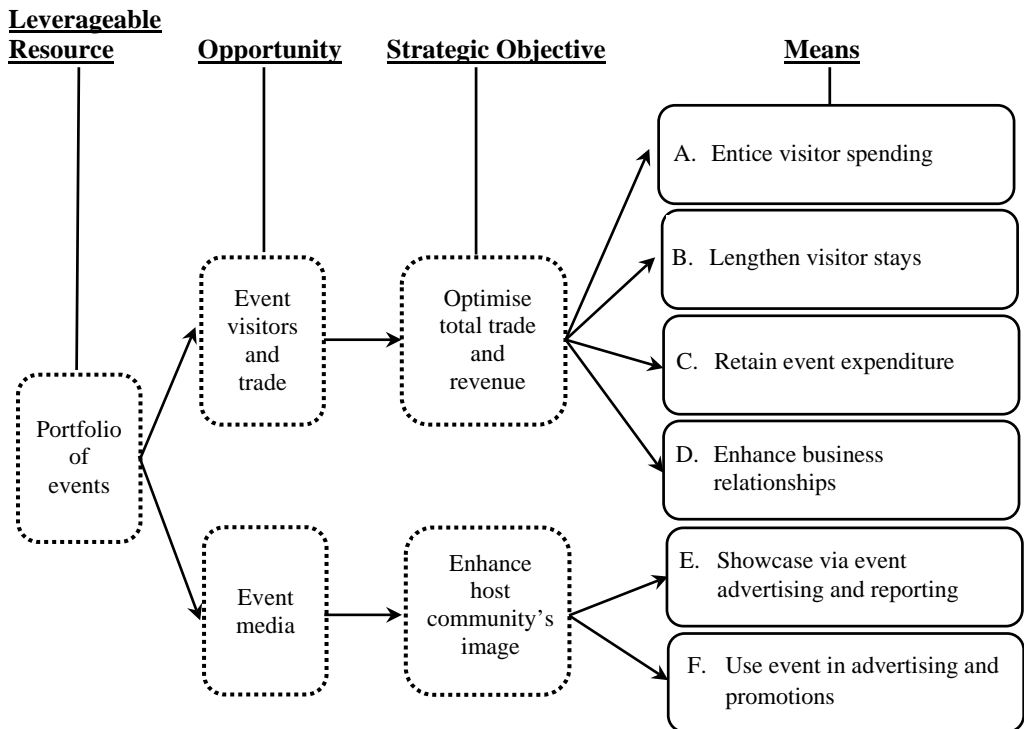


Figure 1. SCHEMATIC REPRESENTATION OF EVENT LEVERAGE
(Chalip, 2004:229)

Such mega-events as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup predominantly invite opportunities for strategic sport event leveraging, due to their economic value and their global media coverage. (See, for example, the respective studies of Chalip (2002) and Grix (2012) on the sport event leveraging of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games and the German 2006 FIFA World Cup). However, Chalip (2004) recognised the importance of adding an event portfolio, consisting of home-grown, recurring events, to the destination marketing strategy, in that doing so should allow the destinations concerned to optimise their reach (in terms of the number of

market segments involved) and frequency (the number of times that there is exposure to events, by way of various communication means at the host destination) when hosting the different events throughout the duration of the once-off mega-event.

Moreover, destinations are considering using combinations of business- or vacation-based portfolios (Hankinson, 2004, 2005). Aaker (2004) asserted that a destination brand portfolio strategy is one in which the goals are to form synergy, leverage and clarity within the portfolio, as well as to create relevant, differentiated and energised brands. Such strategic branding fits with the concept of sport event leveraging, as advocated by Chalip (2004). Encapsulating the event leveraging framework that infers strategic destination branding, Chalip (2004) offered a schematic representation of event leveraging (Figure 1). The model starts with the portfolio of events as the leverageable resource that leads to the opportunity for leverage, which, subsequently, influences the strategic objectives set out in the stakeholder policies. These strategic objectives are both linked to the optimising of trade and revenue, as well as to the enhancing of the destination brand image. Consequently, the set strategic objectives should yield various destination branding outcomes.

METHODOLOGY

Ethical clearance

The College of Business and Economics of the University of Johannesburg approved the application on 24th May 2017 and granted permission to conduct research on leveraging home-grown sport tourism events for strategic destination branding outcomes. The ethical clearance number is FOM2017STH023.

In order to address the research question on how strategic destination branding is leveraged by stakeholders of home-grown sport events, this study employed a qualitative case study research paradigm. Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 key sport, event and destination brand stakeholders who were purposively selected, based on their knowledge of the study objectives. Adopting a qualitative approach was considered suitable, since the aim was to gain a broad overview of stakeholder perspectives and to develop a conceptual theoretical framework based on rich and meaningful data.

The respondents were selected and approached by virtue of their involvement, leadership and recognised expertise in destination branding within the South African context, through home-grown sport event hosting. Respondents were sought from top management positions, preferably at a level of Director or Senior Manager positions. Clusters of stakeholders further provided valuable information across a variety of organisations in South Africa. For instance, a cluster of stakeholders represented local (city) and national (South African) tourism and destination branding organisations. These stakeholders not only provided significant insight on the influence of sport and events on the South African destination brand, but also, both from a city and national perspective, they provided insight into strategies for leveraging home-grown sport for destination brand-related benefits. Another cluster of stakeholders represented the home-grown sport and event industry within major metropolitan cities in South Africa (such as Cape Town and Johannesburg). This group reported on their experiences on the strategic planning and marketing of home-grown sport and events, alongside the objectives of national policy on sport event leveraging. The final cluster of stakeholders represented senior professors

in academia, more specifically, those involved in sport and tourism research at both local and national level.

Targeted stakeholders were interviewed in a semi-structured, face-to-face setting. All the interviews were conducted with the prior consent of all respondents. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the respondents; usually their workplace. All interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed verbatim by the researcher. Every effort was made to ensure validity and reliability of the data through the constant checking of the interview transcripts along with comparing them to the voice recordings and field notes made during the interviews. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions related to topics identified through the literature review. The interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to probe, or clarify, the issues raised, and to explore the particular areas of experience or expertise of the respondents. Key variables that guided the questions, examined concepts of destination branding in the developing context of South Africa, as well as sport event leveraging towards the development of destination brands. Key issues probed were stakeholder strategies and tactics implemented during home-grown event hosting for the benefit of promoting the South African brand, as well as strategic stakeholder partnerships in sport event leveraging for achieving augmented destination branding benefits.

The coding of the data was supported by the software programme 'Atlas ti' which also assisted in the reduction and display of the data. An inductive bottom-up coding approach was used, with individual codes being developed from key words as each response was reviewed. From the resulting long list of codes, themes were developed and grouped which subsequently formed the basis of the results and discussion that are presented in the following section.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Strategic destination branding through home-grown sport event leveraging

Rather than merely using general branding strategies that underpin the corporate theory, increasingly more places than in the past are tending to use sport events as strategic catalysts by which to attain strategic destination branding outcomes. Melbourne, Australia can be considered a prominent example of a place that successfully adopted a home-grown sport event portfolio for the purpose of obtaining the desired destination benefits. King and Jago (2003) stated that the city exemplifies a destination that lacks 'must-see' historic and other iconic settings, which, consequently, has prompted the city to pursue events-based strategies. O'Hanlon (2009) extensively reported on Melbourne's competitive brand position, and on the city's economic and tourism strategy, in an attempt to sell the destination as Australia's 'event capital', through the hosting of annual, recurring home-grown sport, such as the Australian Open Tennis Tournament and the Formula One Grand Prix, as well as associated cultural festivals.

While the Melbourne Major Events Company has been geared towards the creation of such mega-events as the aforementioned Grand Prix and even the Olympic Games, the intention of the Major Events Unit has been to focus on international events of a slightly lesser magnitude, such as world championship events. Melbourne has enjoyed considerable success in its efforts to build an event profile, with it having gained substantial recognition for its destination brand as the 'events capital' of Australia (King & Jago, 2003). Subsequently, other Australian capital

cities have come to follow Melbourne in utilising events as a catalyst for the development of tourism, thus prompting Melbourne to seek new ways of maintaining its advantage in an increasingly competitive market. For example, the successful 2000 Sydney Olympic Games has strengthened the competitive brand position of the city concerned.

Notably, respondents unanimously agreed to the competitive destination brand position of Melbourne and Australia as a result of their continued sport and event hosting. For instance, a stakeholder of sport and events branding stated:

Melbourne is the number one city in the world. Purely from the range of sport Melbourne has and the crowd that they get, they obviously have a lot to offer. (Informant A)

When comparing the South African destination brand to international brands, the majority of respondents recalled the city of Cape Town as a fierce international competitor, simply as this coastal city has recently adopted a home-grown event portfolio for achieving strategic destination branding benefits. This events strategy is aimed at competitively positioning the city as a 'Gateway for Events' in Africa (Hemmonsbe & Knott, 2015), similar to that of the city of Melbourne. The portfolio involved largely consists of sport events, including the Cape Town Cycle Tour, the ABSA Cape Epic, the Two Oceans Marathon, and the Volvo Oceans Race. The decision-making in such regard came about largely as a result of the promising economic benefits to be gained through tourism, as well as through the opportunity to leverage such recurring annual events to attain positive city branding outcomes. Certainly, due to the emergence of Cape Town South Africa as a destination for major events, similar to that of the developed Australian cities, proves that destination branding through sport event leveraging is equally important in the context of developing destinations.

Importance of strategic destination branding through sport event leveraging in a developing context

According to Lepp and Gibson (2011), Africa is a tremendously rich continent in respect to its culture, nature and landscape. The two researchers state that, with such diversity, Africa has the potential to attract millions of tourists to the continent each year. Yet, Africa's tourism potential remains largely unrealised. Moreover, negative perceptions around the South African brand, such as crime, political instability, unemployment, the lack of basic education and housing services, as well as a high HIV infection rate still persist in the minds of global audiences (Donaldson & Ferreira, 2009). To this, Donaldson and Ferreira (2009) recognise that sport and in particular the recently hosted 2010 FIFA World Cup symbolised new hope for re-imagining and positioning the South African destination to change these perceptions and further position a positive destination brand. Notwithstanding the role of sport mega-events for destination branding benefits as postulated by Donaldson and Ferreira (2009), key informants involved in this particular study emphasised the important role of the home-grown sport event for the South African brand development and positioning.

Parallel with the literature, the current study reveals that South Africa faces comprehensive social challenges associated with the priorities set out by national authorities. For example, a key informant in the sport event marketing states that:

South Africa faces different challenges compared to those that are faced by the rest of the world [and by more developed nations]. These challenges include, the provision for the

city's education, health, and safety sectors, [which arguably] require more attention, support and investment from the authorities. (Informant B)

Another respondent in sport event marketing stressed that, these diverted priorities may sometimes take precedence over matters arising in the sporting industry. These stakeholder sentiments thus provide a strong impetus for leveraging activities in line with social responsible programmes during sport and events hosting in the developing context. Against such a backdrop, it is clear that the varying fields of perception, socio-economics, experience and strategic policy are all considered critical not only to the successful hosting of sports events, but, more importantly, in the context of this paper, in terms of the issue of leveraging sport for strategic destination branding outcomes in the developing African nation context.

Notwithstanding the unique developing challenges, all respondents confirmed that home-grown sport events have numerous positive marketing effects linked to brand awareness and brand equity on the destination brand of host cities and, consequently, the broader South African brand. Especially with the home-grown sport events attracting mass participation on an annual basis, compared to the one-off mega-event, branding opportunities become more prevalent. From an event bidding and hosting perspective, a key informant in destination marketing expressed his concerns over the weak South African currency (Rand) compared to the international currency (Dollar) when bidding for sport mega-events. Moreover, the weak currency affecting the South African economy further affects the branding and leveraging activities around mega-event hosting. For this reason, this key informant believes that, home-grown, recurring eventing is crucial for the country, as it allows municipalities to procure destination branding from home-grown sport and a more affordable hosting and marketing budget. The stakeholder in destination marketing reported:

Eventing is critical for no other reason than the Rand is weak. The ability you get out of leveraging the event is sometimes three, four, five, six times what you really put into it ... We don't have a budget of two million rand a month to put on one entity (global marketing), so we rather procure, and then, hopefully, the global eyeball count or global TV count will offset the money five, six, seven times over. (Informant C)

While the importance of home-grown sport event leveraging in a developing context was emphasised in the majority of the respondents' views, some respondents stated that they felt that more could be done regarding the effectivity of leveraging through both private and public partnerships and strategic stakeholder collaborations. These sentiments were mainly shared across stakeholders involved in major event hosting representing various home-grown sports, as well as a few stakeholders in tourism and destination branding, mainly representing the local municipal cities. Hemmonsbey and Knott (2015) revealed the significance of strategic partnerships between home-grown sport and local municipalities for the Cape Town city brand. Their research shows that strategic partnership has subsequently been realised by a major home-grown event in Cape Town, namely the Cape Town Cycle Tour and the City of Cape Town municipality. Their study further revealed event and the joint efforts of city stakeholders for co-branding and event leveraging activities to achieve more planned destination marketing objectives.

In line with this above-mentioned finding, respondents involved in major sport events and local tourism remained strongly focussed on the involvement of national tourism investment and development departments in the marketing of sports and events on a national and, likewise,

international level. For example, a key informant in major sport event marketing believes that home-grown sport is believed to equally benefit the economy of the host city and broader South Africa as it attracts national and international sport tourists to the event. For this reason, this key informant emphasised the primary involvement of national stakeholders in municipally organised sport events. An excerpt that emphasises a key informant in sport event marketing points out the following:

Using the [Cape Town] Cycle Tour as an example, it is not just coming to a bicycle race in Cape Town, that is the hook, its [more like] going to Cape Town, then stop in Johannesburg on our way back [home] and spend a week at Kruger National Park, it's about leveraging those opportunities. (Informant D)

Moreover, to deliver sport tourism events effectively to all contributors and key industry stakeholders, key informants of tourism events and research emphasise that the importance of strategic partnerships between public and private organisations should move beyond the discussion platform towards a functioning relationship for effective leveraging on a national level.

Interestingly, Anholt (2010:11) listed the functions of place branding managers when developing place brands (including destination brands) in a way that corresponds with the sentiments of the respondents regarding the establishment of strategic partnerships for effective destination marketing. The aforesaid functions, as also mentioned by the majority of respondents, which are applicable in both the developed and developing context, include:

- Concluding productive partnerships between government, business and civil society to achieve harmonised goals;
- Establishing the reputation of a place as an external phenomenon, by doing business with international markets;
- Managing, measuring, protecting, leveraging and nurturing the reputation of a place in the long term;
- Establishing brand management so as to form strategic vision surrounding the purpose of the place;
- Implementing new development that will highlight the advancement of a place in the eyes of the international media.

A proposed event leveraging model adapted for developing country context

Various distinguishing factors apparently affect the South African destination brand, compared to the branding of most developed nations that are perceived to be more experienced in sport event hosting, socially and economically mature and politically stable, with a better perceived brand image. Consequently, the sport leveraging model, as proposed by Chalip (2004), cannot be generalised for developing destinations. It is safe to hypothesise that, from the developing nation's perspective, one of the means of including social cohesion that encompasses the promotion of basic education, health, unemployment, and even political stability is through their portfolio of home-grown domestic sport. While the development of such a portfolio could be leveraged through creating event media hype pre, during and post sporting events, entailing the changing of the perceptions of the visitors on such issues, such leveraging could, perhaps, be more effectively achieved through granting suitable opportunities for strategic private and public, or government, partnerships. The opportunity for developing strategic partnerships should help to ensure the impetus of not only funding such aspects, but also of enhancing the

national and international support for the development of the South African brand. In addition, the formation of strategic public and private collaborations through co-branding is encouraged, as doing so should allow for the expansion of the available marketing opportunities for both the event and the destination brands. Accordingly, the adapted sport leveraging model that includes the key aspects for developing nations is proposed as presented in Figure 2 below.

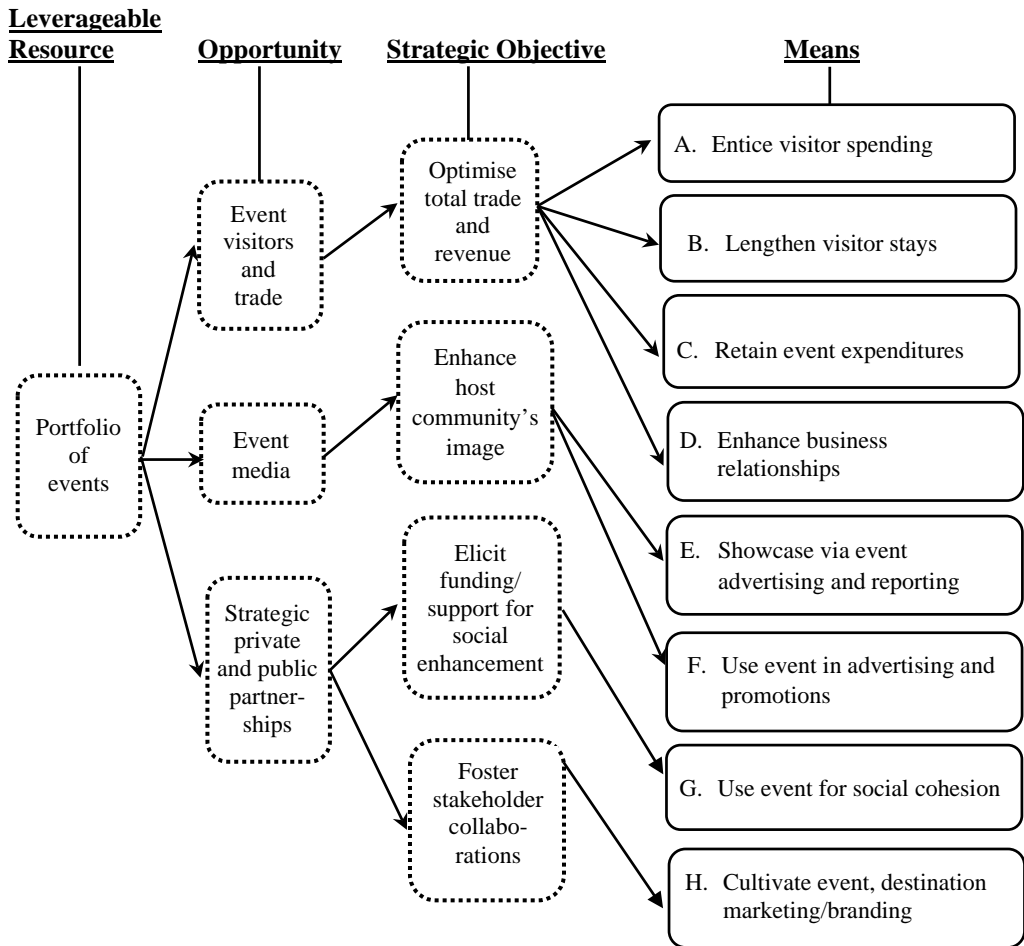


Figure 2. ADAPTED EVENT LEVERAGING MODEL IN THE CONTEXT OF A DEVELOPING NATION

Certainly the above-mentioned adapted sport event leveraging model is applicable to other nations from a global south perspective. “Despite [the] different histories of these countries, they [developing nations] do have colonial legacies of domination and exploitation in common” (De Almeida *et al.*, 2015:268).

CONCLUSION

Destination branding can be conceptualised as a strategic element that can be used to create and enhance the destination image through a collective set of marketing and communication activities. Notably, the concept of destination branding is influenced by several theories, including the corporate branding theory. The above is mainly due to the similarities linked to its organisational structure. As destinations differ in their multidisciplinary scope, certain key distinctions exist between destinations and corporations. Thus, the corporate branding frameworks cannot be applied linearly within the destination context (Hankinson, 2005; Hosany *et al.*, 2007).

In the context of sport, this paper reveals that destination branding outcomes are nothing short of strategic. The sport event leveraging framework, as outlined by Chalip (2004), comprehends the brand of a destination in its entirety (consisting of destination image promotion and economic development through visitor spending), rather than merely the destination brand image that is offered through the co-branding theory. Subsequently, the sport event leveraging framework offers significant opportunities for strategic destination branding outcomes.

Moreover, the evidence suggests that home-grown sport events prove to affect the destination brand of both developed and developing nations strategically, by means of competitive brand positioning. Melbourne’s success in brand positioning came about largely as a result of their strategic approach taken towards the hosting of home-grown, recurring events, sporting and otherwise. Accordingly, the city adopted a calendar of annual events that is supplemented by a range of once-off sporting events. The events not only promote the city as the ‘Sporting Capital’ of Australia, but serve to stimulate the related economic development through annual tourism spending.

Similarly, in the context of a developing city brand, Cape Town has adopted an event strategy encompassing home-grown sport tourism events, so as to position the city specifically as a destination for sport and as a ‘Gateway for Events’ in Africa. However, with the focus of the relevant stakeholders clearly being on the very troubling social challenges that are linked to South Africa’s education, health, and safety, as well as to the economically challenged currency, as compared to the focus of the stakeholders in the developed context, the sport event leveraging model cannot be generalised to the immediate context. Thus, the current study adds to the model of Chalip (2004) insofar as including opportunities for strategic stakeholder partnership and for collaboration, so as to achieve the strategic objectives that are linked to social cohesion, as well as to more effective destination marketing/branding.

This paper has emphasised the importance of the leveraging of sport events in order to realise strategic benefits for a host destination, supporting the literature of pre-eminently Chalip (2004, 2006) and Grix (2012). In particular, the paper has focused its investigation on home-grown

events rather than mega-events in order to address this gap in literature. Although the concept of destination branding remains narrowly defined within the literature, emerging practice on destination branding through sport is widely adopted. The authors further advocate future studies in this field, and in particular recommend an assessment of the practical application of the sport event leveraging model towards achieving strategic destination branding objectives for home-grown sport events. Extending this framework to other event types in a destination should also be explored.

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