

# Branding an African city through sport: the role of stakeholder engagement

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## Abstract

City branding is an emerging, contemporary tourism discourse that is growing faster in practice than in academic theory. For African cities that suffer from the 'Brand Africa' effect, branding provides a means of differentiation in a competitive global environment in order to attract tourism and investment, among a host of other objectives. While a recent paper by the authors examined the perceived importance of sport for a city brand, this paper examines the strategic significance of stakeholder engagement for effective brand differentiation through sport. Cape Town was chosen as the case study context as it has a strong association with sport and tourism. A qualitative design featured semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted with definitive sport, tourism and city-brand stakeholders ( $n=12$ ). A thematic analysis of these findings clearly revealed the importance of strategic partnerships and stakeholder relationships in the development of the city's brand. Respondents identified key stakeholders involved in the development of the city brand and gave specific examples of national and international cities where strategic engagement has enhanced the competitive differentiation of a city brand through sport. The paper concludes that the strategic role of sport for the Cape Town city brand is greatly influenced by the degree of stakeholder commitment to investment in sport and effective, strategic brand stakeholder partnerships. While this paper adds to the limited theoretical knowledge of African city branding, it also has practical significance for other African city brand stakeholders, providing strategic guidance for brand stakeholders who aim to position a distinct and competitive city brand.

**Keywords:** City branding, sport, Cape Town, stakeholder engagement

## Introduction and background

The branding concept has more recently been extended and applied beyond consumer markets to many other contexts including places (which consist of nations, cities, regions, destinations and towns) (Hanna & Rowley, 2008). Place branding, and especially its tourism-related sub-category, destination branding, is widely accepted as a common approach to the promotion of tourist destinations (Saraniemi & Ahonen, 2008). However, despite a growing academic interest in destination branding there is still a need for conceptualising a commonly accepted framework for destination branding theory (Koneznik & Gartner, 2007). Furthermore, the notion of city branding has emerged as a global trend and is rapidly growing among place branding commentators and practitioners. One of the main reasons for this development is that place branding provides an opportunity for gaining a competitive advantage in an increasingly competitive world that is striving to attract investors, tourists, events, and business in both domestic and international markets (Dinne, 2003; Anholt, 2007). For many African nations and cities alike, the competition for these markets has advanced most notably due to their improved

economies through the increase flow of global investment, business and tourism infrastructure, as well as an emergence of a stronger middle class (Feire, 2014). Consequently, Freire (2014) expressed the importance of branding for African nations in particular. Beyond improving economies, the increased competition between African nations and in turn the cities within these nations has led to these places overcoming what Anholt (2007) refers to as the 'Brand Africa' effect, where all African nations are viewed as a collective and are associated with the negative aspects, such as the violence, corruption, and disease of other African countries. While these associations have left very little opportunity for brand differentiation, Feire (2014:32) stated that "countries all over Africa have been making an effort to build their brands and to differentiate their offerings in order to attract tourists, investment and people."

### **Literature review**

Rein and Shields (2007) explored sport as a branding platform for emerging, transition, negatively viewed or newly industrialised cities. They stated that sport has been proposed as a means of generating and communicating a strong and coherent brand for cities, whether in the form of sport events, teams or places (Rein & Shields, 2007). Extensively reviewed and most commonly cited, is the successful transformation of the Barcelona city brand that evolved from an industrialised city image to a more modernised image through the hosting of sport mega-events, and in particular the 1992 Olympic Games (Brunet, 1995; Hargreaves & Ferrando, 1997; Onnes, 2010; Belloso, 2011). Furthermore, Dimanche (2003) indicated that sports and events are increasingly used as marketing strategies to help promote, position, and brand destinations. The Oktoberfest (Germany); Carnival (Brazil); and Wimbledon Tournament (England) are prime examples (Kotler & Gertner 2010). Beyond events, other sport entities including sport personalities, sport facilities, and commercial sport brands and sponsors similarly contribute to city brands certainly through the opportunities for brand awareness and exposure through sponsored sporting events, economic development through visitor spending, job creation, and sport business opportunities. Sport is increasingly recognised as a powerful agent for city branding and economic development (Getz, 2003; Higham & Hinch, 2009).

However, city branding faces a number of challenges. The most commonly cited challenge mentioned within the place branding literature is that of leadership and control. Govers and Go (2009) raised the complex question of who has the right and responsibility to define a nation's identity. Pereira et al. (2012:93) stated that the lack of clear ownership and control has led some to believe that destination branding is a "myth and a misleading notion". Pike (2005) identified a major challenge facing destination branding as the politics involved in the decision-making process. The issue of who decides the brand theme, and how they are held accountable, are critical. Fyall and Leask (2006) noted that one of the primary frustrations for many destination marketers is their inability to control the elements of the destination product as well as the marketing surrounding those elements. They explained that marketing campaigns could be undertaken by a variety of tourist businesses with no consultation or co-ordination on the prevailing message or the destination values being promoted. Dinnie (2011:69) confirmed this challenge, describing destination branding as a "highly political activity". Morgan et al. (2010:3) even noted a criticism of place branding being that "there are too many stakeholders and too little management control". Dinnie (2011:70) approached this challenge from an ethical perspective, raising two key issues: firstly, "Who has the legitimacy to act as the place brand manager?"; and secondly, "Who

should decide upon the brand values that underpin the brand strategy?”. The issue of ‘legitimacy’ includes the debate surrounding place brand ownership. Aitken and Campello (2011:4) stated, “A place brand by nature belongs to the place and its people”.

Pereira et al. (2012) stated that some people believe that place branding is a misleading concept owing to the lack of clear ownership and control over the place brand. Sáez, Periañez and Mediano (2013) provided some insight into challenges that may clarify this statement. They explained the following two key challenges in effective brand development: The number of stakeholders involved in city branding, each of whom has their own agenda and objectives, may cause the city brand to appear indistinguishable to the rest of the world; The reluctance of city authorities to commit to a single brand identity means that they instead attempt to combine cultural aspects, natural attractions and people in one brand. Pike (2005) indicated the importance of stakeholder relationship, emphasising the need to establish stakeholders’ responsibilities and accountabilities. Allan (2011:81) elaborated on this challenge, explaining that stakeholders have “very different purposes, responsibilities, goods and services, with very different and potentially competing service and product brands.” Therefore, he urged that the focus should rather be on what unites them, namely “their shared desire to improve their place, how it operates and what it offers to consumers and investors” (Allan, 2011:82).

Given that place brand stakeholders often comprise an “infinite number of groups and individuals” (Dinnie, 2011:69), a further challenge identified is the need for consensus. Polunin (2002:3) argued that if nation branding is to work, “there must be a common cause and consensus” among stakeholders. He claimed that the long process of consulting, co-opting and involving stakeholders, followed by distilling from their input the essence of a place’s personality, is “probably the toughest part” of nation branding (Polunin, 2002:3). Pike (2005) explained that there is a fine balance to be struck between community consensus and brand theory and that a top-down approach to destination brand implementation is likely to fail. Critically, DMOs lack any direct control over the actual delivery of the brand promise by the local tourism community. Without buy-in from these stakeholders the strategy will fail. Partnerships are therefore crucial to the success of destination brands (Morgan et al., 2010).

While collaborative stakeholder partnerships can be achieved through the context of sport and the hosting of sport mega-events in particular, Trueman, Klemm and Giroud (2004) cautioned that conflict may appear evident in stakeholders’ efforts when working together towards a common goal. Notwithstanding their successful achievements in city branding practices through the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, Hargreaves and Ferrando (1997) alluded to the conflict that existed between the organising committee of the Olympic Games and the various Spanish government stakeholders. They indicated that conflict occurred during the cohesion of stakeholder engagement as the Olympic Games presented different opportunities for all parties involved. This further created tension in the overall objectives for the event for the city of Barcelona and in turn the nation of Spain. With reference to the leadership challenge between stakeholders, Allan (2011) advocated a shared brand leadership. Similarly, Fyall (2011:94) depicted destinations as “collaborative networks”. While Alan (2011:92) admitted that stakeholder collaboration is not unique to tourism destination management, he advocated that collaboration is necessary for destinations to survive in the face of increasing competition and environmental challenges. Furthermore, Govers and Go (2009) proposed that place

branding could actually be viewed as an opportunity to mobilise value adding partnerships and networks among public and private actors in order to develop coherent city brands for opportunities linked to tourism, trade, and investment.

Despite these stakeholder challenges, Hankinson (2010) recognised the importance of both the network of public and private organisations involved in jointly developing a city's brand. Sheehan, Richie and Hudson (2007) and Houghton and Stevens (2011) stated that it is also with the involvement of local residents, community, local, regional and national authorities, as well as destination marketing organisations (DMO's), all working together, that city branding is deemed possible. Although a generic list of stakeholders is not defined in the literature, Anholt (2007:73) and Scott, Ashton, Ding and Xu (2011:230), mentioned the following key place brand stakeholders, namely: tourist boards, chambers of commerce or investment promotion agencies, cultural institutes, exporters, minister of foreign affairs, and government agencies.

South Africa's successful hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup led to many brand related gains for the African continent as a whole (Allen, Knott & Swart, 2013), the host nation (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2015), as well as the specific host cities (Swart, Bob & Allen, 2015). Cape Town, the most visited South African city, is certainly considered an emerging city with a strong association with sport and tourism (Alexander, 2010). While Cape Town hosted numerous matches during the 1995 Rugby World Cup and the 2003 Cricket World Cup and the 2010 FIFA World Cup, the 2004 Cape Town Olympic Games bid signifies the first sport mega-event explicitly aimed at transforming the previously Apartheid city (Hiller, 2000). Gibb (2007:537) reported that Cape Town definitely display global characteristics linked to an increase in 'urban planners and development practitioners in foreign investment', 'strategic marketing campaigns', and 'the hosting of high-profile events'. Moreover, Cape Town "has a considerably longer urban history and a unique geography" (Minty, 2006:423) which distinguishes the Cape Town city brand from other South African national cities. The city has a competitive brand and global ambitions in hosting sport mega-events.

While the emerging place branding literature has indicated that there may be brand related gains for a city through sport and has separately acknowledged the challenges faced by place brand stakeholders, no literature has examined the relationship between the stakeholders and effective place branding through sport. This paper therefore aimed to examine the strategic significance of stakeholder engagement for effective place brand differentiation through sport. Furthermore, the context of an African city (i.e. Cape Town) further enhances the unique contribution of this paper for emerging place brands.

## **Methodology**

This study adopted a qualitative research approach with in-depth, semi-structured interviews conducted with 12 definitive sport, tourism, and city-brand stakeholders. All the interviews were conducted with the prior consent of all respondents. Each interview was conducted at a location chosen by the respondents, which was usually their workplace. The anticipated duration for the interviews was approximately 30-40 minutes. However, the set-up of these locations presented some issues mainly related to noise and distractions and therefore some interviews varied in length and exceeded the anticipated time. All interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed verbatim. Every effort

was made to ensure validity and reliability of the data by constantly checking the interview transcripts as well as comparing them to the voice recordings and to the field notes made during the interviews.

Although there are many disputes on the sample size for qualitative interviews, they are generally linked to the time and cost constraints of the researcher when conducting larger sample groups; the suitable amount of interviews usually being three or four (Gratton & Jones, 2004). However, regarding the saturation in the data collection, Van de Merwe (2003) and Gratton and Jones (2004) agreed that the researcher may complete as many interviews within his or her time and cost constraints if the researcher does not reach saturation in the data. Van der Merwe (2003) added that the sample size must be large enough to reduce the sampling error and to reduce bias. For this study it was important to obtain a broad overview of stakeholder perspectives to obtain rich and meaningful data, hence the selected sample size (n=12). The respondents were selected by virtue of characteristics thought by the researcher to have some bearing on their perceptions and experiences involved in branding Cape Town. Representatives of sport and city-brand stakeholders, sport brand stakeholders, sport federations and events stakeholders, as well as academia in sport and tourism research, were included in the study (as listed in Table 1 below).

**Table 1: List of stakeholders interviewed**

Category	Organisation	Position held
<b>City brand stakeholders</b>	City of Cape Town (COCT)	Director of Place and destination Marketing
		Director of Sport and Recreation
	Western Cape Provincial Government (WCPG)	Chief Director of Sport and Recreation
	Accelerate Cape Town (ACT)	Marketing Manager
<b>Brand stakeholders</b>	Peninsula Beverages	Sports Branding Manager
	Adidas Cape Town	Senior Marketing Director
<b>Sport federations and events stakeholders</b>	Cape Town Cycle Tour Trust (CTCTT)	Director of the CTCTT
	Cape Town Stadium	Brand Communications Manager
	Western Province Cricket Association (WPCA)	Chief Executive Officer
	Western Province Rugby Association (Stormers and Western Province) (WPRA)	Communications Manager
	Ajax Cape Town Football Club	Public Relations Officer
<b>Academia</b>	Centre of Tourism Research in Africa (CETRA)	Director

The disclosure of the respondents' identities raised important ethical considerations. For this study, the names of the respondents were kept confidential. However, due to the selection of the respondents (based on their direct involvement in the development of the Cape Town brand and the organisation they represent) their responses are associated with their job title and representative organisation. This was believed to allow for richer and more meaningful interpretation of the data. Respondents gave consent for this representation.

Face-to face, semi-structured interviews were conducted with all respondents. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions related to topics identified through the literature. This interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to probe or clarify issues raised and to explore particular areas of experience or expertise of the respondent. While the overall focus of the broader study included questions on general place and city branding and the impact and importance of sport to the Cape Town brand, the main focus for this paper centers on questions relating to the strategic importance of stakeholder engagement during the development and implementation of city branding practices for Cape Town, using sport as a competitive differentiating factor. Examples of specific questions that were asked relating to this aspect include: "How does your organization/ company contribute to the development of the Cape Town brand?"; "Who do you believe the main sport stakeholders are involved in the branding of Cape Town city?"; and "How would you describe your organisation/ company's relationship with these stakeholders?".

The coding of the data was assisted by the software programme "ATLAS ti" An inductive bottom-up approach was followed with codes being developed from key words as each response was reviewed. From the resultant long list of codes, themes or subjects were developed. These themes form the basis of the findings and discussion sections that follow. Throughout these sections, direct quotations are used to explain the phenomenon of a theme or subject. The quotations were selected based on the respondents' degree of representation of either a common response among stakeholders or a unique response that merits discussion.

## **Findings and discussion**

### **Brand identity**

Highlighting the impact of stakeholder organisations on city brands, the respondents clearly indicated that a Cape Town city's distinctive brand identity is greatly influenced by the way the city's brand identity is portrayed to the rest of the world. The respondents also consistently referred to the brand identity of The City of Cape Town (COCT) (the city's leading branding organisation). Alexander (2010) considered Cape Town as an emerging city with a strong association with sport and tourism. While respondents confirmed Cape Town city to exude qualities of a destination city for sports and events, they clearly expressed the importance for Cape Town city brand stakeholders to portray the city's destination brand instead of the dominant portrayal of its municipally structured brand identity, especially when hosting sports and events in the city. However, the Director of Place and Destination Marketing at the COCT admitted that: "We (the COCT) don't have a brand identity. The logo that you see, 'The city that works for you' (the city's slogan) is a municipal brand. We don't have a destination brand."

Stakeholder sentiments about the Cape Town brand were further reinforced as they particularly noted the opportunities for brand positioning when establishing the city's destination brand during the hosting of sport mega-events in Cape Town. A perspective illustrating a missed opportunity for brand positioning came to light when one respondent referred to visitors' perceptions of Cape Town during the hosting of sports mega-events in the city:

*“When the city supports an event, what is the dominant brand? What is the dominant position? Is it the city as a municipal structure? Or do we want visitors to see the event is associated with Cape Town as a destination? For me it’s about Cape Town as a destination. With (the) 2010 (FIFA World Cup) there were very definite lessons learned and as great as 2010 was, they saw it as a missed opportunity to really position Cape Town” (Director of CETRA).*

In consideration of this, one respondent believed that a refined brand identity would promote the city’s distinguishing brand and suggested that: “Tying the (city’s) brand identity into some kind of logo or recognisable feature is something that needs to take priority (and) settled on” (Director, CTCTT). While the Director argued that, “The city should hold on to a singular brand that they can promote”, Sáez et al. (2013) indicated a challenge in the reluctance of city authorities to commit to a single brand identity, which may potentially challenge the efficacy of brand development. The Cape Town city brand identity subsequently underwent a transformation to incorporate the destination element; however the success of the brand identity is yet to be determined through visitor and stakeholder perceptions.

### **Brand leadership**

Allan (2011) explained that stakeholders have very different purposes and responsibilities in place branding and therefore he advocated the importance of a shared brand leadership between stakeholders. In light of Cape Town’s emerging destination brand, a respondent questioned the responsibilities of Cape Town city’s brand stakeholders when promoting the city’s brand. Identified as an “issue that remains somewhat sensitive” between the COCT and the Western Cape Government or Provincial Government” (Cape Town’s two leading city branding organisations), the Director at the CTCTT stated:

*“(With) new logos around the destination, is it the city that does its own destination marketing? Or is it the province that markets the province and the various cities? So who is ultimately responsible for promoting the city of Cape Town?”*

Furthermore, emphasising the importance of stakeholder alignment across these city brand stakeholders when positioning the Cape Town brand, the Director of CETRA explained that:

*“Brand alignment is very important across all the role-players. I think you want that competitive advantage of being a stronger brand that you can portray, you can only do that if there is an alignment”.*

Pereira et al. (2012) admitted that due to a lack of clear ownership and control over the place brand, people may actually view place branding as a misleading concept. Allan (2011) advocated the importance of a shared brand leadership for destinations to survive certain city branding challenges. For effective city branding practice, it is therefore imperative for Cape Town city’s brand stakeholders to establish clear and comprehensive brand leadership across all stakeholders. However, with the lack of control and brand leadership of the city’s brand noted as a significant challenge, a further challenge is related to the substance of what the brand leadership should entail and how this relates to reality

or experience. Therefore, more investigation is needed into the concept of brand leadership for city brand stakeholders.

### **The role of sport brand stakeholders**

The respondents confirmed that it is certainly with the collaboration of all sport brand and city stakeholders that city branding is deemed possible. Sheehan et al. (2007) and Houghton and Stevens (2011) cited the importance of all stakeholders involved in city branding, namely: local residents, community, local, regional, and national authorities, as well as DMO's. Stakeholders' unique contributions become apparent through "sponsorship and hospitality" (Marketing Manager, ACT), "providing an experience at iconic stadia" (Communications Manager, WPCA), "sport development" (Marketing Manager, Adidas), or through "financially supporting and leveraging sport events" (Director of Place and Destination Marketing, COCT). While these stakeholder roles may be seemingly evident there are stakeholders of sporting events who believed that they equally contribute, albeit on a more involuntary basis:

*"We happen to have an event (the Cape Town Cycle Tour) that travels around the Peninsula and, as a result, we have been promoting Cape Town inadvertently as a destination to travel to" (Director, CTCTT).*

Moreover, the contribution of stakeholders extends beyond their immediate objectives. Linking their contribution with social responsibility, the CEO at WPCA reported:

*"More importantly, perhaps we run activities for 25,000 people in Cape Town, which is a massive contribution to the social stability to the city which is infested with gangsterism, poverty and other problems."*

Beyond the certainty of their own contribution, when identifying the main sport brand stakeholders, respondents struggled to limit their selection to one specific industry. They believed that: "It doesn't matter where you sit, everybody believes that they have a say." (Director, CTCTT). However, there are views that conceive some clusters of stakeholders as more important than others in terms of the Cape Town sport brand. For example, "sporting federations are the most important to the Cape Town sport brand" (Chief Director of Sport and Recreation, WCPG). Another example of this: "Obviously the big names, e.g. rugby, soccer and cricket (federations), go with how much sponsorship they have attracted and so on, so I think they have a critical role to play" (Brand and Communications Manager, CT Stadium). Along with federations, equally important were Cape Town sporting events. Based on the amount of sport participants and tourists which these events attract, the Marketing Manager at ACT responded:

*"Obviously it would be the main sports, whether it is Western Province and the Stormers, Ajax Cape Town, and the Cobras, but I would go back to the big events that have grown over the years, so it is not actually a sport team but events that now attract 30 thousand people like the Argus Cycle Tour and the Two Oceans that have evolved into these huge events. They are equally important to Cape Town's sport brand because they bring in people."*



Also mentioned as main sport stakeholders were tourism/ marketing organisations and sport sponsors. However, their significance as to why they are perceived as important role-players was not elaborated on by respondents. This may indicate their degree of significance compared to sport federations and sporting events. While the literature does not clearly define sport brand stakeholders, Anholt (2007) and Scott et al. (2011) also mentioned tourist boards as key stakeholders involved in place branding. Additionally, they mentioned chambers of commerce or investment promotion agencies, cultural institutes, exporters, minister of foreign affairs, and government agencies as significant role-players. However, the significant role of tourism organisations/ boards becomes apparent as it was noted by both respondents and the broader place branding literature (albeit to a smaller degree as it applies to city branding though the association of sport). Figure 1 illustrates the perceived sport brand stakeholders as identified by respondents.



Figure

1: Sport brand stakeholders of Cape Town

### Strategic brand partnerships

Notwithstanding the significant contribution of selected sport stakeholders, respondents also considered the importance of strategic brand partnerships through positive stakeholder relationships. Strategic brand partnerships between Cape Town sport and city stakeholders appeared evident through the strategic vision of Cape Town stakeholders: “to position Cape Town as a leading destination for events” (Director of Place and Destination Marketing, COCT). However, further strategic partnerships are suggested between sport and city stakeholders to enhance the marketing of certain sporting codes, such as cricket, as one of the city’s key sports promoters:

*“The city can massively add to what’s happening. Cricket is actually, despite the beauty of the space and the quality of the performances that one sees here, it’s actually very vulnerable financially and actually needs the city to be working much more closely with them and I think the city itself realises the success and wants to help. In actual fact, on the marketing side, there is very little that happens”.*

While this was a new revelation of stakeholder perceptions, it is not surprising, due to the private nature of the ownership of this particular sporting code and stadia. Interestingly, in relation to an exclusive major sporting event, previously known as the 'Cape Argus, Pick 'n Pay Cycle Tour', this event has since had its name changed to 'The Cape Town Cycle Tour'. According to the Director of the CTCTT, this has "enhanced the marketing of the Cape Town brand through sport". In view of an earlier statement from the Director of the CTCTT regarding the inadvertent branding of Cape Town through the Cycle Tour, the renaming of the event to 'Cape Town Cycle Tour' as well as the strategic partnership of sport and city stakeholders, he noted that this collaboration is "directly related to how we (the Cycle Tour) will market the city." Kotler and Gertner (2010) noted that the Oktoberfest (Germany), Carnival (Brazil), and Wimbledon Tournament (England) similarly enable strategic brand partnerships for these respective city- and event stakeholders. Therefore indicating that events, sporting or otherwise, are increasingly used as marketing strategies to help promote, position, and brand destinations through strategic brand partnerships (Dimanche, 2003).

### **Commitment to invest in sport**

Beyond the significance of establishing strategic brand partnerships, respondents also emphasised the importance of stakeholder commitment to invest in sport in order to position Cape Town as a leading city for sports and events. While respondents believed that the natural setting and geographic location of Cape Town is incomparable to any other national or international city, the majority of respondents believed that Cape Town city "cannot rely purely on its beauty to constantly win things" (Director, CTCTT). The Director of CTCTT further recognised that "The city of Durban spends a lot of money on promoting sport". This indicates a possible advantage for the City of Durban in being a "front runner" (CEO, WPCA) when bidding to host sport mega-events. Thus, the CEO of WPCA urged that Cape Town authorities commit to invest in bigger sporting budgets. Referring to the brand positioning of the city, the CEO of WPCA also indicated that the commitment to invest in sport is essential. Once again the City of Durban was mentioned as the prime comparative example:

*"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" (CEO, WPCA).*

Internationally compared, stakeholders perceived the city of Barcelona as one of the top global sporting cities as a result of the commitments of Barcelona stakeholders to invest in a competitive sport brand positioning through hosting sport-mega events. The Director of Sport and Recreation at the COCT confirmed that, "Despite the financial burden, Barcelona city authorities strategically decided to continue to invest into sport for the city." Extensive studies by Brunet (1995), Hargreaves and Ferrando (1997), Onnes (2010), and Belloso (2011) on the Barcelona city brand confirmed respondents' statements. Therefore, the extent of stakeholder support extends beyond their collaborations on branding practices but to a more strategic investment into sport mega-events.

### **Conclusions and implications**

The purpose of this paper was to examine the strategic significance of stakeholder engagement for effective brand differentiation through sport. From the analysis of the findings, the following key conclusions and recommendations are made for the Cape Town city brand stakeholders:

Although sport may be of importance to the city brand, sport is not clearly reflected in the current city brand identity. While the literature does not agree on whether a single brand identity can effectively be used to reflect all elements of importance to a city brand, this paper advocates that either sport is better reflected in a single identity or else separate identities should be chosen to reflect different brand elements.

Besides the lack of clear positioning for the Cape Town city brand, the lack of clarity relating to brand leadership is also identified as a challenge for the stakeholders to address. This paper has identified the types of stakeholders that should be involved in the branding process, especially with regards to the aspect of sport. Clear and comprehensive brand leadership and brand alignment is required across all stakeholder groups.

From the stakeholder responses it is clear that the distinctive brand identity and competitive brand positioning of Cape Town is greatly influenced by strategic stakeholder engagement. This became apparent in respondents' perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders through brand leadership when developing and promoting the city's brand during sports and events in Cape Town, the strategic brand partnerships when branding Cape Town city through sport, and the degree of city stakeholders' commitment to invest in sport and in particular sport mega-events when positioning the city's competitive sport brand. From this, sport brand stakeholders recognised the potential for stronger collaborative efforts with city brand stakeholders. The findings also reveal the importance of stakeholder commitment to invest in bigger sporting budgets which will enhance the city's competitiveness as a leading city for sport. For the efficiency of city branding processes, this paper advocates the importance of stronger stakeholder collaboration and greater stakeholder presence. It further urges the consideration of national and international benchmarking practices with city brands such as Durban (nationally) and Barcelona (internationally), which have prioritised their efforts to invest in bigger sporting budgets which essentially lead to the enhancement of their city brand.

Furthermore, this paper has contributed to the limited literature on the role of stakeholder engagement for city branding through sport, particularly in an emerging African city brand context. It has confirmed the established city branding challenges such as the diverse number of stakeholders and the lack of brand leadership and control. It confirms the positive impact of sport as a competitive differentiator for city brands, even in an emerging nation context. While this paper acknowledges that the in-depth study of a single, unique case has limitations (i.e. the uncertainty over the degree of transferability to other cities and contexts), a recommendation is thus made that the findings identified in this paper be further investigated across a variety of cities and contexts.

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