Destination Marketing of Towns and Cities: Citizens as Stakeholders

Prof. Andre P. Calitz
NMU
Port Elizabeth, S.A.
+27 41 504 2639
Andre.Calitz@Mandela.ac.za

Prof. Margaret Cullen
NMU
Port Elizabeth, S.A.
+27 41 504 3772
Margaret.Cullen@Mandela.ac.za

Norman Hunt
NMU
Port Elizabeth, S.A.
+27 41 504 4000
Norman.Hunt@nmmu.ac.za

Abstract

Destination marketing involves identifying a strategy to harvest and maintain a brand image for tourist destinations through a customer-orientated philosophy. When considering destination marketing, the brand image of the destination must be clear and established. The success of a destination marketing initiative can be driven through events. There are three types of events that have been identified, namely sports, cultural and business events. Based in stakeholder theory, the objective of this study is to determine what the small city in South Africa, namely George residents' perceptions are regarding events that can be hosted for destination marketing purposes. This study used a survey approach, administered in the form of an online survey. Data was gathered using snowball sampling. There were 186 responses from the population of George in South Africa. The results indicated that rugby is a strongly supported sporting event and that George should host more cultural and business events. The respondents have positive associations with George, related to its natural beauty, infrastructure, quality of life and friendly people.

Keywords: Destination Marketing, Destination Marketing Organisations, Branding, Events.

Introduction

Creating a new brand image or successfully marketing an existing brand image is essential in positioning and differentiating a location or region (Sönmez & Sirakaya 2002). By communicating the right message to a tourist, one can enhance the destination's image and thereby improve the overall effectiveness of marketing efforts to potential visitors. Sönmez and Sirakaya (2002) suggest that destination marketing can include components such as the destination's history, heritage and culture, but the branding strategy must also include and manage the destination's stakeholders.

The management of the destination's stakeholders will result in greater synergy and acceptance of the marketing strategy if tourists have the perception that they form an integral part of the process. Sönmez and Sirakaya (2002) also indicated that once the residents are loyal to the brand, they may feel such a strong connection to the branding efforts of the destination that the brand will end up playing a role in defining their self-concept and purpose. Residents may even become evangelists for the brand and spread the positive brand image by word-of-mouth.

A destination is a multi-dimensional environment which is made up of many different attractions, people, scenery, accommodation and climate (Pike 2008). Travellers from various regions, socio-demographic groups and lifestyle clusters will respond to different offers at different times for many reasons. Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) are formed to join these two concepts on behalf of the destination and its stakeholders by developing a clear, sustainable strategy for growth and tourism development within its boundaries.

According to Avraham (2014), events entail several significant advantages for the destinations due to the fact that they attract large numbers of guests and visitors who would not normally travel to the destination, were it not for the event. Events also attract opinion leaders such as celebrities, academics and journalists who can positively contribute to the image of the destination through the mediums available to them. Events furthermore encourage local residents to take pride in their place of residency and to reinforce their commitment to its image. Events are also viewed as a driver for social cohesion, economic mobility, new attractions, sports and cultural facilities. An additional advantage involves events contributing to the future success of the destination by creating awareness and by attracting tourism-business developers for future inbound travel. Event types such as sports, cultural and business can be considered in marketing portfolios. The structure of this paper entails the following section exploring the background of destination marketing by investigating brand image, DMOs and the role of events in destination marketing. Thereafter, the research methodology is described which is followed by a discussion of the analysis of the data collected. The results are presented and several conclusions are made that could assist in destination marketing of small towns and cities.

Destination Marketing

Within the concept of destination marketing, the brand image of destinations must be considered. A DMO defines the role that a destination must take when considering the marketing strategy of the destination. Events play an important role in the successful marketing of destinations and can be categorised into sports, cultural and business events.

Brand image

A destination image is the product of all the experiences of an individual and is subject to the influence of many sources whether they are negative or positive (Araújo 2013). Destination marketers strive to promote a positive image of their tourism destination region, but the promotion can be undermined due to difficulties experienced which include factors such as natural disasters, wars, terror attacks, crime waves and political tensions (Avraham 2014). Restoring a damaged destination image is necessary when negative perceptions are a barrier in attracting tourism. A strategy applied by destination marketers to improve the image of a damaged destination is to host spotlight events which are used to attract various visitors, in the hope that they will lead to an improvement in the destination's public image, regardless of whether the event mitigates the reputational issue. Spotlight events have proven to be a popular marketing strategy as they offer a platform to attract opinion leaders as well as journalists to improve the image of the destination and are considered a good opportunity to attract tourists that may never have considered visiting if it were not for the spotlight event. According to Avraham (2014), whilst sport events are the ultimate example of a spotlight event, smaller locations employ similar methods by hosting festivals and athletic events. According to Walbeek (2004), most festivals are locally driven and can play a major role in establishing the image of a destination.

Brands provide information to consumers and communicate and establish expectations with stakeholders (Massey 2009). According to Morgan, Pritchard and Pride (2005), a growing number of tourists search for new experiences and lifestyle fulfilment rather than to compare which destination has the best accommodation and attractions. It is branding that creates an image of what is on offer as well as how it is positioned in the consumer's mind. Branding is of critical importance to a destination's success when competing for a share of the market.

Destination marketing organisations

The increasing levels of competition between tourism destinations forces the DMOs to ensure that their funds are spent effectively if they wish to compete with other destinations that are trying to capture the attention of potential tourists (Pratt 2009). Marketers need to ensure that their costs incurred lead to a high return on investment and that their actions positively impact tourist's perceptions of the brand. Marketing efforts can either be focused on attracting new visitors to the destination or they can be focused on having tourists extend their stay in the destination as a direct result of their marketing campaigns. However, many travellers have already decided to visit a destination before being exposed to advertising campaigns, thereby questioning the influence that the DMOs have on travellers (Stienmetz, Maxcy & Fesenmaier 2013).

A tourist destination is not a single product, but instead, is represented by a number of facets such as accommodation, attractions, dining events and shopping that can influence the decisions of tourists. As such, these items have each become potential focus areas for destination marketers. A proposal is made that DMOs should therefore consider using a facts-based approach in their advertisements of the destinations.

The role of events in destination marketing

It is believed that a portfolio of events does not have any strategic value if it is a coincidental mix of miscellaneous events (Ziakas & Costa 2011). The strategic success in using events to brand a destination lies in that the portfolio constitutes a strategic pattern and is related to a central theme being portrayed by the destinations' stakeholders. The strategy, however, also needs to ensure that such planning avoids exhausting local resources to achieve such a common goal, to avoid hosting repetitive events and finally, to avoid exceeding the demand for such events (Ziakas & Costa 2011).

Ziakas and Costas (2011) point out that one way of avoiding these pitfalls is to differentiate the composition by providing sport as well as cultural events, and as such, the destination marketers should design a balanced event portfolio. Such a portfolio of events needs to be seen holistically and should be designed accordingly rather than designed in fragments, only to be linked together with nothing other than a chronological order in which they occur during a particular period of time.

Ziakas and Costas (2011) further state that such a balanced portfolio approach is based on the functionality of the various combined events and the premise that each can achieve specific economic and tourism goals. A balanced event portfolio, if designed correctly, can enrich the final destination tourism product and can improve its overall image. It can also address any seasonality challenges because of the fact that the events of different types and sizes would strategically vary on-and-off-season based on a comprehensive framework aimed at studying the utility of such event portfolios. In short, such an effort may integrate the portfolio of events with the overall mix of the destinations' products and services and may achieve multiple outcomes and purposes within the social, business and sport arenas.

It may benefit a host destination community that wishes to effectively use its event portfolio, to employ an integrated approach to enhance synergies between the various fields and then to ensure that they are incorporated into the local structures as well as the local agenda to achieve sustainable development. Destinations and recurring events often become inseparable and the result may be that the event provides the host venue, community or destination with a competitive advantage. Such a recurring event that possesses significance in terms of tradition, attractiveness, image or publicity is described as being a "hallmark" event or a mega-event (Getz, Svensson & Gunnervall 2012).

Getz *et al.* (2012) continue by stating that mega-events are those that yield extraordinarily high levels of tourism, media coverage, prestige, or economic boost for the community, venue or organisation that hosts the event. As such they say that hallmark events can be "mega" in their size or significance, but that this is not a defining characteristic. A large impact in terms of tourist attractiveness and image-making is expected of hallmark or mega events.

Sport events

Sport events are increasingly being integrated into destination marketing strategies to stimulate tourism in the area and are often widely broadcasted through media such as television, radio or social networks (Snelgrove & Wood 2010). The Summer Olympic Games which are rated as one of the most important and high-profile mega-events in today's world was broadcast to more than 70% of the world's population when hosted in Beijing in the year 2008 (Li & Kaplanidou 2011). More than 4.7 billion television viewers watched the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games which set the record as the most viewed Olympic Games. When Beijing initially bid for the Olympic Games in the year 2000, China was determined to use the event to promote its new national image as a fast-developing, open country, boasting their rich culture, history and friendly people.

A study conducted in 2011 investigated the impact of the Beijing Olympic Games on China's brand in terms of destination image and personality and found that the consumers' exposure to the event's media affected their perception of the host destination (Li & Kaplanidou 2011). People who followed the Olympic media coverage tended to have a positive attitude toward China compared to those who did not and a greater amount of Olympic media consumption seemed to lead to a more favourable view about China. The research also concluded that the host destinations of the Olympic Games traditionally achieved average tourism growth rates that exceeded the global rate by 2.3% in the four years leading up to the Games and 2.2% in the four years after the games. Host countries experience increased tourism revenue, improved infrastructure, and extensive international media attention during this period which portrays a positive and healthy image for the destination. What is highlighted in the results is that positive impacts will only be achieved by way of carefully crafted marketing strategies, particularly of the traveller segments. The infrastructure of destinations is vital to the success of attracting tourists (Henderson 2006; Ketshabile 2015).

Creating a positive brand image is especially important in the tourism industry as it sets the destination apart from the competition and as is shown in previous studies, influences the way people perceive the destination, which in turn affects consumer behaviour (Howe 2009). Sport events have the capability of directly influencing the destination brand and often play a role in the designing of the brand as well. Marketing managers require a detailed analysis of the brand image transmitted to the market as it affects consumer choice (Sergio & Lopes 2011).

Cultural events

Culture is the basic assumptions of a country's residents and their shared feelings, beliefs and values (Werner 2012). These are manifested in symbols, processes, forms and group behaviour or events. Hofstede, an expert on cultural differences offers his definition of culture as a system of values and norms that are shared among a group of people and that when taken together constitute a design for living (Hill 2013). South Africa offers its own unique cultural experiences and events, of which the following are listed as some of the most popular (Top 10 events 2015):

- The Kaapse Klopse or Cape Carnival, held in Cape Town annually in January which dates back to the nineteenth century when the city's slaves arranged a day of festivities on New Year's Day. The carnival has become a symbol and celebration of life in the Cape and continues today despite the fact that slavery is a distant memory;

- The Grahamstown National Arts Festival where the student town of Grahamstown comes to life every July; and
- The Klein Karoo National Festival which takes place in Oudtshoorn and is a celebration of Afrikaner culture.

According to The World Tourism Organisation (WTO), cultural tourism accounts for 37% of global tourism and is growing at 15% per year. The WTO say that destinations should be leveraging what they have to offer, that they should promote what distinguishes them and that they should invest in developing cultural tourism programmes if they wish to capture their share of this growing market. Branding the culture of a destination needs to harbour the support of its residents in that they need to accept and become committed to the destinations branding efforts, the objective of which is to have them serve as evangelists for the brand who then actively promote the destination by word of mouth and possibly even end up having the brand playing a role in defining the residents' self-concept (Kemp, Williams & Bordelon 2012).

Business events

The competition among destinations is more intensive now than it has ever been before as countries worldwide supply various meeting venues to the market (Dragicevic 2012). The main components of business tourism are: meetings, incentives, conventions and exhibitions (MICE). A destination has to offer suitable venues for meetings, suitable accommodation, attractions, accessibility to the generating market as well as efficient transport systems.

According to Dragicevic (2012), a destination is competitive if it can attract and satisfy potential tourists and this competitiveness is determined by both tourism specific factors as well as a much wider range of factors that influence the tourism service providers. The fundamental task of destination managers is to understand how tourism destination competitiveness can be enhanced and sustained. Business travellers represent a growing segment of the international tourism market and are considered to be one of the most desirable forms of tourism due to its high quality and yield and as such can be positioned as a key part of an economic development strategy (Asseraf & Shoham 2016). This sector is also resilient to the traditional type of events and economic downturns that affect leisure tourism. For this reason, this is becoming an increasingly "in demand" and competitive market.

Care must be taken, however, to ensure that the tourist experience is one of warm hospitality rather than merely a source of financial revenue, because visitors have a natural, human desire for warm acceptance as they seek to enjoy the range of experiences that the destination has to offer (Ritchie & Crouch 2010).

Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder participation can be defined in many different ways. What is common for all definitions is the active role of the stakeholders to influence the decision-making process (Martinez & Olander, 2015). In the context of this study, local residents should be consulted and then encouraged to take pride in their place of residency and to reinforce their commitment to its image. Destination marketing has salient characteristics of interconnectedness and comprehensiveness. As a result, destination marketing cannot be separated from the participation of stakeholder groups. Residents, domestic and foreign tourists and tourism practitioners are the core stakeholder groups.

Residents are the focus of this study as they are participants in the development of tourist destinations and are also the potential domestic tourist source market to support the sustainable development of destination tourism (Liu & Ma 2017).

Research Methodology

The objective of this study is to conclude the needs of the residents of George, South Africa related to events. An in-depth literature review of brand image, DMOs and the role of events in destination marketing was undertaken. This study aims to gain insights regarding the feelings and thoughts of the George residents regarding events in George and George's branding. The sample who responded to the survey was used to generalise the feelings of the residents of George.

According to Kumar (2012), quantitative research focuses on quantifying the variation of the problem and the accompanying data gathered consists mainly of quantitative variables. Kumar (2012) also points out that, although a quantitative approach makes use of statistics to support conclusions, it is also used in qualitative studies. This study applies the use of statistics to reach the desired outcomes of determining the broad offerings that media and events can add to the marketing of George as a marketable destination. It is also used to understand local residents' viewpoints in terms of what they perceive George to be and what events they should host. Quantitative data were collected and analysed. The survey was used as the sole instrument to gather responses from the sample respondents.

Research materials

This exploratory research formed part of a larger destination marketing study for the town of George in South Africa. Exploratory research is conducted into a research problem or issue when there are limited or no earlier studies to which one can refer for information about the issue or problem (Collis & Hussey 2014). The scope of the respondents was limited to residents of the town.

The sample size is related to the size of the population under consideration and is used when it is not feasible to study the entire population (Collis & Hussey 2014). In this study it is not feasible to study the entire population of George of 193 672 residents due to time and logistical constraints. A total of 186 survey responses were received for this study from a total of 396 that were sent out. As this is an exploratory study, 186 responses were appropriate.

The data collection was done by way of face-to-face interviews as well as through the online NMMU survey platform. The sampling technique applied in this study is the snowball sampling technique which is a non-probability sampling technique used to identify potential subjects in studies where larger sample sizes are required (Collis & Hussey 2014). Respondents for this study were asked to distribute the survey amongst their communities in an attempt to reach as many potential respondents as possible.

The survey was divided into six sections. Section One captured the respondents' biographical data using a nominal scale. Section Two to Section Five aimed to capture the respondents' perceptions regarding:
- Media;
- Events;
- Branding; and
- Communication.

Sections Three to Five measured items using five-point Likert scale questions where respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with statements provided. The Likert scale ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree as follows:
- Strongly Disagree = 1;
- Disagree = 2;

- Neutral/Do not Agree nor Disagree = 3;
- Agree = 4; and
- Strongly Agree = 5.

Section Six asked respondents to indicate whether they would like to receive feedback related to the survey results. For the purposes and scope of this study, the results related to Sections One, Three and Four will be reported on. The data gathered in Section One of the survey specifically related to this study will be reported on and the remainder of the data forms part of the larger study.

Profile

A variety of demographical information was collected from respondents (Table 1). Of the 186 respondents, 58% (n=107) were male and 42% (n=79) were female. Despite the fact that there are more females than males in George, according to Census 2011 by Statistics South Africa (2011), more males participated in the survey. With regards to age, the highest percentage of respondents were between the ages of 41 and 50 (20%) whilst 19% fell within the 31 to 40 year age category. Some of the respondents were between the ages of 18 and 21 (15%) and 12% fell within the 51 to 60 age group. The same result of 11% was obtained for respondents that were between the ages of 22 and 25, as well as 26 and 30. Of the 186 respondents, 6% were between the ages of 61 and 65 and 6% were over 66 years of age. The majority of respondents (64%) speak Afrikaans with English being spoken by 16% of the respondents. Of the 186 respondents, 10% speak Xhosa, 3% speak Zulu and 3% noted that they speak a language other than what was represented on the survey. The respondents that speak both Afrikaans and English comprise 2% and the same result of 1% was obtained for respondents that speak either English and Xhosa or English and another language. With regards to the highest qualification obtained by respondents, the majority (44%) have matric and 19% have a diploma qualification. Of the 186 respondents, 16% have degrees, 10% have less than matric, 7% have a postgraduate degree and 4% have no formal education. A total of 70% (n=131) of respondents were not born in George whereas 30% (n=55) were born in George.

Table 1: Biographical Information (n=186)

Biographical Information		Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	107	58
	Female	79	42
	Total	**186**	**100%**
Age	18-21	28	15
	22-25	20	11
	26-30	21	11
	31-40	36	19
	41-50	37	20
	51-60	23	12
	61-65	11	6
	66+	10	6
	Total	**186**	**100%**
Home Language	Afrikaans	120	64
	Afrikaans & English	4	2
	English	30	16
	English & Xhosa	1	1
	English & Other	1	1
	Xhosa	19	10
	Zulu	5	3
	Other	6	3
	Total	**186**	**100%**
Highest Qualification	No formal education	8	4
	Less than matric	18	10
	Matric	82	44

	Diploma	35	19
	Degree	30	16
	Postgraduate degree	13	7
	Total	**186**	**100%**
Born in George	Yes	55	30
	No	131	70
	Total	**186**	**100%**

Results and Discussion

Respondents were presented with a number of statements and were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed with these statements (Table 2). When asked whether respondents were of the opinion that George hosts a strong portfolio of events, 33% indicated that they strongly agreed and 28% indicated that they agreed. A total of 53% of the respondents were of the opinion that hosting a mega event would improve George's image. Of the 186 respondents, 78 (42%) indicated that they felt proud of George's provincial teams. Respondents response to whether they would attend sports events rather than cultural events or festivals, 35% indicated that they strongly agreed attending sport events.

The extent to which respondents agree that George has the infrastructure to host sporting events showed that 33% strongly agreed and 28% agreed with this statement. With regard to George hosting cultural events, 30% strongly agreed that George was capable in terms of its infrastructure capabilities. A total of 64 respondents (34%) were of the opinion that George has the infrastructure to host business events.

Regarding the importance of an event's location, the majority of the respondents (52%) indicated that they strongly agreed that locations of events are important. A total of 104 respondents (56%) indicated that entrance fees influenced their decision to attend events. Regarding international events, 34% stated that they strongly agreed that they support these events. Food and other facilities at events are important to the 44% of the respondents who strongly agreed with this statement.

Of the 186 respondents, 59 (32%) strongly agreed that they support exhibitions, trade shows and conferences. The majority of the respondents (56%) were in strong agreement that business events create job opportunities. Of the 186 respondents, a total of 85 respondents (46%) strongly agreed that sporting events create job opportunities. With regard to cultural events creating job opportunities, 45% of the respondents strongly agreed with this statement.

A total of 36% of respondents were in strong agreement that George needs an international convention centre and 34% of the respondents strongly agreed that George has sufficient facilities to host business events. Of the 186 respondents, 76 respondents (41%) were of the opinion that cultural and religious events are important for George. A total of 24% of the respondents indicated that they regularly visit tourist sites in George and 34% strongly agreed that the George Municipality ensures that the heritage of the town is maintained.

Of the 186 respondents, 30% strongly agreed that their community supports cultural events and the majority (51%) of the respondents strongly agreed that religious events are important. A total of 32% of the respondents were in agreement that they attend events regularly and the majority (51%) of the respondents strongly agreed that business events will boost George's economy.

Table 2: Respondents' Perception of Events in George (n=186)

Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	μ	σ	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
George has a strong portfolio of sporting events	3.71	1.23	13	7	19	10	39	21	53	28	62	33
Hosting mega events can improve George's image	4.23	1.05	8	4	5	3	22	12	53	28	98	53
I am proud of our provincial teams	3.90	1.16	10	5	10	5	44	24	44	24	78	42
I would rather attend sports events than cultural events and festivals	3.42	1.47	29	16	25	13	33	18	34	18	65	35
George has the infrastructure to host sporting events	3.77	1.13	7	4	19	10	45	24	53	28	62	33
George has the infrastructure to host cultural events	3.61	1.22	13	7	20	11	49	26	48	26	56	30
George has the infrastructure to host business events	3.88	1.01	2	1	15	8	49	26	56	30	64	34
The location of the event is important	4.24	0.96	3	2	7	4	29	16	50	27	97	52
Entrance fees influence my decision to attend events	4.18	1.13	8	4	11	6	24	13	39	21	104	56
I support international events	3.60	1.29	15	8	24	13	44	24	40	22	63	34
Food and other facilities are important at events	4.05	1.10	8	4	12	6	24	13	61	33	81	44
I support exhibitions, trade shows and conferences	3.68	1.23	14	8	19	10	38	20	56	30	59	32
Business events create job opportunities	4.27	0.97	3	2	8	4	26	14	45	24	104	56
Sporting events create job opportunities	4.11	1.03	5	3	11	6	25	13	60	32	85	46
Cultural events create job opportunities	4.09	1.02	3	2	13	7	31	17	56	30	83	45
George needs an international convention centre	3.70	1.22	9	5	24	13	46	25	40	22	67	36
George has sufficient facilities to host business events	3.82	1.11	8	4	12	6	50	27	52	28	64	34
Cultural and religious events are important for George	3.94	1.12	6	3	18	10	32	17	54	29	76	41
I regularly visit tourist sites in the town	3.13	1.42	33	18	35	19	34	18	40	22	44	24
George Municipality ensures that the heritage of the town is maintained	3.76	1.16	8	4	21	11	42	23	52	28	63	34
My community supports cultural events	3.66	1.18	10	5	22	12	46	25	52	28	56	30
Religious events are important	4.25	0.93	2	1	8	4	26	14	56	30	94	51
I attend events regularly	3.45	1.32	22	12	25	13	32	17	59	32	48	26
Business events will provide an economic boost for George	4.22	0.94	2	1	9	5	24	13	56	30	95	51

Respondents were asked to specify which sporting events they would attend and were able to select more than one response (Table 3). The results indicated that Rugby and Rugby 7's were selected most frequently by the respondents, with a total of 42% of respondents selecting

Rugby and 31% selecting Rugby 7's. The other prominent sports that were selected are Athletics (26%) and cricket (24%).

Table 3: Types of Sports Supported by Respondents (n=186)

Sports Type	Frequency n	Percentage %
Athletics	49	26
Cricket	45	24
Cycling	21	11
Motor Racing	28	15
Netball	22	12
Rugby	78	42
Rugby 7's	58	31
Running	25	13
Sailing	3	2
Soccer	26	14
Tennis	14	8
Triathlons	13	7

The respondents were asked which types of events they prefer to attend and were able to select more than one option (Table 4). The results show that the Sport category was selected as the preferred event to attend with a total of 57% respondents (n=106) selecting it as their event of choice. Religious and Musical events are each represented by 46% of the responses. Only 7% (n=13) of the respondents indicated that they would not attend any events.

Table 4: Types of Events Supported by Respondents (n=186)

Event Type	Frequency n	Percentage %
Business	51	27
Cultural	53	28
Education	47	25
Music	85	46
Performing Arts	51	27
Religious	86	46
Sport	106	57
None	13	7

Respondents were asked to give more perspective on their perception of George's brand by rating statements related to George's brand (Table 5). The majority of respondents (51%) strongly agreed that George has access to clean outdoor recreational equipment. Of the 186 respondents, 66 respondents (35%) had a neutral perception of George having adequate cultural events. A similar result of 34% was obtained for respondents who felt neutral towards George having sufficient live shows and 38% felt neutral regarding George having sufficient performing arts shows. A total of 47% of the respondents strongly agreed that the living conditions in George are good. Of the 186 respondents, 60 respondents (32%) strongly agreed that George has a wide range of leisure activities. Regarding the statement of the availability of business resources in George, 33% of respondents strongly agreed that there is an availability of such resources, whilst 30% indicated that they agreed.

A total of 32% of the respondents indicated that they strongly agreed that George has a good range of sporting activities available. The majority of the respondents (56%) strongly agreed that George is good for families. A total result of 44% of respondents strongly agreed that the most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a green town. Of the 186 respondents, 56 strongly agreed that the most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a place of adventure. Lastly, the majority of the respondents (53%) strongly agreed that the most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a place to work and live.

Table 5: Respondents' Perception of George's Branding (n=186)

Statement	Mean	Std Dev	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	μ	σ	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
George has access to clean outdoor recreational facilities	4.16	1.08	7	4	11	6	21	11	53	28	94	51
George has adequate cultural events	3.31	1.24	19	10	24	13	66	35	35	19	42	23
George has sufficient live shows	2.97	1.31	32	17	32	17	64	34	25	13	33	18
George has sufficient performing arts	3.04	1.25	28	15	27	15	71	38	30	16	30	16
The living conditions in George are good	4.17	0.98	5	3	6	3	28	15	60	32	87	47
George has a wide range of leisure activities	3.59	1.32	18	10	24	13	34	18	50	27	60	32
George has business resources available	3.80	1.12	7	4	18	10	43	23	56	30	62	33
George has a good range of sporting activities	3.79	1.10	9	5	10	5	51	27	57	31	59	32
George is good for families	4.35	0.88	2	1	5	3	23	12	51	27	105	56
The most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a green town	3.98	1.16	10	5	12	6	29	16	53	28	82	44
The most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a place of adventure	3.67	1.22	15	8	16	9	38	20	61	33	56	30
The most desirable development of the future of George is the town becoming a place to work and live	4.23	1.01	6	3	6	3	23	12	53	28	98	53

The results further investigated which items the respondents typically associate with George (Table 6). The respondents were able to select more than one item. Some of the most selected items were related to natural beauty (52%), friendly people (44%) and quality of life (40%). Two of the least selected responses were items related to George being windy (2%) and multi-cultural (3%).

Table 6: Respondents' Associations with George (n=186)

Event Type	Frequency	Percentage
	n	%
Affordability	32	17
Conduct Business	32	17
Economic Growth	29	16
Employment Opportunities	27	15
Friendly People	81	44
Good Education	63	34
Good Infrastructure	34	18
History and Heritage	39	21
Home	70	38
Low Crime Levels	65	35
Multi-cultural	5	3
Natural Beauty	96	52
Place to Settle Down	41	22
Quality of Life	74	40
Retire	38	20
Safe Beaches	48	26

Safety	48	26
Sport	29	16
Variety	14	8
Wind	4	2

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study aimed to investigate and report on the perceptions that George residents have related to events and George's branding. In order to achieve the objectives of this study, a literature review was conducted and the findings from literature indicated that events have been used in many cases to enhance destination marketing and the brand of destinations. The literature suggested that the concept of destination marketing involves brand image, DMOs and the use of events.

The results revealed that respondents somewhat agree that George has sufficient infrastructure to host sports ($\mu = 3.77$), cultural ($\mu = 3.61$) and business events ($\mu = 3.88$) and that hosting such events in George would create job opportunities. The responses for all three event types in this regard have a mean value above $\mu = 4$. Respondents indicated that religious events are deemed the most important ($\mu = 4.25$) while also indicating that they agreed with a mean value of $\mu = 4.18$ that entrance fees influence their decision to attend events.

Stakeholder Theory advocates that residents are consulted when developing a marketing plan for a destination. It is therefore recommended to George that destination marketing be composed around the events that residents are likely to attend, but also considering the price sensitivity of residents. The research therefore proposes that George uses sports events, specifically rugby and rugby 7s, to brand the city since residents will support such events. These events should be designed to incorporate the surrounding towns to capitalise on the concept of intra-town events where George becomes the main centre but uses the outlying towns to lure tourists. Future research should include other stakeholders.

References

Araújo, A. (2013). The effects of negative plot films on destination image: the case of Brazil, Aveiro University, Portugal, 1–15.

Asseraf, Y. & Shoham, A. (2016). Destination branding: the role of consumer affinity. *Journal of Destination Marketing & Management*, 1-10.

Avraham, E. (2014). Hosting events as a tool for restoring destination image. *International Journal of event Management Research*, 8(1), 61–76.

Collis, J. & Hussey, R. (2014). *Business research: a practical guide for undergraduate and postgraduate students.* 4th ed., Cornwall: TJ International Ltd.

Dragicevic, V. (2012). Business tourism destination competitiveness: a case of vojvodina province (serbia). *Economic Research - Ekonomska istrazivanja*, 25(2), 311–332.

Getz, D., Svensson, B. & Gunnervall, A. (2012). Hallmark events: definition , goals and planning process. *International Journal od Event Management Research*, 7(1), 47–67.

Henderson, J. (2006). Tourism in Dubai: overcoming barriers to destination development. *International Journal of Tourism Research*, 8, 87-99.

Hill, C.W.L. (2013). *International business: competing in the global marketplace,* 9th ed., Glasgow: Bell & Bain Ltd.

Howe, L.V. (2009). *Determining the relationship between destination brand image.* University of North Carolina Wilmington: Cameron School of Business. (MBA thesis).

Kemp, E., Williams, K.H. & Bordelon, B.M. (2012). The impact of marketing on internal stakeholders in destination branding: the case of a musical city. *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18(2), 121–133.

Ketshabile, L.S. (2015). Diversification of the Botswana tourism product through development of urban tourism strategy – the case of Francistown. Journal for Development and Leadership, 4(2), 27-36.

Kumar, R. (2012). *Research methodology: a step by step guide for beginners.* 3rd ed., London: Sage Publications.

Li, X. & Kaplanidou, K. (2011). The impact of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games on China's destination brand: a U.S.-based examination. *Journal of Hospitality & Tourism Research*, 37(2), 237–261.

Liu, J. & Ma.Y. (2017). The perceptual Differences among Stakeholders in the Toursim Supply of Xi'an City, China. MDPI.

Martinez, C. & Olander, S. (2015). Stakeholder participation or sustainable propery development. *Procedia Economics and Finance*, 21 (2015), 57-63.

Massey, J.E. (2007). An empirical test of brand extension on IMC Effectiveness. *Journal of Marketing & Communication,* (5)3*, 4-11.*

Morgan, N., Pritchard, A. & Pride, A. (2005). *Destination branding: creating the unique destination proposition.* 2nd ed., Burlington, USA: Elsevier Ltd.

Pike, S. (2008). *Destination marketing: an integrated marketing communication approach.*, Burlington, USA: Elsevier Inc., 24-32.

Pratt, S. (2009). Measuring the effectiveness of destination marketing campaigns: comparative analysis of conversion studies. *Journal of Travel Research, 29 (2) 179-190.*

Ritchie, J.R.B. & Crouch, G.I. (2010). A model of destination competitiveness/sustainability: Brazilian perspectives. *Revista de Administração Pública*, 44(5), 1049–1066.

Sergio, D. & Lopes, F. (2011). Destination image: origins, developments and implications. *Revista de Turismo y Patrimonio Cultural*, 9, 305–315.

Snelgrove, R. & Wood, L. (2010). Attracting and leveraging visitors at a charity cycling event. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 15(4), 269–285.

Sönmez, S. & Sirakaya, E. (2002). A distorted destination image? The case of Turkey. *Journal of Travel Research*, 41, 185–196.

Stienmetz, J.L., Maxcy, J.G. & Fesenmaier, D.R. (2013). Evaluating destination advertising. *Journal of Travel Research*, 54(1), 22–35.

Top 10 events. (2015). *South Africa - inspiring new ways*. Online at: http://www.southafrica.net/za [Accessed 8 August 2015].

Van Walbeek, B. (2004). Hospitalitynet. Online at: http://www.hospitalitynet.org [Accessed 9 August 2015].

Werner, A. (2012). *Organisational behaviour. A South African perspective*, Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.

Ziakas, V. & Costa, C. A. (2011). The use of an event portfolio in regional community and tourism development: creating synergy between sport and cultural events. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 16(2), 149–175.