THE EFFECTS OF MAJOR SPORT EVENT LEVERAGING FOR TOURISM AND DESTINATION BRANDING: THE CASE OF SOUTH AFRICA AS AN EMERGING DESTINATION

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Abstract: Emerging nations with transitioning or newly transformed brands are increasingly using sport as a branding platform to generate and communicate strong and coherent brands. This is done in acknowledgement of sport as a powerful agent for destination branding. While many studies on sport mega-events leveraging exist, few have addressed the effects of major sport on tourism and destination branding. Regrettably, the theory underpinning emerging economies and destinations of the Global South has been neglected. This paper, therefore, addresses the gap by investigating the major event and its effects on the emerging South African brand. The study followed a qualitative design featuring semi-structured in-depth interviews with key industry stakeholders involved in sport, nation and tourism brands. The findings clearly revealed positive effects of major events for a developing destination, in line with socio-economic development and brand exposure. Furthermore, strong emphasis on the importance of strategic partnerships for effective brand development is evident. The paper contributes to the developing country's perspective on topics investigated largely in the developed contexts. It also holds practical significance for stakeholders of other developing nations, providing them with guidance on how to achieve branding benefits through major sport event leveraging.

Key words: Major sport, event leveraging, tourism, destination branding, emerging nations, South Africa

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INTRODUCTION
The branding theory has recently been extended and applied beyond the product and service industry to a number of different environments, including places encompassing nations, destinations, cities, regions, and towns (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Pike (2009) recognises the first publication related to destination branding emerging half a century after the development of the generic branding theory in 1940. In relation to leisure tourism, Blain

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et al. (2005) suggest that branding theories within the context concerned have gained visibility, since 1998, as a focal research theme. Subsequent to the emergence of the destination branding literature, relatively little research has been reported in relation to analysing the long-term effectiveness of destination brands (Pike, 2010). However, following the emergence of destination branding as a concept, the importance of branding as a strategic marketing activity has been considered increasingly significant to both academia and industry. The phenomenon of globalisation has significantly influenced destination branding, in that destinations are increasingly competing for their share of domestic and global tourism, events and business markets. Anholt (2007) argues that such competition is fierce for emerging destinations, especially those in the sub-Saharan African context, where scant differentiation exists between individual countries in terms of tourism product offerings, with destination branding, therefore, becoming essential in such regard. Elsewhere in the extant studies, sport has become increasingly recognised as a powerful agent for destination branding and economic development (Getz, 2003; Higham & Hinch, 2009; Kozma, 2010). Sport has particularly been noted to act as a branding platform for emerging, transition, negatively viewed, or newly industrialised, destinations (Rein & Shields, 2007). Interestingly, the globalisation of sport, specifically as linked to mega-events, is argued potentially to alleviate the branding challenges that destinations might face in terms of the advanced globalisation of places, which, consequently, greatly influences the sport tourism experience involved (Weed & Bull, 2004). For the above reason, sport has become an important leveraging tool by means of which the host tourism destination can achieve destination branding benefits (Chen & Funk, 2010, Tichaawa & Bob, 2015).

Prime examples of emerging destinations that have hosted a series of sporting events to lure their fair share of tourism and destination branding benefits include: Rio de Janeiro in Brazil, and their hosting of the 2007 Pan-American Games; the 2011 Military Games (Bienenstein et al., 2012); the final match of the 2014 FIFA World Cup; and, most recently, the 2016 Olympic Games. In the context of Africa, South Africa has been at the forefront of hosting numerous major international sporting events (the 1995 Rugby World Cup; the 20th Africa Cup of Nations in 1996 and 2013; the 2003 Cricket World Cup; the Indian Premier League (IPL) in 2009; and the 2010 FIFA World Cup) that are noted as having contributed towards enhancing the host country's brand (Knott et al., 2013). Despite such prominent examples as Brazil and South Africa, event leveraging studies, to date, have failed to recognise the significant rise in the amount of sport event hosting undertaken in the emerging destinations, as well as the influence of sport on the developing nation's brand development. Using South Africa as a case study, the current paper provides findings based on an investigation into the effects of sport event leveraging for tourism and destination branding, from an emerging destination context. The paper is organised in the following manner: the literature review puts destination branding in context for the study concerned, while it discusses key concepts on major sport event leveraging within a developing context. The study's qualitative methodological framework is highlighted in the subsequent section, and, thereafter, a thematic presentation of the study's findings is presented and discussed, based on in-depth analysis of the data. Lastly, the study's implications are outlined, before the study concludes with final remarks and recommendations for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Destination Branding in Context

In the available research foci on destination branding, destinations are traditionally regarded as well-defined geographical areas (Hall, 2008; Ilies & Ilies, 2015; Shafiei et al., 2017; Sziva et al., 2017). A general supposition that a destination brand denotes the

tourism aspect of a place is widely supported (Buhalis, 2000, Anholt, 2005, Hanna & Rowley, 2008). However, a degree of complexity exists in identifying a single destination, especially as destinations can comprise several towns, cities, other government provinces, islands, or entire countries (Morgan et al., 2004). Fittingly, Hanna and Rowley (2008, p. 64) explain that "the type of geographical entity does not limit the scope of destination branding, provided a direct association with tourism is established". Anholt (2005, p. 118) notes that destination branding is "the term often used to indicate the modern form of tourism promotion", but that it has often been conflated with the concept of nation branding. However, nation branding is "concerned with a country's whole image on the international stage, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions" (Fan, 2010, p. 98). Within the aforementioned context, Anholt (2005) explains that tourism is merely one component of the nation and, unlike the nation as a whole, tourism is the 'product' that needs to be 'sold' in the global marketplace. Certainly, the same holds for other products that comprise the nation, such as agriculture, sport and entertainment. However, by definition, nations are unlikely to have a single target market or offering. Consequently, Hanna and Rowley (2008, p. 64) affirm that, "when referring to nation brands in relation to countries, the reference is in the context of country 'outputs' within which the context of tourism is a destination brand". For the current study, it is with the above-mentioned interpretation of nation and destination brands that the South African brand is contextualised, in terms of its geographical area, and, consequently, in terms of its tourism- or destination-brand-related inputs and/or outputs.

Destination branding is most commonly defined according to the definition of J.R. Ritchie and R.J.B. Ritchie (1998, p. 17), as:

"…a name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore, it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the destination; it also serves to consolidate and reinforce the recollection of pleasurable memories of the destination experience".

The above definition not only highlights the strategic marketing activity through such brand communicators as the destination name or descriptive insignias, but, more notably, it also highlights the imperative of underpinning a 'pleasurable and memorable travel experience'. Moreover, it is increasingly recognised that a destination can be regarded as a perceptual concept as "[destination brands are] interpreted subjectively by consumers, depending on their travel itinerary, cultural background, purpose of visit, educational level and` past experience" (Buhalis, 2000, p. 97). Perceptions are generally formed as a result of, or they are reflective of the destination's brand image, and how it is perceived among visitors prior, during, or after their visits. Due to the perceptual construal of destination brands, Cai (2002) and Nelson (2005) advocate the importance of adopting the appropriate destination marketing strategies, so as to communicate specific selected destination images, as a critical stimulus to motivating and influencing the travel decisions of potential visitors. In terms of its conceptual framework, however, Hankinson (2004) conceptualises destination branding as 'relational brand networks' that act as: (1) communication devices, in the form of logos, slogans and trademarks; (2) perceptual entities that appeal to the visitors' senses and emotions; (3) value enhancers that lead to brand equity; and (4) relationships that communicate the brand personalities concerned. The framework involved is believed to underpin the concept of destination branding.

Sport Event Leveraging

The essence of leveraging events to improve destination image, which is known as co-branding (Brown et al., 2004; Chalip & Costa, 2005), is believed to benefit the brand image concept. However, according to Chalip (2002, p. 7), "leveraging recognises [that

the event] is an opportunity to implement particular tactics which may foster and nurture the impacts that are desired". O'Brien and Chalip (2008) state that many major sport event stakeholders are now increasingly approaching events more strategically than in the past, with them looking beyond the immediate visitation-related impacts. Instead, they plan for such longer-term outcomes as: encouraging repeat visitation; reimaging host communities in key markets (Egresi & Kara, 2014); fostering business relationships; and encouraging inward trade, investment and employment. Chalip (2004) and O'Brien and Chalip (2008, p. 297) refer to the phenomenon as the 'strategic leveraging' of events to maximise their long-term benefits from events.

Chalip (2002) considers Australia as the first nation to have employed leveraging strategies successfully around the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games, so as to achieve the desired branding benefits, such as: brand repositioning through media coverage; the creating of convention business opportunities; minimising of the diversion effect of the Games; and the promoting of pre- and post-Games touring. Subsequently, Grix (2012) reports on Germany, which employed similar strategies during their hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup, so as to improve the national brand image among international tourists. Other successful studies linked to sport event leveraging are those conducted by Kellett et al. (2008), on leveraging relationships with sport teams for community benefits, and by Taks et al. (2013), on leveraging sport events for sport participation.

From a developing destination's perspective, Pillay and Bass (2008) postulate on the leveraging of sport tourism events for attaining the South African brand. The authors emphasise that a key objective of the 2010 FIFA World Cup for South Africa was to capitalise on tourism, as well as to establish the nation as a powerful tourism destination, as a way of improving upon its international brand image and tourism promotion.

The Influence of Major Events

Major sport events have become a key component of destination branding. "Many destinations throughout the world have developed event portfolios as a strategic initiative to attract tourists and to reinforce their brand" (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, which have the ability to attract enormous investment to a destination (Trošt et al., 2012). Event visitors (participants and spectators) pay for accommodation, food, souvenirs, and tickets and, therefore, through sport events, the extension of visitor stays at a destination, and the facilitation of enhanced promotion of a destination, are stimulated (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, Higham & Hinch, 2009). Knott et al. (2012) reveal that the impact of social media coverage around the first day of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was significant to the exposure that the country received overall. As with the mega-event, South Africa also plays host to a series of numerous major sporting events that have proven to yield similar socio-economic and destination branding benefits. Prevalent examples include: The Cape Town Cycle Tour; the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon; the ABSA Cape Epic mountain bike stage race (held in Cape Town); the Comrades Marathon (held in Durban); the annual Super Rugby, Currie Cup (rugby) and ABSA Premier League (soccer) games (held in various South African cities); the Soweto Marathon (held in Johannesburg); and the Ironman African Championship (held in Port Elizabeth). Other major local sport tournaments hosted in South Africa include the South African Open (golf tournament), and most of the Sunshine Tour golf events. Moreover, in November 2018, South Africa will host a new cricket league, namely the #T20 Global Destination

League. The local league will, in part, directly promote South Africa as a leading destination for sport tourism. The above-mentioned events have proven that, as is the case with large-scale international mega-events, the major event tends to contribute associated socio-economic and destination branding benefits equally for the host destination concerned (Dimanche, 2003). Other major events that are seen to influence tourism and destination brands similarly, as a result of their annual, recurring nature are, for example, the Oktoberfest (held in Germany); the Rio Carnival (held in Brazil); and the Wimbledon Tournament (held in England) (Kotler & Gertner, 2004).

Despite the aforesaid contribution of sport to destination brands, scant extant studies have explicitly explored the major event as a means of leveraging brand-related benefits. More importantly, none has examined the emerging Global South context as a case study for sport event leveraging by means of which to achieve brand-related benefits. Instead, most studies have focused on international sport mega-events and on the leveraging opportunities provided for host destinations, particularly from a developed, Global North perspective (Chalip, 2002; Kellett et al., 2008; Karadakis et al., 2010; Karadakis & Kaplanidou, 2012; Grix, 2012). Consequently, the theory of sport event leveraging is skewed toward the developed context, and special theories that inform developing destinations research are scant.

To provide an informed context of sport event leveraging for the developing destinations, the current research extends the scope of the sport mega-event to unearthing the opportunities for leveraging major sporting events, and to exploring the effects of such events on emerging destination brands. The context of an African destination brand, in the present case South Africa, enhances the unique contribution of the study beyond the developed context. The study contributes to the practices and policies of stakeholders of the developing contexts who wish to augment tourism and destination branding through major sport event leveraging.

THE RESEARCH STUDY

The methodology adopted for the study followed the adoption of a qualitative approach, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with key industry stakeholders representing South African sport and destination branding organisations. More specifically, 20 stakeholders were chosen from within South Africa's major sporting metros (i.e. Port Elizabeth, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Bloemfontein). By adopting a qualitative approach to the study, the researchers involved considered it appropriate to gain a comprehensive overview of stakeholder perspectives, and to gather rich and meaningful data on the topic at hand. Accordingly, the stakeholders were purposefully selected by virtue of their characteristics, which had some bearing on their perceptions and experiences of branding South Africa through major sporting events. The stakeholders interviewed, who each held a management-related position, included both national and local tourism destination brand stakeholders, national and local sport federation stakeholders, and local home-grown event stakeholders.

All the interviews were conducted with the prior consent of the respondents concerned. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the respondents, with it usually being their workplace. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions relating to the topics identified through the literature review, although 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 involved. The focus of the interview questions largely centred on the effects of major events on developing destination brands, with a specific

focus on sport event leveraging for the obtaining of South African destination branding benefits. A typical interview lasted between 45 and 60 minutes. Additionally, the researchers used primary documentary sources to trace trends in sport tourism event leveraging and its influence on the destination branding outcomes in South Africa, which subsequently supplement the key interviews within the discussion section.

The interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed verbatim, after which the data was coded and analysed with the assistance of a software programme, Atlas.ti. Every effort was made to ensure the validity and reliability of the data, by means of constantly checking the interview transcripts, as well as continuously comparing them to the interview voice recordings and field notes made during the interview. A thematic presentation of the results is outlined in the following sections.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
The South African brand image

The respondents clearly described the South African brand as 'exciting', 'intriguing', 'genuine', and 'authentic', with a brand image clearly distinguishable from that of many European nations. Their views were captured succinctly by the director of a regional major cycle tour, who noted: "South Africa offers a unique experience of having major cities like Johannesburg, Durban, and Cape Town that can offer world-class conferencing facilities, and yet, within an hour, you can be in the bush experiencing the big five, which you simply can't do anywhere else in the world."

In addition to the perceived 'soft' image descriptions linked to the destination brand name, the respondents mentioned important 'experience factors' in terms of the iconic tourist attractions that South Africa has on offer. For example, the 'beaches in Durban and Cape Town', 'wildlife havens, like the Kruger National Park and other places' (Chief Director of the Provincial Department of Cultural Affairs and Sport [DCAS]). The respondents also mentioned the factors describing the so-called 'hard' features, such as Table Mountain (which is one of the world's top ten iconic landmarks), as a key element of the South African brand. Linked to the brand images is the iconic event hosting and sport event leveraging that can be attained through major events. For instance, the beaches become important "because that is where you have surfing, wind surfing and kite surfing taking place" (Chief Director, DCAS). Moreover, using the Cape Town Cycle Tour as an example, the Director of a regional cycle tour stated that the above is about leveraging opportunities granted in terms of what the rest of South Africa has to offer. His response reads: "It isn't just coming to a bicycle race in Cape Town. It's [more like] going to Cape Town, and stopping over in Johannesburg on our way back, and spend[ing] a week at [the] Kruger National Park."

A previous study revealed that the respondents involved compared the brand images of what are considered the major metropolitan cities in South Africa, namely Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Port Elizabeth (Hemmonsbey & Knott, 2015). In connection with the city of Durban in the KwaZulu-Natal Province, the CEO of regional cricket stated, "Durban has somehow managed to be much better positioned in terms of how the city supports sport...there is a whole sporting precept there...most importantly, the city invests in sport." Another respondent said that, while the city of Johannesburg in the Gauteng Province is a budding city for sport, compared to the city of Cape Town, "people live in suburbs, and there is concrete and highways" (communications manager in the field of regional rugby). He continued, "In Cape Town you can go up on[to] Chapmans Peak running and cycling. So, Cape Town is a massive sporting destination for serious people" (communications manager in the field of regional rugby).

Furthermore, while the findings of Hemmonsbey and Knott (2015) revealed that the city of Port Elizabeth in the Eastern Cape was a less conspicuous destination brand for major events at the time of their study, the present researchers found that the stakeholder sentiments tended to include Port Elizabeth as a key host city for major events, which greatly promotes the competitiveness of various South African city brands through the hosting of major sport events. One respondent argued: "By and large, most of the big cities get the value that events have. Port Elizabeth, the tiny little city of Port Elizabeth, hosts one of the best Ironman events in the world, and that is a global event that is televised internationally. So we [as South Africa] are a great destination, we have a hell of a lot to offer" (director of a regional cycle tour).

Destination branding through co-branding

Brown et al. (2004) and Chalip and Costa (2005) postulate that the essence of leveraging events to improve destination image is known as co-branding. According to the researchers concerned, co-branding is believed to benefit the brand image concept by means of offering two brands (event and destination) of mutual branding benefits through brand association. The respondents all agreed as to the importance of co-branding for the South African brand. All the respondents clearly expressed the imperative to "attract people to the destination and the event". The respondents believed that major events tend to enhance the destination brand through their association with the brand identity and image. Through his interpretation of destination branding, the Chief Director at DCAS referred to the importance of co-branding destinations with associated major sport event brands. Exemplifying Cape Town and the Western Cape province, he explained, "Destination branding will always have … Cape Town or the Western Cape attached to the event. So even if the event is a basketball event, you are going to say 'basketball Cape Town'."

Other examples reveal that the Cape Town Cycle Tour and the Durban July (horseracing event) incorporate the destination name (identity), consequently augmenting the destination image. An event stakeholder emphasised largely how the destination brand enhances the promotion of the event itself, and, subsequently, attracts people to the event, given that the destination brand name is attached to the event:

"Many people may not have heard of the Cape Town [Cycle] Tour or what was the Argus [Cycle Tour], but certainly a lot more have heard of Cape Town, and even more of South Africa. So, [destination branding] is about using that as the drawcard, or the hook, to promoting our event, both regionally and internationally" (director, regional cycling tour). From the above excerpts in relation to destination branding through major sport events, it is evident that co-branding, which is a form of leveraging events to improve destination image (Brown et al., 2004; Chalip & Costa, 2005), has been extensively considered by stakeholders. Such branding, thus, provides a framework for the effective destination branding of South African branding stakeholders.

Strategic destination branding through sport event leveraging

The literature makes clear that the leveraging concept extends beyond enhancing the brand image through co-branding, towards particular tactics that might foster and nurture desired impacts (Chalip, 2002). As a result, many major sport event stakeholders are now increasingly approaching events more strategically than in the past. They are looking beyond the immediate visitation-related impacts, and planning for longer-term outcomes, such as encouraging repeat visitation, reimaging host communities in the key markets, fostering business relationships, and encouraging inward trade, investment and employment (O'Brien & Chalip, 2008). Similarly, the respondents expressed the belief that "leveraging comes in different formats and modes" (Chief Director, DCAS). In terms

of the South African brand, the respondents perceived the economic factors and business relationships involved to be imperative to the long-term effects of the country's tourism and destination brand, and, as a result, regarding major events more strategically than they might otherwise have done. The Chief Director at DCAS stated in the above regard:

"[For South Africa] other economic factors come into play with leveraging, your upstream economy. People coming earlier to your event and stay[ing] in your hotels, your catering, [the] hospitality industry, your tourism activities, your museums would be enhanced, your shopping malls, restaurants."

The role of media and, more notably, social media, has become apparent for purposes of strategic leveraging. Although not explicitly asked, the respondents raised the point of the effect of media around the major event for purposes of attaining branding benefits. For example, "A lot of events have got a wide media and social media following. Therefore, immediately [with] your destination brand, people will be photographing themselves at the Waterfront, Table Mountain, Robben Island, or the wine farms, and that would be ... promoting destination branding" (Chief Director, DCAS).

The above-mentioned new finding certainly substantiates the findings of Knott et al. (2012) on the significant impact of social media around the 2010 FIFA World Cup, which contributed to the brand exposure that South Africa received, especially around the opening and the first day of the event. However, one respondent expressed the belief that not all major events have completely successfully positioned the destination effectively, despite its large media following. For instance, "The ABSA [Cape] Epic, which has also got a big media following, has not yet positioned itself geographically, because it called itself the ABSA Cape Epic. I think [that], at this stage, the home-grown (major) events have promoted itself [i.e. themselves] for a specific destination within the South African geographical setup" (Chief Director, DCAS). Unlike with such mega-events as the various tournaments of the FIFA World Cup, major events tend to gain the image of permanent residence in the host country or city involved. The image is rooted within the destination, and, therefore, requires effective positioning through geographic association.

Destination branding challenges of emerging nations

Certainly, while the media contribute to the positive destination brand through the hosting of both mega-events and major sporting events, the portrayal of the country's less attractive features, such as that which is most commonly mentioned, namely the issue of safety and security (in relation to crime), both on the personal and the political front, remains a matter of contention. Other challenging areas noted across the respondents were linked to education, housing and health, which, compared to European counterparts, have been known to impede the bidding for, and the hosting of, sport events considerably. Accordingly, one stakeholder noted the need for a high level of cognisance and understanding that, "[t]he national imperative in South Africa is slightly different to that of Germany", and, therefore, "the billions of Rands [that are spent on] pitching for events [is taken] out of housing, education and health" (director, regional cycle tour).

The comprehensive challenges of the South African brand are believed to be a long-standing societal problem holding very real implications for the brand. Some studies have enunciated the country's much-publicised social problems, including crime, political instability, unemployment, the lack of basic education and housing services, as well as the high national HIV infection rate (Donaldson & Ferreira (2009), leading to related remarks by the various stakeholders. Subsequently, such challenges, as have been noted in the literature and by the respondents alike, tend to take precedence over the bidding, hosting and marketing around sport events, which might impede the competitive position of the South African brand. The respondents not only recognised the aforesaid nationwide

societal problems, but noted that they assisted with alleviating the challenges arising around the hosting of community events by creating alternative sport and recreation opportunities in the associated communities. Such opportunities enabled the people, more specifically the youth, to occupy their time with positive engagement. However, in terms of the above, the director of a regional cycle tour recognised the importance of establishing public and private partnerships to execute the related activities effectively.

One important challenge facing emerging nations is their weaker currency compared to the US Dollar, especially when bidding for global events. As a result of such currency differential, the respondents expressed the belief that "eventing is critical and the ability you get out of leveraging the event is sometimes three, four, five, six times what you really put into it" (Director of Place and Destination Branding). However, another finding suggests that the weak South African currency might present potential benefits for tourism, regardless of the aforementioned's status. The director of a regional cycle tour stated, in the above regard, "the volatility of the Rand works in our favour, because it makes tourism most affordable for international visitors". Corroborating the finding, the Branding Manager of Sponsorship and Investment stated: "A big advantage is our exchange rate. It is very cheap for people to visit, and, once they are here, they stay here."

Simultaneously, the weakness of the South African currency impedes the international marketing activities of emerging destinations. One respondent reported as follows: "Marketing South Africa internationally is a very difficult task, because you are up against a lot of countries with very powerful (a) marketing arms, and (b) currency (they are a lot stronger than ours). So, if we are competing for an outbound destination tourism market from Europe, America, Australia, and the Far East, they are all able to market their countries with a particular strong currency. Our currency is shockingly weak" (director of a regional cycle tour). According to the above-mentioned respondent, one way to tap into the international market is to niche market where people will travel. Notably, major events with some degree of global awareness are believed to encourage people to travel to destinations, and can help relieve some of the associated marketing demands. The Ironman (triathlon) event in Port Elizabeth, the Old Mutual Two Oceans Marathon, as well as the Cape Town Cycle Tour, are of the examples mentioned by the globally aware respondents who held by creative leverage of such. So as to realise the importance of destination branding through the hosting of major events, the imperative of obtaining funding and support through national and international strategic partnerships is highlighted.

Effective brand messages of South Africa obtained through major event hosting

The respondents were asked what they thought the main brand messages were that the South African brand conveys during their hosting of major events. In addition to the element of 'diversity', it was apparent that there was universal agreement on South Africa's 'professionalism' and 'reputation' when hosting either major sport events, or other business events, such as conferencing. The Chief Director at DCAS said:

"I believe that the home-grown (major) events contribute to the reputation. It contributes to the understanding that we are multidisciplinary in our codes and [in] our approach, so, when people think South Africa, they don't only have to think rugby, or soccer, or cricket [alone]." In comparing the importance of the mega-event over the major event, the respondents perceived both to be important for very different strategic reasons. The importance of sport mega-events was emphasised on the global scale, as well as were the infrastructural developments around the hosting of mega-events. However, "one can argue that hosting mega-events may generate billions of

international revenue" for the country (according to the director of a regional cycle tour). Mega-events are held to be important, "because it shows that we have the organisational ability and that South Africa 'can'" (Director, DCAS).

Major sport is believed to draw mainly on the effects that are linked to the nation's reputation and professionalism around major event hosting. Certainly, major sporting events tend to occur more frequently (usually annually), as well as to attract mass participation to their host destinations. Compared to mega-events, major events tend to place a destination competitively, due to the recurring tourism- and brand-related benefits that are thereby attained through visitor spending. Thus, the respondents urged the relevant destinations to adopt an annual event portfolio, which, from the literature, can be seen as an important strategic initiative for attracting tourists, and for reinforcing the destination brand (Trošt et al., 2012). The above is especially significant as seen from an emerging destination context, in terms of which bidding for mega-events can become an expensive exercise. When referring to the importance of major events over mega-events, one respondent, in a previous study by Hemmonsbey and Knott (2015), explicitly stated: "I think it [the major event] is very, very, very important. You say Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, I would say no, the Argus (Cape Town Cycle Tour), the Two Oceans (marathon) – those are massive events, those are good for the city and country, and contribute significantly to the brand" (communications manager involved in regional rugby). The present study also revealed that the City of Cape Town has adopted an events strategy to position both the city and the country as a leading destination or 'gateway' for events in Africa (Director of Place and Destination Branding). Cape Town has, subsequently, adopted a number of annual, recurring major sporting events that will essentially act as catalysts to brand the city and nation alike. The City is striving to achieve its strategic vision through their events portfolio strategy by 2023.

STUDY IMPLICATIONS

The current study should hold significant implications for South African stakeholders and for stakeholders within the broader developing context, alike. The destination brand of South Africa is one that holds enormous potential for not only major event hosting, but also for business and leisure tourism. The brand image of South Africa offers diversity in terms of its unique tourist offerings, from its soft factors linked to the brand name (which are described as exciting, intriguing, genuine and authentic), to its experiences in terms of its wildlife, beaches, and open spaces. In addition, there are the 'hard' components that are linked to such iconic landmarks as Table Mountain, which is the most prominently perceived. Certainly, the aforementioned brand components contribute to major event hosting, as they lend themselves to the outdoor nature of events in South Africa (such as the cycling and marathon events that occur around the South African coastline). Moreover, the explicit marketing practices that are involved in co-branding (in terms of which the event image is associated with the destination image), for instance, the Cape Town Cycle Tour, and the Durban July, which serve mutually to enhance the related destination and event brand image. The co-branding exercise, consequently, sets a framework for the effective leveraging of major events for the gaining of destination branding benefits. The stakeholders concerned, therefore, are encouraged to consider the use of co-branding to inform their branding practices.

In the context of major sport event leveraging, as postulated by Chalip (2002), in that leveraging involves adopting particular tactics that foster and nurture the desired impacts, the current paper has revealed that such leveraging offers significant

opportunities for both tourism and destination branding. For the South African destination brand, however, the strategic effects of the hosting of major sport events extend beyond such typical benefits as encouraging repeat visitation, reimaging host communities in key markets, fostering business relationships, and encouraging inward trade, investment and employment, as proposed by O'Brien & Chalip (2008). The hosting includes enhancing the social development of South African communities, especially as general perceptions frequently centre on the comprehensive social challenges that are linked to crime, education, housing, and basic health services. While such challenges are relatively long-standing, the stakeholders interviewed considered that some of the challenges could be alleviated through creating opportunities for community sport engagement, and, more importantly, through forming strategic partnerships with local, provincial and national government, as well as with private entities, so as to support alternative youth development programmes. For the developing nations, combatting the challenges involved is key, with it perhaps seeming to take priority over other marketing and destination branding imperatives, which essentially impede the competitive global brand positioning of South Africa.

The influence of both the traditional and social media around major events presents significant branding challenges and opportunities for South Africa. A key challenge is linked to broadcasting the perceived social challenges to the rest of the world, which might negatively affect the destination's branding. However, where media impacts positively is through showcasing and promoting the nation's brand characteristics via national and global broadcasting. The new finding made in terms of social media revealed opportunities for brand enhancement through numerous postings and subsequent viewings on various social media platforms. The social media theme was especially significant, in terms of the arousing of global awareness of the South African destination brand. Furthermore, the brand messages that South Africa conveys during its hosting of major events have come to be recognised as being both professional and reputable. Such brand messaging certainly applies to mega-event hosting. However, it is in terms of the debate around the high cost of bidding for, and hosting of, sport mega-events as opposed to major sporting events, as well as around the socio-economic benefits that are frequently offered through major event hosting, that major home-grown events are deemed critical for effective sport event leveraging.

CONCLUSION

Through an in-depth qualitative analysis of key industry stakeholder perceptions, the current researchers have come to recognise the significant effects of major sport event leveraging for tourism and destination branding. The researchers further acknowledge that, in particular to emerging destinations such as South Africa, sport event leveraging holds various short- and long-term strategic benefits for the nation's developing brand. The benefits are mainly linked to the enhancing emerging economic development and brand exposure, as well as to the addressing of unique socio-economic challenges. Although destination branding and sport event studies remain skewed towards the developing context, the present study contributes to the body of knowledge regarding the developing Global South context, by means of providing the stakeholders concerned with empirically based recommendations regarding major sport event leveraging. While the current researchers purposed to contextualise sport event leveraging in relation to the South African destination brand, they recognise the limitation of their research in terms of them having adopted a single case study approach, at least as far as the study's findings may be applied to other emerging destination

contexts. It is, therefore, urged that further related research should investigate other emerging destination brands as the way forward to draw on more conclusive similarities and contrasts in relation to the effects of major events on the developing of destination brands. Empirically, such research studies will aid in producing a generalised sport event leveraging model that can be applied within a developing destination context.

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