

Research Paper

## The nation branding opportunities provided by a sport mega-event: South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup

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### abstract

Over the past decade there has been a growing awareness of the significant impact that hosting sport mega-events can have on a nation's brand. This paper discusses the context of nation branding and the role of sport mega-events in generating a nation branding legacy. A nation brand is not owned or controlled by a single organisation, but rather jointly developed and delivered by a network of public and private sector organisations. The examination of both event and brand stakeholder perceptions and experiences post the event was therefore identified as an important research area. The case of South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup was selected as improving the brand image was clearly stated as an aim for the host nation. The paper is based on a qualitative study that featured in-depth interviews conducted with definitive stakeholders from the public and private sectors ( $n=148$ ), within two of the major host cities of Johannesburg and Cape Town that took place two years post the event. The paper details the perceptions, experiences and reflections of these stakeholders relating to the branding opportunities and the legacy from the event and the degree to which these were leveraged. The paper contends that there are significant branding opportunities for nations beyond merely publicity, brand awareness and short-term perception changes. Greater knowledge and understanding of a brand can be developed through the experiences and engagement of visitors, citizens and members of the international business community, leading to the establishment of a more authentic brand image. Furthermore, there is also the opportunity to use these new image perceptions to position the nation brand for competitive advantage in tourism as well as business and investment sectors. Two key influencing factors of the nation branding legacy were identified, namely the media (including traditional and new media) and the role of local citizens. The discourse surrounding leveraging of legacies is furthered and supported, as it is clear that the success and legacy of the mega-event are a result of strategic activities of stakeholders. A nation branding legacy is therefore a combination of the opportunities provided by the sport mega-event and the strategic intention and activities of stakeholders.

### 1. Introduction

The first ever FIFA World Cup on African soil took place from 11 June to 11 July 2010. Although South Africa had hosted other sport mega-events, such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 1996 African Nations Cup (football) and the 2003 Cricket World Cup, the 2010 FIFA World Cup represented by far the largest sport event to be hosted. One of the principal issues for all concerned with the organisation of the 2010 event was the issue of legacy, and in particular, the legacy of the event for the South African nation brand. Indeed, the 2010 Organising Committee made it clear that the vision for the event,

and one of its main objectives, was to change the global perceptions of South Africa and the African continent (Jordaan, 2011).

South Africa faces branding challenges similar to most developing nations, given the unfamiliarity of its brand and also having potentially incorrect, out-dated or stereotyped associations. The "Brand Africa"/continent brand effect results in all African nations being associated with the same attributes (Anholt, 2007). For "Brand Africa", these tend to include the negative problems associated with the continent, such as crime, civil war, famine, disease and corruption. A study of nation brand perceptions of South Africa conducted during the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games (Knott, Swart, Turco, & Bob, 2010) confirmed this, showing that there were limited clear perceptions of South Africa's nation brand. In addition, heightened media attention on the nation in the lead up to the mega-event had focused on many negative aspects such as inflation, crime and xenophobic riots, casting

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doubt on the country's ability to successfully and safely host the event (Tomlinson, Bass, & Pillay, 2009).

As the largest sport event to be hosted on the African continent, the 2010 FIFA World Cup provided a platform for the host nation to be showcased to the largest global television audience for any single-sport event ever and created an opportunity to dispel common stereotypes about Africa and dispel Afro-pessimism (Donaldson & Ferreira, 2009; Tomlinson et al., 2009). The case of South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup is therefore an interesting one, as the host nation represents a country that clearly stated its intention to use a sport mega-event to develop its nation brand. The following section reviews the development of the literature related to nation branding and the role of sport mega-events.

## 2. Nation branding opportunities & challenges

Widler (2007, p. 145) refers to nation branding as a 'discourse', explaining this as 'a body of shared knowledge about a particular thing in the world'. Fan (2010, p. 98) points out that despite the 'huge growth' in publications in this field in the first decade of this century, there has been a 'disappointing lack of progress in conceptual development'. According to Dinnie (2009, p. 15) a nation brand is:

'the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all its target audiences'.

This definition acknowledges the multi-faceted or complex nature of the nation brand. One of these complexities is that there are numerous powerful stakeholders interested in shaping the nation brand (e.g. representatives from government, commerce, not-for-profit organisations, tourism and the media) to appeal to multiple target audiences (Dinnie, 2009). The definition is linked to the "holistic" view of branding, i.e. acknowledging that a brand is more than merely the designed or created aspects, but includes the perceptions and images that reside in the consumer's mind (Blichfeldt, 2003). The core branding objective of providing differentiation is also mentioned. The wording "culturally grounded" implies that Dinnie favours a bottom-up approach to nation branding, ensuring that the brand identity is rooted in the identity, history and culture of its citizens. Fan (2010, p. 101) proposes a slightly different emphasis in his definition:

'Nation branding is a process by which a nation's images can be created, monitored, evaluated and proactively managed in order to improve or enhance the country's reputation among target international audience'.

This definition stresses the process and actions of brand stakeholders and stresses the central activity of nation image management. Similar to Dinnie's definition, it notes that nation brands are constructed and managed by stakeholders and do not simply come into existence on their own, and furthermore, that there is a strategic intentionality to the process, namely that it is expected to result in positive reputation.

The leadership and control of a nation brand are particularly challenging. According to Hankinson (2010), a nation brand is not owned or controlled by a single organisation, but rather jointly developed and delivered by a network of public and private sector organisations. Morgan, Pritchard, and Pride (2010, p. 3) even note a criticism of place branding being that 'there are too many stakeholders and too little management control'. Dinnie (2011, p. 70) approaches 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?".

Although a generic list of legitimate stakeholders is not defined in the literature, the following typical roles of key nation brand

stakeholders are mentioned (Anholt, 2007; Scott, Ashton, Ding, & Xu, 2011): tourist boards; chambers of commerce or investment promotion agencies; cultural institutes; exporters; Ministry of Foreign Affairs; government agencies; and possibly a variety of other bodies, agencies, ministries, special interest groups, NGOs and companies all conducting a form of nation branding. Although a number of stakeholders may be involved in nation branding, Anholt (2007) lays the primary responsibility for this on government.

Increased global competitiveness among nations, be it for trade and investment or for tourism, appears to have led to the development of nation branding. Anholt (2007) explains that in the struggle for competitive advantage, national reputation is becoming more and more significant as countries compete for the attention, respect and trust of investors, tourists, consumers, donors, immigrants, media and governments. Van Ham (2001, p. 2) explains that in 'today's world of information overload, strong brands are important in attracting foreign direct investment, recruiting the best and the brightest, and wielding political influence'. The "unbranded" state has a difficult time attracting economic and political attention. Image and reputation have therefore become essential parts of the state's strategic equity (Van Ham, 2001). A successful nation brand is therefore seen as a key national asset providing strong competitive advantage for a nation (Anholt, 2007; Olins, 2002). To this effect, Anholt (2007, p. 75) prefers to use the term 'competitive identity' to describe the synthesis of brand management with public diplomacy and with trade, investment, tourism and export promotion.

The challenge appears to be to create an 'authentic' brand image. Govers and Go (2009, p. 17) refer to the 'true identity' of a nation as the full set of unique characteristics or set of meanings that exist in a country and its culture at a given point in time, nevertheless realising that this identity is subject to change and might include various fragmented identities. They urge that this true identity should be the foundation on which to build the nation brand propositions. Similarly, Olins (2002) warns that nation branding can be counter-productive if it is not rooted in fact.

Hakala and Lemmetyinen (2011) highlight the importance of managing the nation brand "bottom up"; in other words starting from the people (local citizens). Understanding that brand meanings are socially constructed, culturally dependant and communally "owned" promotes a radical shift in understanding brands and brand ownership (Aitken & Campelo, 2011). Brand meanings are constantly co-created and re-presented by the community, reflecting, as they do, the everyday experience of their constituents. The resulting brand essence is dynamic, authentic and, most importantly, collective. For place brand managers this requires a more inclusive, integrative and comprehensive approach to identifying the meaning-making processes that constitute a brand.

Simonin (2008, p. 23) refers to the 'four pillars', 'critical dimensions' or 'marketing spaces' of nation branding as being: public diplomacy; tourism; exports; and foreign direct investment. He acknowledges that other dimensions have been advanced, such as people, culture and heritage. Fan (2010, p. 98) supports these assessments, although he simplifies it in his assertion that nation branding is concerned with 'a country's whole image on the international stage, covering political, economic and cultural dimensions'. This is similar to an early definition of nation branding by Anholt (2003, p. 11), who likens it to a 'strategic vision', defining the activity of nation branding as:

'determining the most realistic, most competitive and most compelling strategic vision for the country, and ensuring that this vision is supported, reinforced and enriched by every act of communication between the country and the rest of the world'.

The final aspect of this definition hints at the potential for nation branding that hosting a sport mega-event may hold for a nation. This is the focus of the following section.

### 3. Nation branding opportunities through sport mega-events

Sport can be a powerful agent in the imaging, re-imaging and branding of places, especially through the hosting of sport mega-events (Getz, 2003; Higham & Hinch, 2009). While mega-events can include a variety of different types of events, there has been a growing awareness of the potentially significant impact that hosting sport mega-events, such as the Olympic Games and FIFA World Cup, can have on a country's brand image (Gibson et al., 2008). Sport mega-events have become increasingly important in the contemporary era, with their hosting becoming an object of policy for an increasing number of nation states in the world, most notably 'as a means to gain international visibility in some ways' (Cornelissen, 2007, p. 242). Sport mega-events represent a means of achieving international prominence and national prestige (Essex & Chalkley, 1998), or, as Berkowitz, Germano, Gomez, and Schafer (2007) put it, 'a great branding opportunity' for nations (p. 164).

Such events may provide an opportunity to create or promote an image and also re-brand a nation (Anholt, 2007; Florek & Insch, 2011). For example, the Olympic Games have long been used to serve the imaging or re-imaging of places (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Florek and Insch (2011) cite the case of Sydney and the Olympic Games of 2000 that accelerated the awareness of Australia as a destination by up to 10 years while they also cite the case of Germany's image being "softened and boosted" through the hosting of the 2006 FIFA World Cup.

Heslop, Nadeau, O'Reilly, and Armenakyan (2013, p. 13) note the perceived nation brand benefits for emerging nations from hosting sport mega-events:

'Many emerging nations have risked a great deal in betting that hosting of a mega-event can be a fast-track to world recognition and reputation enhancement, and there is considerable evidence that this bet has payoffs in positive impacts on country images and reputations as producers of products and as tourism destinations'.

The high media profile of mega-events can be harnessed to increase the awareness, prominence and standing of places as well as serve as an agent of change in terms of imagery and place meaning (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Florek & Insch, 2011; Higham & Hinch, 2009).

Sport conveys an emotional and symbolic value that few other types of events can. Rein and Shields (2006) explain how sports stimulate an "emotional heat" between the participants and the audiences that can symbolise the energy, vigour, and strength of an emerging nation in ways that eco-branding, museums, and other cultural attractions, for example, cannot. Sport events also offer the potential to build strong associations between specific people (participants and spectators) and particular places (Higham & Hinch, 2009). Higham and Hinch (2009, p. 242) also note the growing prominence of sport in terms of place identity and the potential for sports to offer 'authentic cultural experiences of place'. Dickinson and Shipway (2007, p. 2) explain that there appears to be a widely held assumption that there is a legacy from events. However, more recently, studies have questioned the positive benefits from events and the equity of their distribution. Weed and Bull (2009) suggest that the event impacts framework may be outmoded and, supported by a number of other authors (Chalip, 2004; Dickinson & Shipway, 2007; Jago, Dwyer, Lipman, Van Lill, & Vorster, 2010), indicate that a new focus with an emphasis on leveraging may be more applicable.

According to Weed's (2009, p. 621) meta-review of sport tourism research, 'the nascent literature around the strategic 'leveraging' of sports mega-events for specific purposes represents a welcome 'shift' from a dominant focus on measuring post-hoc

impact assessments'. Leverage rather broadly refers to 'those activities...which seek to maximise the long-term benefits from events', and 'the processes through which the benefits of investments are maximised' (Chalip, 2004, p. 228). Smith (2014, p. 15–16) describes leveraging as:

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

The focus on leveraging therefore represents a shift to a more forward-thinking, proactive, strategic approach, acknowledging the vital role of stakeholders in the process.

Most event impact studies examining the brand-related gains for a host city or nation from a mega-event have either involved a quantitative pre- and post-event sampling of tourists (e.g. Kim & Morrison, 2005; Smith, 2006), international observers (e.g. Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Fullerton & Holtzhausen, 2012; Harris, Lepp, & Lee, 2012; Heslop et al., 2013; Ritchie & Smith, 1991); or residents (Armenakyan, Heslop, Nadeau, O'Reilly, & Lu, 2012; Lee, 2010); or a media content analysis (Lepp & Gibson, 2011; Swart, Linley, & Hardenberg, 2012). Few studies have captured the experiences, observations and lessons learned by event and brand stakeholders. Grix (2012) produced a rare study that used Chalip's (2004) conceptualisation of leverage to investigate the strategies used to leverage nation brand image legacies of the 2006 German FIFA World Cup. Grix (2012) followed a qualitative approach, using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with nine commentators with knowledge of, or direct involvement in the event. These were conducted five years post the event and used a skeleton interview protocol. Otherwise, knowledge into the perceptions of various stakeholders in sport and tourism, be they participants, policymakers, providers, host communities or the media, is limited, and likely to make an important contribution to knowledge (Weed, 2010). Weed does caution, however, that a key feature of perceptions is that they can be particularly individual, and will vary over time according to experiences. It is therefore proposed that the examination of stakeholder perceptions and experiences related to the nation branding opportunities created by a sport mega-event, as well as the ways in which these opportunities were leveraged, is an important and under-researched means of gathering knowledge on mega-event legacies and, particularly, leveraging activities. This study therefore aims to expand this area of knowledge by assessing the strategic contribution of a sport mega-event for a nation brand, in particular, the case of South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup, as perceived by the sport mega-event and nation brand stakeholders.

### 4. Methodology

The multidisciplinary nature of sport tourism research (Weed, 2009) is evident in this study. Fitting within a general business orientation, the study draws on the applied management areas of marketing (particularly branding); event management (including stakeholder theory); and sport tourism studies (mainly mega-event impacts, legacy and leveraging). Weed (2009, p. 624) advocates that sport tourism researchers build on, rather than repeat, previous research, and 'pay attention to methodological and epistemological concerns in constructing their research, rather than simply applying methods on the basis of current practice and convention'.

The literature review noted a change in focus from event impact studies to a greater awareness of legacy and leveraging of these impacts. This has led to a shift in emphasis from mostly short-term, pre- and post-event quantitative measurements to assess event impacts, to include a broader assessment of legacy that necessarily

requires a longer time-frame of measurement. Although there is debate as to the timing and manner of legacy measurements, with authors noting this could be conducted from the event bid period up until 20 years post the event (Cornelissen, Bob, & Swart, 2011). An assessment of event leveraging would also be linked more to this legacy measurement, as leveraging can relate to short-term or immediate activities by event hosts or long-term activities, both before and after the event has taken place (Chalip, 2004).

This study therefore adopted a qualitative approach in order to ascertain the key stakeholders' experiences, perceptions and lessons learned. Firstly, a legitimate and definitive set of stakeholders was selected. This was done using the list of stakeholder types found in the literature (see Section 2.1). Further to this list, in the case of a sport mega-event, sport organisations, federations and event owners and organisers can be added (Weed & Bull, 2009). The framework of power, urgency and legitimacy by Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) was applied to these lists, clustering stakeholders according to their degree of power or influence in brand development; the degree of legitimacy or recognised authority or brand leadership that the stakeholder exhibits; and the extent to which the stakeholders had a measure of urgency or vested interest in the specific organisation and success of the FIFA event. The framework describes stakeholders that have high levels of each of these aspects as "definitive stakeholders". Key informants were therefore purposively chosen to represent definitive stakeholders. The selection of the eight definitive stakeholders and informants included one representative of each of the following sectors:

- Representatives of the event owners responsible for local organisation (i.e. FIFA OC);
- Regional government event management and strategic co-ordination;
- National government agency for tourism promotion;
- National government agency for nation branding;
- Tourism destination promotion agency at a host city level;
- Business and investment promotion agency at a host city level;
- Research co-ordination for tourism and consultation at a national level; and
- Research co-ordination for mega-event studies and academic representation.

Furthermore, the researcher was an invited representative on the '2010 Technical Update Committee' of the Provincial Government of the Western Cape. This committee was formed in 2008 as a platform for communication and information dissemination between the major host city and provincial event and brand stakeholders within

the Western Cape provincial region. The researcher used this database of stakeholders as a starting point for selecting and contacting the definitive stakeholders identified. Four stakeholders were selected from this committee, including representatives of: the Provincial Government of the Western Cape; Cape Town Tourism (the local destination marketing organisation, or DMO); Accelerate Cape Town (a local business and investment marketing organisation); and the Cape Higher Education Consortium (CHEC), which represented the local universities and event-related research co-ordination. These committee members assisted the researcher to source additional representatives at a national level, namely from: the FIFA local organising committee (OC); the official government agency viewed as the "brand custodians" of the nation brand, "Brand South Africa"; the national government department for tourism; and the research consultancy company employed by the national department for tourism.

Thus in total, eight brand and event stakeholders were interviewed in two of the major host cities of the mega-event, Johannesburg and Cape Town, during the period March to June 2012, i.e. two years post the event. It was felt that this time period would allow the stakeholders to be more objective in their reflections and also to reflect on the post-event legacy and the degree to which the opportunities had been leveraged post the event. For each organisation selected, the researcher identified the most suitable candidate to be interviewed, this being the most senior member of the organisation or department that was directly involved in the 2010 event. In every case except one, the representative selected was available to be interviewed. In the one exceptional case, the person approached referred the researcher to a colleague as a more suitable respondent. See Table 1 for the full list of respondents interviewed, the sectors they represent and the date and place the interview was conducted. The experiences, lessons and insights from these subjects were elicited using in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews were guided by a set of questions related to topics identified through the literature. This interview protocol comprised of open-ended questions (e.g. Overall, how would you describe the impact of the mega-event on the development of the South African nation brand?; How would you summarise the nation branding legacy that has been left by the event for the nation?; Do you believe that the nation branding gains of 2010 are being leveraged post the event?;), which were followed up with specific probes (e.g. What do you believe were the main brand messages conveyed during South Africa's hosting of the World Cup, and by whom?; In what ways do you think the event reinforced, reversed or created new brand perceptions of South

Table 1  
Selection of stakeholders interviewed ( $n = 48$ ).

Sector represented	Office and organisation/department	Date	Location
Event 'owners' – FIFA	Head of the Office of the CEO, the FIFA 2010 Organising Committee	7 March 2012	Johannesburg
Event Management – Provincial Government	2010 Coordinator from the Department of the Premier, Western Cape Provincial Government	31 May 2012	Cape Town
National government – nation brand custodian	UK Country Manager, Brand South Africa	7 June 2012	London (telephone)
Tourism promotion – host city and national levels	Communications Manager, Cape Town Tourism (R6) ● Global Manager, Events Platform, South African Tourism	31 May 2012 6 June 2012	Cape Town Johannesburg
Business and investment promotion – host city	CEO Accelerate Cape Town	1 June 2012	Cape Town
Consultancy and research – national event and tourism research project co-ordinators	● Principal, Grant Thornton Strategic Solutions ● Director of the Centre for Tourism Research in Africa, Cape Peninsula University of Technology	6 June 2012 22 May 2012	Johannesburg Cape Town

Africa?; Who/what were the main factors that contributed towards/influenced the nation branding impact (both positive and/or negative)?).

The interviewer was able to probe or clarify issues raised and to explore particular areas of experience or expertise of the respondent. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all (except for one international interview that was conducted by telephone from London). Due to the nature of the semi-structured interview, interview times varied per respondent, from 35 to 75 min in duration. The respondents were generally very responsive and supportive of the research process. Most indicated that it was useful to reflect on their experiences and pass on their observations and lessons learned, noting that there had not been many such opportunities to do so. This highlights the need to record the knowledge and experiences of mega-event stakeholders.

The interviews were digitally recorded and manually transcribed, verbatim. The transcriptions were then analysed and manually coded using the software programme Atlas.ti. This programme was extremely useful for data management and the in-depth analysis of data according to the researcher-generated codes and themes. An inductive or bottom-up approach to the coding was followed, with codes being developed from key words as each response was reviewed. From the resulting long list of codes, clusters or categories were developed. After further conceptualisation of the findings, this large list of codes was then reduced to clusters of slightly broader themes. A list of 96 codes emerged during the analysis, although these were then reduced to clusters that more clearly reflected the core themes of the responses. The list of codes and clusters is set out in Table 2. These three broad themes form the basis of discussion in the following section.

##### 5. The nation branding opportunity created by sport mega-events

The main nation branding opportunities that stakeholders highlighted were related to: creating global attention and brand awareness; developing the brand identity; and changing or re-positioning the brand image.

A mega-event gets “a full nation's attention” (2010 Coordinator from the Department of the Premier, PGWC). The opportunity that the event offered for this is explained by the Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism, as the ability of mega-events to create a “captive audience”. This is linked very clearly with the media exposure gained through the event. The CEO, 2010 FIFA OC, alluded to the scale and value of the global media coverage of the mega-event as follows:

‘On a daily basis, if you switched on Sky and BBC and CNN and Aljazeera and others, it was about Cape Town, it was about South Africa, it was about the World Cup. Now if you think, what it would cost Cape Town to have 30 days, everyday, focus on your city and nation and the message is positive. What is the sum total of that? And what will it cost you if you want to achieve that through a marketing or branding plan?’

The CEO was delighted with the global media exposure that the country received as a result of the event, with examples of the media coverage including: ‘700 million people watching the final and the final draw alone gathered 206 television crew from all over the world’. It was not only the traditional media that carried this media impact. Respondents noted that the advent of smart phones meant that travellers were able to convey their own images and reflections of the nation and the event through social media platforms. As a result, the first day of the World Cup was “bigger than the inauguration of Barack Obama” and in terms of social media coverage, “the biggest event in history” (CEO, 2010 FIFA OC) at that time.

Further to gaining attention through the international media, the event created an opportunity for many first-time visitors from non-traditional markets to visit the nation. It was believed that with ‘many of these people seeing the country for the first time, now there is much knowledge and understanding of the whole country’ (CEO, 2010 FIFA OC). This illustrates a deeper level of brand development from mere awareness to knowledge and understanding of the nation brand among event visitors.

The second major nation branding opportunity relates to brand image formation and re-positioning of this image. The CEO, 2010 FIFA OC, clearly stated that re-branding or repositioning the nation was one of their key strategic areas, describing the opportunity as ‘an image make-over for the country’. He further added that hosting a mega-event gives a nation ‘a degree of credibility’ and ‘positions (a nation) for global impact’. Respondents agreed that ‘the biggest benefit (for the host country) has been the change of image and perception of South Africa internationally’ (Director of CETRA). The following responses indicate the key brand image and international perception changes that stakeholders believed were influenced or altered as a result of the 2010 FIFA World Cup.

The introduction to this paper noted the lack of clear image and associations for the nation brand and the many brand challenges with which the nation has traditionally struggled. The following quote explains the strategy of South African (SA) Tourism and gives an indication of some of the key impacts of the event on the nation's brand image. It specifically mentions the change in perceptions from some of the more negative associations preceding the event, such as crime and security fears, to a perception based more on the fun and vibrancy of the nation and its people:

‘From research that was done it was discovered that all that stood out to those who had never visited South Africa was the wildlife and Nelson Mandela. The views of those who had travelled to South Africa changed dramatically.... From a branding point of view, we were successful in shifting perceptions. After the World Cup, value for money and safety and security shifted from a negative to a positive’ (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism).

As a result of the large-scale opportunity created by the event and as a result of the successful hosting of the event, ‘the world started to see South Africa in a different way’ (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism). Some of the key images seen by television viewers across the world as well as visitors to the nation are described by the CEO, 2010 FIFA OC as: ‘the wonderful mountain in the background’; ‘people celebrating in the street, people walking, people happy, people smiling’. ‘Everyone said this was a wonderful event. It was safe. We walked in the streets’ (CEO, 2010 FIFA OC).

Many stakeholders considered the images of the South African citizens a key feature of the media coverage. This is especially important, as traditional destination marketing for South Africa had ‘tended to focus on wildlife and scenery’ (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism). This is highlighted by the comment from 2010 Coordinator, Department of the Premier, WCPG, that ‘what the World Cup did was to show the rest of the world that we had much more than just our natural attributes’. The image of the nation-brand therefore appears to be a more authentic one as a result of the 2010 event.

One of the key re-positioning aims for certain stakeholders was using the World Cup as a platform to promote the tourism destination aspect of the nation brand in particular. The event offered the opportunity to position South Africa as a tourism destination especially to many travellers from new tourism markets. In the lead up to the 2010 mega-event, South African Tourism specifically targeted ‘people who had never travelled to South Africa and whose perceptions (of the nation) were negative’, with many of the

Table 2  
Codes and code families emerging during the analysis.

Core theme	Cluster category	Individual code
1. The nation branding opportunity	Brand awareness/salience	Brand exposure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicity</li> </ul>
	Brand identity	Authenticity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Place</li> <li>• Story</li> <li>• People</li> </ul>
	Brand image, perceptions, reputation and positioning	Image and perceptions pre-event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External brand image legacy</li> <li>• Africa perceptions</li> <li>• Co-branding</li> <li>• Credibility</li> <li>• Crime</li> <li>• Iconic images</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Competitive advantage</li> </ul>
2. Key influencing factors of the nation branding legacy for the host nation	Local residents/ citizens	Internal brand component <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilising residents_South Africa</li> <li>• Mobilising residents_Africa</li> <li>• Residents_support</li> <li>• Capability</li> <li>• Education <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pride</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Social cohesion</li> </ul>
	The media	Brand messages conveyed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Media hosting</li> <li>• Media negativity pre-event</li> <li>• Media exposure</li> <li>• Media impact</li> <li>• Media legacy</li> <li>• Social media</li> </ul>
3. Leveraging the nation branding opportunities	Assessment of leveraging activities and missed opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leveraging activities during event – Africa</li> <li>• Leveraging activities during event – business</li> <li>• Leveraging activities during event – tourism</li> <li>• Leveraging activities post-event</li> <li>• Leveraging benefits post-event</li> <li>• Missed opportunities</li> </ul>

countries that participated in the World Cup seen as 'key markets for South African tourism', such as 'China, Korea and South America' (GlobalManager—EventsPlatform, South African Tourism).

Beyond the tourism destination aspect of the nation brand, the brand image changes also benefitted other aspects of the brand, such as business and investment. Many respondents described the successful hosting of the event as displaying a sense of 'capability' for the nation. Specifically linking this to the hosting of mega-events, the Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism noted that South Africa 'demonstrated to the world that we have the capacity and the infrastructure' to host events and that 'we can host events safely'. In the business environment, South Africa is now seen as a 'capable, serious player', (CEO, Accelerate Cape Town). Once again lending credence to the competitive differentiation aspect of nation branding, the link between hosting the 2010 sport mega-event and investment benefits for the country is explained as:

'If you're capable of running an event successfully, then you're capable of hosting tourists successfully, then you are capable of keeping your residents safe, then you are capable of growing an

economy through more investments.... So for me the World Cup was indicative of what we can do in this country' (The 2010 Coordinator, Department of the Premier, WCPG).

Having established the major nation branding opportunities and benefits for the host nation, the following section identifies two major factors that influenced these positive impacts, namely the global media and the local residents.

#### 6. Key influencing factors of the nation branding legacy

As discussed earlier in the creation of brand awareness, the global media plays a vital role in the dissemination of images to a global audience. The following quote lends support to the literature that views the media as an agent of change in terms of imagery and place meaning (Chalip & Costa, 2005; Florek & Insch, 2011; Higham & Hinch, 2009). 'The media plays a huge role in the perceived ability of a country to host an event and the perception of the success of the event' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town





Tourism). The media opportunity and significance of the mega-event for the nation is explained as:

'Having had 18,000 journalists in the country who have now seen it for themselves for the first time have changed the kind of report writing about South Africa. This definitely had an impact on the kind of reporting that happens about South Africa. Before, a lot of the reporting...was done by people who had never been here. They [used to just] read our newspapers and translate it into their own flowery enhanced language about how it is here. You must see the comments that Cape Town Tourism has [collected from journalists post the event]. A long list of people saying, "That was just amazing". They were all completely blown away by it. They're travel writers, they're sports writers. And they create perceptions' (CEO, Accelerate Cape Town).

The media was also instrumental in altering negative perceptions. Redressing the media focus, and in particular, perceptions of crime, was a notable factor mentioned by many of the stakeholders. The 2010 Co-ordinator, Department of the Premier, WCPG, elaborated that 'safety and security and crowd control as well as individual safety and security' was a prominent theme of media messages in the lead up to the event. However, 'after the World Cup, no one talked about crime', declared the CEO, 2010 FIFA OC and the country was viewed as a place where 'you won't necessarily get stabbed when you're walking down the road' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism). Linked to the media imagery of 'people' and 'safety' is the notable focus on urban imagery and a modern society, with media images showcasing: 'a dynamic, workable society' and 'a vibrant urban setting that is relatively safe' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism). The event 'showcased our cities as vibrant urban destinations that are working, that are dynamic and embracing and showcased the culture of the people that are friendly and that extend themselves to the visitors' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism). South Africa was seen as a country with 'world class infrastructure' (CEO, 2010 FIFA OC) and 'technologically advanced' (Director of CETRA). These new images were noted as contrasting with the 'more negative stereotypes that are associated with South Africa and Africa more broadly (such as) crime and afro-pessimism' (Director of CETRA) and the 'Brand Africa' effect noted in the literature review. It therefore appears that the media plays a pivotal role in the reputation management and competitive positioning of the nation-brand.

The second most significant influencing factor mentioned was the role played by the host nation residents. Govers and Go (2009) included in their definition of place branding, building a favourable internal (with those who deliver the experience) and external (with visitors) brand image. The link with the internal component of the nation-brand is described in the following quote:

'Nation branding is really about defining who you are as a nation, mobilizing your country to buy into that concept, live it and project it out to the rest of the world so that they can understand who you are as a South African' (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism).

There is also a significant link between nation-building, national pride and nation branding, as explained in the following quote:

'Nation branding has a national pride element to it on an internal branding side so, if you can build the values and understanding internally and instill pride, it will be conveyed externally also. So, a nation has a brand internally for its stakeholders too' (Principal, Grant Thornton Strategic Solutions).

The World Cup provided 'an opportunity to portray a more positive image of the country both internally and externally' (Director of CETRA). Focusing on the internal impacts on the brand, respondents noted the World Cup's influence on local residents, in terms of: increased sense of national pride; social cohesion; self-confidence; and a general 'feel-good factor' (Director of CETRA). This came as a result of 'exceeding our own expectations' (CEO, Accelerate Cape Town). One respondent noted how businesses used the opportunity of the event for 'team building, spirit building and proudly South African building process' (CEO, Accelerate Cape Town). Illustrating this patriotism effect and its link with nation building, the CEO, 2010 FIFA OC noted that:

'(South African) people said, 'You know what? This is the South Africa we want to live in. This is the country we want.' Everyone was a proud South African, a patriotic South African, an appreciative South African and just a South African that was probably celebrating the fact of our special achievement'

Linked with this is the importance of the emotional and symbolic value of sport in the development of the nation-brand. The significance of a sport mega-event and its social impact is highlighted in the following quotation by the Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism:

'Sport is a social glue and has huge emotional connotations for communities and cities. Therefore the buy in to support a national team has huge impact on how a country perceives themselves'

Beyond these influences on the internal and external components of the nation brand, stakeholders were asked about leveraging activities pre, during and post the event, and as a follow on from this, whether there were any missed opportunities. The responses are highlighted in the following section.

## 7. Leveraging the nation branding opportunities

Some stakeholders specifically mentioned a number of leveraging activities undertaken before and during the event that they believed had a positive impact on the nation branding legacy. Some activities were short-term or of a limited duration, while others took a longer-term approach.

As an example of a longer-term approach, SA Tourism mentions that their:

'long-term objective was to promote South Africa as a destination to the billions of viewers out there and not the visitors. The strategies implemented were geared to long-term branding. Our role was to ensure that for our core markets, South Africa was first in their mind (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism)'

The organisation also mentions a deliberate strategy to change the image of the nation, especially through campaigns aimed at the non-travelling sport mega-event fans:

'We then developed a campaign to change mindsets of those who did not travel to South Africa. For decades people only saw images of violence and crime so it was important to highlight the fun, the people and not the wildlife. Campaigns like the 'Diski' were used to promote South Africa as a fun, vibrant country that liked to party (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism)'

Another specific leveraging activity related to managing and even hosting the international media. Brand South Africa appears

to have communicated directly with international media houses prior to the event (from about mid-2009), briefing them on pertinent issues like the stadium construction progress. The UK Country Manager, Brand South Africa, noted the impact of this: 'The line of questioning after the briefing was different. It was more informed'. There was also mention of media tours that brought international media representatives to the host nation the year prior to the event having a positive influence on media reporting, as explained in the quote below:

'The media tours really helped a lot. The journalists that we hosted in the country a year before the World Cup really helped. The perceptions started changing. ... So there was a lot more positive reporting that happened, I'd say six to eight months before the World Cup and that assisted a lot in projecting a positive image about the country' (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism).

Another campaign, 'Fly the flag for South Africa' was directed at the local citizens, 'to mobilise the nation to support the event' and 'to promote South Africa as a positive brand' (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism). This campaign encouraged citizens to make the national flag prominent, to wear the national team colours, to learn the 'Diski' special dance created for the event and learn to sing the national anthem. The same respondent describes the impact of these activities, firstly in building nation brand identity and then conveying this to the global audience:

'It was these kinds of fun things that got the country mobilised to demonstrate that we are proud to be South African. This is who we are: we're full of fun; we're very friendly. And I think the foreigners experienced that'.

Event-period leveraging activities were also mentioned. Brand South Africa distributed event-related collateral that was specifically identified with the host nation (such as 'vuvuzelas', 'makarapas' and 'Bafana-bafana' t-shirts) at international business networking events in London. Accelerate Cape Town used the event period to create an umbrella brand, *Connected Cape Town*, that brought together visiting international business people, investors and politicians with the local business and leadership community. SA Tourism developed a campaign during the event that followed two international visiting couples around the country, allowing them to tell their story and 'giving an honest experience of their time in the country' (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism).

However, although acknowledging the positive impacts and initiatives highlighted above, stakeholders also highlighted a number of missed opportunities and noted opportunities to leverage the branding impacts beyond 2010. All stakeholders noted the need for post-event leveraging, with some noting 'a missed opportunity to keep the momentum' going and 'not leveraging the benefits actively enough' (CEO, Accelerate Cape Town). For example, on-going media exposure was noted as 'just as important as the positive publicity received during the tournament', and that 'building on the momentum' that the World Cup provided was vital (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism). Leveraging the branding benefits was considered a challenge, according to the 2010 Coordinator, Department of the Premier, WCPG, with 'much too little attention paid to post-tournament leverage', with possible reasons for this stated as 'a lack of budgeting' or 'because people were just exhausted at the end of the event'. The same stakeholder noted the need to 'gather the lessons learned' from the event as a possible platform for further leveraging of the benefits gained.

One stakeholder argued that despite the many positive legacies of the event, South Africa 'have a massive missed opportunity with the World Cup for nation branding' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism). More specifically, the

stakeholder elaborated that the event had not resulted in a clear brand positioning:

'I don't believe we defined ourselves to the rest of the world, as, for example, Germany (2006 FIFA World Cup hosts) did very successfully. Germany said "make a friend" so what that they achieved with their World Cup was changing the perceptions of Germans being quite stern, quite unfriendly to a friendly nation. From a branding point of view there was not one single-minded message here in South Africa. We didn't define what we wanted South Africa to be known as. The perception of South African people was good, but it was not planned'. (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism).

A respondent noted an opportunity missed being the lack of communication of what the event impact and legacy, especially for the residents of the nation: 'We probably didn't send the message clearly enough. People still believe we overspent. There's not enough understanding of what we gained from this event' (Principal, Grant Thornton Strategic Solutions).

The imperative of pro-active leveraging of event benefits and an example of effective leveraging is given in the following quotation:

'We need to build on the success of the World Cup. Barcelona is an example where they used the Olympics to create a platform to start growing the Events Industry. Barcelona is what they are today because they aggressively went after events. South Africa is missing a great opportunity if they sit back and wait for people to come to the country because they hosted a successful world cup. We have to pro-actively start bringing events into South Africa. It is important, as an Industry, to lobby Government to play an active role in growing the Events Industry' (Global Manager—Events Platform, South African Tourism).

The following section integrates these findings with the literature, proposing three key ways in which nation brand development can be aided through the hosting of a sport mega event, as well as discussing the significance of leveraging these opportunities.

## 8. Advancing an authentic brand image through global engagement

As mentioned earlier, authenticity refers to the challenge of representing the 'true identity of a place' as the foundation for the place brand proposition (Govers & Go, 2009, p. 17). Others such as Olin (2002) and Anholt (2003) urge that the nation brand needs to be based on facts and also that the actions of a nation speak louder than its words. With South Africa being a developing nation brand, overcoming negative media and public perception, a low base of awareness and knowledge of brand attributes were particular challenges. The 2010 FIFA World Cup Organising Committee stated clearly that they aimed to change perceptions of South Africa and Africa through hosting the event. The event was viewed as an opportunity to broaden global knowledge and understanding of the nation, its people, its culture, its development and its event-hosting capabilities. The predominant brand image of the nation prior to the event was related to its wildlife, scenic beauty and natural environment. On a more negative note, there were strong associations with crime and violence and this predominated media coverage in the build-up to the event. Event visitors (through their tourism experience) and global fans (through the media) were exposed to experiences and images that showcased the nation in a different light to what previous global perceptions and stereotypes had done. These new images reflected a more authentic nation brand, showcasing

urban development and technology; the competency and skill of the workforce; as well as the people and culture of the nation.

A sport mega-event certainly appears to gain significant global attention through television and traditional media coverage, public relations and marketing activities related to the event, as well as the emergence of new media, including social media coverage by non-accredited journalists, sport tourists and fans. The media exposure through traditional and new media platforms represents one of the largest global media exposure opportunities, on a scale that cannot easily be replicated either through other events or through traditional marketing means. Through the course of the event, global media showcased more of an urban, people and development-focused image of the nation than its traditional marketing imagery of natural beauty and wildlife.

A further boost to brand 'authenticity' was stated as the fact that 18,000 international media representatives visited the nation in person and are therefore believed to be able to write about or portray the nation in a more authentic manner in future. For an emerging nation, and especially in light of the host nation's tumultuous political history and global alienation, this was viewed as a significant legacy for the brand.

Gilmore (2002) explains how the core of a country's brand should capture the spirit of its people. This was certainly an aspect of the brand that was aided through the showcasing of the warmth and vibrancy as well as diversity of the South African residents. The media images portrayed residents of the nation as warm and exuberant. The huge pre-event fears of safety and security fuelled by the international media were allayed. The perception of crime was reduced as a result of the event having no serious incidents reported during the event period. In many respects, these new images would not replace the previous images of nature and wildlife, but rather provide a more balanced, authentic image of the nation as a whole. Similarly, although crime is still a major factor for the country, the new perceptions post the event appear to be more balanced and reflect an improved understanding of the fact that the tourism experience can be a safe one. This is expected to benefit tourism in the country as tourists see that they can enjoy urban environments besides the traditional safari experiences. It further provides an incentive for business investors in the longer term.

The 2010 mega-event created significant communication platforms for the host nation through traditional media sources, social media interaction and brand experiences and engagement with visitors, citizens and members of the international business community. Furthermore, the more 'authentic' brand image provides an opportunity for the nation brand to be re-positioned, which will be the focus of the following section.

#### 9. Re-positioning the nation brand for competitive advantage

Much of the literature has tended to focus on brand awareness and image as two of the most anticipated brand impacts for a host nation. However, this paper adds to these aspects, giving evidence for how the changes in image and perceptions assisted the nation to re-position itself for competitive advantage in tourism and business sectors. As mentioned earlier, a challenge and aim of nation branding is to increase a country's ability to compete effectively on the global stage, be it for trade and investment or for tourism. Anholt (2007) even refers to nation branding as 'competitive identity'. A particular challenge is to attract economic and political attention. South Africa faced the challenge of its brand being very much associated with many of the general images related to the African continent, such as poverty, under-development and corruption. This actually posed an interesting dilemma for the nation brand as it positioned itself as an African brand (with the event marketed as "Africa's World Cup"). However, there was little overall

suggestion that the event changed perceptions of Africa. In fact, the success of the host nation may even have entrenched the differences between itself and the rest of the continent.

For South Africa, the 2010 mega-event appears to have assisted its competitive positioning in a number of ways. The improved perceptions of the nation brand, formed through direct visitor experiences as well as through images portrayed in the significant global media coverage, appear to have accelerated the development of South Africa as a desirable destination. Beyond tourism, other areas of the economy, such as longer-term business and investment procurement, were regarded as benefitting from the brand impacts. The event particularly showcased urban imagery of the host cities. The infrastructure, modern transportation and iconic stadia in particular, showcased a different aspect to the familiar imagery associated with the country. Important for the nation's developing global status and competitive positioning was the fact that it was seen as 'more first-world, technologically advanced' (Director of CETRA). The symbolic value of the mega-event for the nation has created further opportunities for trade and collaboration with other developing nations. The association with FIFA was generally regarded as a positive form of co-branding, as the hosting of the event was viewed as an endorsement by FIFA of the nation's capability. The event hosting expertise was particularly highlighted as having benefited from the successful staging of the 2010 event.

Gilmore (2002) states that active repositioning of a country through branding can be done successfully and holds great potential for countries, arguing that thoughtful brand positioning gives a country a competitive advantage over other nations. While the sport mega-event appears to have aided the re-positioning of the South African brand, there is little to suggest that this was an entirely active, thoughtful or deliberate process. The brand repositioning was also mentioned as a missed opportunity from the event, with stakeholders noting that there was not a clear brand-positioning message that was conveyed and that the nation did not 'define what (it) wanted to be known as' (Communications Manager, 2010 World Cup, Cape Town Tourism).

Much of the re-positioning success may have been dependant on the perceived success of the event and the manner in which the media portrayed the nation. It is this uncertainty and possible risk that is associated with a sport mega-event that makes the opportunity distinct from traditional strategic branding activities. Stakeholders noted that there was a perceived risk of damage to the nation brand if the event was not perceived favourably. The re-positioning gains made by the nation were therefore not guaranteed, nor was the process completely controlled.

#### 10. Mobilising citizens to co-create the nation brand identity

The national citizens were mentioned as a key element to influence the nation branding legacy. The mega-event provided significant opportunities to enhance the internal element of the nation brand. Earlier it was mentioned that there is a challenge of creating a nation brand from the bottom up, i.e. starting from the people/local residents (Hakala & Lemmetyinen, 2011), as brand meanings are constantly co-created and re-presented by the community. The dynamic and inclusive nature of a nation brand creates opportunities for a sport mega-event to aid its development. The 2010 event had an enormous impact on the identity of the South African nation brand, particularly through its impact on the local residents and businesses. The successful hosting of the event led to an increased national pride and self-confidence, with residents regarding themselves and their nation as more competent and capable of delivering large projects and overcoming infrastructural challenges. The event appears to have strengthened the nation brand identity in terms of its rootedness in social-cohesion,

diversity of culture and hospitality. However, the challenge remains for nation brand stakeholders to adopt a more inclusive, integrative and comprehensive approach to nation brand development.

Despite these numerous positive brand development opportunities, the stakeholders certainly support the literature in their imperative for the opportunities created by the event to be leveraged, sustaining the momentum of the opportunities created by the mega-event post 2010.

#### 11. Leveraging nation brand opportunities

The literature noted a shift in focus from legacy to leveraging as a result of stakeholders desiring and aiming to plan for positive, on-going legacies, in order to sustain the momentum of positive benefits accruing from an event. Chalip (2004, p. 228) defines leveraging as 'the processes through which the benefits of investments are maximized'. The study of leverage has a strategic and tactical focus, implying a much more pro-active approach to capitalising on opportunities. This focus on the strategic and tactical activities of stakeholders should therefore be included as part of a broader understanding of legacy.

While several stakeholder mentioned specific leveraging activities and campaigns before and during the event, there was general consensus that there was not much planning regarding post-event leveraging. Despite the positive gains detailed, missed opportunities were also mentioned. While there was strong advocacy among the respondents for post-event leveraging activities to continue, there did not seem to be any sense of plan, strategy or urgency to do so. Bidding for and hosting future sport mega-events were mentioned as one means to sustain the momentum post 2010, although there was no clear mention of any proposed future bid. The lack of post-event leveraging therefore calls into question the longevity of these nation branding gains as a legacy for the host nation.

#### 12. Conclusion

This paper has explored the emerging discourse of nation branding in the context of sport mega-events and their legacies. The study of the nation branding impacts and legacies has mostly used quantitative-based, short-term study approaches and has very seldom taken into consideration the reflections, experiences and perceptions of key stakeholders. Through the inductive analysis of qualitative in-depth interviews, the paper revealed the stakeholders' perspectives on the types of nation branding opportunities available for a mega-event host nation. It further indicated the major factors that influence the impact and legacy of these opportunities and highlighted the strategic importance of leveraging these opportunities before, during and after the event, in order to sustain the momentum that the mega-event provided. Through the interpretation of these definitive stakeholder responses, the paper extends the nation branding discourse in a number of ways.

Firstly, the literature gives no indication as to the types of opportunities that sport mega-events provide for nation branding. Event impact and legacy studies have focused on media coverage and image and perception change among visitors and international audiences. This paper contends that there are significant branding opportunities for nations beyond merely publicity, brand awareness and short-term perception changes. Greater knowledge and understanding of a brand can be developed through the experiences and engagement of visitors, citizens and members of the international business community, leading to the establishment of a more authentic brand image. This may be particularly relevant for emerging brands such as South Africa that experience a negative, stereotyped or incorrect brand image.

Furthermore, there is also the opportunity to use these new image perceptions to position the nation brand for competitive advantage in tourism as well as business and investment sectors.

Secondly, two key influencing factors of the nation branding legacy were identified, namely the media (including traditional and new media), and the role of local citizens. Although the important role of the media has been noted in previous studies and a number of event impact studies have focused exclusively on the media impact, the role of the local citizens in the nation branding legacy from sport mega-events has perhaps been overlooked. The enthusiastic support of the host nation citizens influenced the event visitor experience as well as conveying many of the new images of the nation brand through the global media. In addition, the event assisted the development of brand identity by creating shared positive experiences among citizens, national pride and communal sense of achievement and capability.

Finally, the discourse surrounding leveraging of legacies has been furthered and supported. From the stakeholder perspective, it is clear that much of the success of the event and the nation branding legacy is a result of strategic activities and campaigns before and during the event. The contention of this paper is that a nation branding legacy does not automatically occur for host nations. It is a combination of the opportunities provided by the sport mega-event and the strategic intention and activities of stakeholders. Future assessments of event impacts and legacies need to take this into consideration, although it may not always be possible to separate the effects of the strategic stakeholder activities from more generic impacts arising from hosting the event. However, stakeholders also noted that some positive gains for the nation-brand were not planned or not able to be controlled. In addition, there was mention of missed opportunities and a lack of leveraging plans post the event. While the responses relating to the nation branding legacies for the host nation by stakeholders two years post the event are very positive, the missed opportunities and lack of strategic planning to capitalise on these leaves a question mark over the longevity of these gains.

Overall, this paper has indicated more clearly the types of nation branding opportunities that a sport mega-event can create for a host nation. Although this process may be difficult to control and also carries some risk, depending mainly on the perceived success of the event, stakeholders are urged to plan this process more deliberately in order to leverage the opportunity more effectively, before, during and, most importantly, after the event.

An acknowledged limitation of the study is that it reflects only eight, albeit definitive, nation brand stakeholders across two major host cities in the host country. Analysis of a greater variety of brand stakeholders from other cities and smaller regions, across tourism and business sectors, event sponsors and neighbouring African nations, would add depth to the case of South Africa and the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The inclusion of stakeholders and experts from other mega-event host nations could add valuably to this discussion and extend the relevance and generalisability of the findings. Due to the long-term nature of legacy assessments, it is also proposed that further longitudinal and comparative studies be conducted among and between different host nations of sport mega-events.

