**Inducing destination images among international audiences: The differing effects of
promoting sport events on the destination image of a city around the world**

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine how effective the international promotion of a sport event is on changing the destination image prior to the event, if the sport event lacks global popularity. We conducted a quasi-experimental post-test research design, in which the authors used promotional information of a Tour de France stage to manipulate the destination image non-visitors (N= 3505) from nine different nations have of the hosting city, five months prior to the actual event. Results show that treating the international market as a homogeneous entity might be deceptive, as the effect of the event was different from nation to nation, pending on the popularity of the event or sport in the specific nation, and whether the nation itself offered similar events.

KEYWORDS

Destination image; Destination image formation; Sport as cultural product; sport leverage

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Selling your city to the world: The differing effects of promoting sport events on the destination image of a city around the world

Over the last several decades, the international tourism market has become hyper-competitive with many cities, regions or nations bidding for the attention of the potential tourist (Armenski, Dwyer, & Pavlukovic, 2017). Many cities use the development and rejuvenation of sport facilities to revitalize downtown areas (Smith, 2011). Cities have also bid for large sport events to be hosted in their city in the hope of attracting tourists and spur economic development (Fourie & Santago-Gallego, 2011; Green, Costa, & Fitzgerald, 2002; Jones, 2015; Smith, 2005). These sport events, ranging from the Olympic Games, to Formula One races, or the Super Bowl, are deemed extremely valuable because of the high levels of media interest they create. They are part of an overall strategy used by the world's leading cities in their competition for prestige and investment (Gold & Gold, 2008). Specifically, the 'lure of large and spectacular events is thought to be an expedient way to attract media interest in a host city' (Nauright, 2004, p.1326). As a consequence of the high level of investment that hosting these sport events require, many of the expected economic effects, including increased tourism to the city, have been scrutinized by scholars who claim that the direct economic benefits are not sufficient to justify hosting the event (Baade & Matheson, 2002). Though scholars have recently begun to examine the indirect effects of hosting sport events, including changes to destination brand image (Zhang & Zhao, 2009), we still know relatively little about what effects these events have on the perception of the brand image among potential visitors, and especially among those who have never visited the destination before, yet might be familiar with the sport event that takes place in the destination.

In a quest to understand how consumers view destinations, tourism scholars have conducted extensive research around destination image (Gallarza, Saura, & Garcia, 2002). This

has included examining how these images are formed (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) and what influences people's perception of the destination image (Beerli & Martin, 2004). They have also noted the complexity of destination images (Smith, 1994), its multidimensionality (Cock, Josiassen, & Assaf, 2016; Gartner, 1989), and the ambiguity surrounding what elements constitute the destination's image, leading to a variety of different destination image measures, all incorporating different components (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Dolcinar & Grün, 2013).

Despite this progress, the research on destination images has offered less guidance on the mechanisms that are successful in changing or improving the existing image that consumers hold of the destination, particularly and importantly among those who have never visited the destination. Attracting new visitors is a crucial element of the marketing efforts of any destination manager. Destinations spend large amounts of money on efforts to improve the image of their city (Cherifi, Smith, Maitland, & Stevenson, 2014), either through extensive marketing campaigns (e.g. Las Vegas), infrastructure developments and improvements (e.g. Berlin, Dubai), or the organization of festivals and events (e.g. New Orleans, Melbourne, Rio). In particular, this last component is an important lever for destinations as it allows them to connect festivals and events to their marketing campaigns or even support infrastructure improvements.

Those scholars that have examined the effect of sport events on destination image have predominantly focused on post facto evaluations of how sport events, such as the FIFA World Cup and the Olympic Summer Games (Florek, Breitbarth, & Conejo, 2008; Jones, 2015; Li & Kaplanidou, 2009; Ritchie & Smith, 1991), have changed the destination image of the city. What is missing from these evaluations is what leverage tactics the marketers in the destination used to take advantage of the event in their city branding prior to the event, which might have activated tourism during the event (O'Brien & Chalip, 2007). Particularly for sport events that lack the

global popularity of the FIFA World Cup and the Olympics, the activation of the event through advertising might be crucial in allowing the event to affect the destination image. Mega sport events attract so much media attention in the months or even years leading up to the event, that little activation of awareness of the event may be required, thus it is unclear whether the findings on the effect of mega sport events such as the Olympics and the World Cup extend to sport events that lack the global popularity of their mega sport event counterparts (Coates, 2012). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine how effective the international promotion of a sport event is on changing the destination image prior to the event, if the popularity of the sport event differs from nation to nation.

The Formation of Destination Images

Destination image has been one of the most researched subjects in the field of tourism (Pike, 2002). In particular, scholars have devoted much attention to what components or factors are part of a destination's image, and how to measure this concept (Gallarza et al., 2002; Beerli & Martin, 2004). Based on the conceptual frameworks presented in these studies, scholars have primarily chosen two approaches to measure a destination's image. First, scholars have focused on the consumer's cognitive evaluation of the perceived attributes of a destination, and second, they have focused on the affective appraisals an individual has developed towards a destination object in general (Beerli & Martin, 2004; Li & Kaplanidou, 2013). Unfortunately, despite the progress made, Baloglu and McCleary (1999) stated: "[...], little empirical research has focused on how image is actually formed" (p. 869). In addition, they argued that because of the static nature of the measurement of destination image, little is known about how images of a specific destination are initially formed within an individual, who has yet to visit that destination, and qualifies as a non-visitor. Gunn (1972) proposed that destination images are formed either

organically through personal experiences and/or word of mouth, induced through marketing efforts of the destination, or through autonomous agents, such as educational materials, and portrayals of the destination in popular culture. If an individual then visits the destination, based on these images, he/she will then be able to form a complex image of the destination (Fakeye & Crompton, 1991). What remains unclear though is the role of destination marketers in what induced messages they could create that could lead to a first time visit, and thus, a complex image. More recently, Baloglu and McCleary (1999), inspired by the work of Gunn (1972) presented a holistic model that outlined the different components that contribute to the formation of a destination image, broadly categorized as personal and stimuli factors. The stimuli factors are further divided by social stimuli (friends, relatives, word of mouth) and symbolic stimuli (promotional efforts of a destination). For destination marketers, this last category is crucial, because it illustrates the importance of their own promotional efforts within the destination image formation process. Unfortunately, the limitations associated with the cross-sectional survey approach used by Baloglu and McCleary prevented an in-depth understanding of how marketers can alter people's image of a destination, and improve the symbolic stimuli that people receive through different media channels.

Stemming from Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) call for more research examining destination image formation, scholars have focused on the role that information sources play in how individuals form an image of a destination (Llodra-Riera, MacKay & Fesenmaier, 2000; Martinez-Ruiz, Jimenez-Zarco, & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2015). In their review, Tasci and Gartner (2007) discussed the complexity and longitudinal nature of the formation process and stated: "...it would be impossible to separate the impact of each possible cause leading to a positive image change for [the destination]" (p. 414). This quote referenced a 12-year time period, and

the authors agree that over such a long period it is impossible to understand what contributed to the destination image formation. However, this should not prevent scholars conducting experiments that examine how different variables can impact one's image of a destination.

Most of the research on destination image formation has been directed towards a stronger understanding of the importance of the different categories of information that individuals encounter when researching destinations. In particular, scholars have extensively examined the impact that websites and social media have had on this information search (Buhalis & Law, 2008; Li, Pan, Zhang, & Smith, 2009). Other scholars have focused on the perception of produced content through movies (Hudson, Wang, & Gil, 2011), and/or specifically produced 'destination trailers' (Gong & Tung, 2017). However, less is known about the role of the specific content that is presented within these different platforms on destination image. As such, little is known about the impact of incorporating or excluding various promotional content (i.e. advertising the beach, but excluding the local museum on the website) on the perceived destination image of potential visitors. As a consequence, we know little of how the promotion of sport events (at perhaps the expense of other content) affects the destination image for potential visitors of the destination. MacKenzie, Lutz and Belch (1986) demonstrated that advertising a particular message contributes to the knowledge and overall attitude people have of the company. It could be argued that this finding extends to the potential effect of inducing destination images through the promotion of a sport event, and that using sport events in city branding prior to the event could have a positive effect on the image of the host destination.

The Effect of Sport on Destination Images

One of the first studies that focused specifically on the effect mega sport events have on the image of the host destination was conducted by Ritchie and Smith (1991). They conducted a

longitudinal study to understand the impact of the 1988 Winter Olympics on the awareness levels non-visitors had of Calgary, Canada. They found that the Winter Olympics had a strong effect on the awareness levels of Calgary, but since their focus was solely on awareness, it remained unclear how the event affected the destination image of the city beyond awareness. It appears that most of the awareness was oriented towards the attributes of the event itself and did not seemingly transcend to other components of the brand image of Calgary. In fact, their data might signal the negative impacts of hosting a mega sport event; it crowds out other cultural images non-visitors have of the city, which consequently might lead to an influx of event visitors during the event, but a potential decrease in non-event visitors both during and importantly after the event (Liu & Wilson, 2014). Since their study, a plethora of scholars have examined the effects of sport events on the host's destination image (Florek, Breitbarth & Conejo, 2008; Kaplanidou, 2006; Kim, Kang, & Kim, 2014; Lee, Lee, & Lee, 2005; Li & Kaplanidou, 2013). The emphasis in these studies is on tourists who traveled to the destination, and thus already have developed a complex image of the destination, based on their experiences in the destination, which does not allow us to understand the effectiveness of the induced messages that they received prior to their visit. Additionally, these studies focus on mega sport events, with a global popularity, which prohibits an understanding of how these findings may extend to sport events whose popularity differs between regions. Therefore, an understanding of how promoting sport events that lack the global popularity of a mega-event affects the image of a destination among non-visitors is still limited. For the purpose of this study we will focus on these large sport events that miss the global popularity of their mega events counterparts (e.g. FIFA World Cup, Summer Olympics), and refer to them as hallmark events. The term hallmark event is contested, yet the ambiguity of the term (Hall, 1989) lends itself for the event examined in this study, which straddles the line

between mega event and hallmark event. The media attention these hallmark sport events receive ranges significantly from nation to nation, which decreases the likelihood that non-visitors encounter the symbolic stimuli associated with the event, particularly if that event is not popular in their nation. It is likely that unless the event is activated in the destination branding of the city, the awareness levels that people have with regard to these sport events are significantly lower than the awareness levels achieved from mega sport events hosted by larger metropolitan areas. In addition, many hallmark events are organized by smaller cities, who do not receive much attention in popular media, thus are unable to profit from autonomous messages that might be produced in popular culture (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Few scholars have explored the effects of hallmark sport events on the destination image of the host. Kaplanidou, Jordan, Funk, and Ridinger (2012) examined the impact of destination image characteristics on consumer behavioral intentions and place attachment. By examining participants of a large regional marathon event, they found that destination image characteristics held positive impacts on individuals' intent to revisit the city or event in the future and recommend the destination or event to others. Gibson, Qi, and Zhang (2008) found that American students of a Southeastern University already had developed positive views towards the Beijing Summer Olympics, and that those positive views positively affected their intention to visit Beijing. Green and colleagues (2002) examined how media exposure of the event can affect the destination image of the city. They found the event did little for the image of the city, and that branding the destination of the city was best accomplished through the event branding itself (e.g. logos). Chalip, Green and Hill (2003) examined the effects of the Honda Indy 300 race event, which is the largest annual sport event in the state of Queensland, Australia, on the destination image of the state. Despite its popularity and apparent international reach, the media

the race generates is not quite to the levels that mega sport events generate for their host destinations. The study provided particularly informative results through the use of an experimental research design that allowed the researchers to manipulate the promotion surrounding the event. Chalip and colleagues (2003) found that manipulating the advertisement of the sport event successfully altered people's perception of the destination, providing evidence of the importance of activating the event in destination branding. They found that the level of success of the manipulation is dependent upon several variables. The effectiveness of including sports event promotion to alter perception is affected by distance between host destination and country of origin of the non-visitor affected. Those respondents who live closer to the destination, and who are more familiar with the destination, are less likely to be affected by the promotion than those who live further away. Chalip and colleagues (2003) explain this difference as a consequence of familiarity with the destination, stating that people from New Zealand, as the neighboring nation to Australia, were more likely to be aware of the Gold Coast as a destination to visit than Americans who are across the world from Australia (also supported by the fact that 62% of their original New Zealand sample had visited the Gold Coast before).

While this is a valid conclusion and is supported by previous literature (Crompton, 1979), their results might not take into account that it is not just the familiarity with the destination that caused the difference, but also the familiarity with the sport event. Sports are cultural products, and popularity of sports differ greatly from nation to nation (Van Bottenburg, 2001). Based on the type of the sport event organized, it is likely there will be different effects on non-visitors from nations, if the popularity of the event differs between them, regardless of the distance. For instance, while Mexico and the United States are neighboring nations, they are marked by enormous cultural differences when it comes to sport engagement (i.e. Soccer versus American

Football), and Mexico might, in the context of sports, have much more in common with the more distant nation of Spain. The implication being that if destination marketers in Mexico aim to use a sport event as an instrument to improve the destination image of their nation the results will be significantly different between the USA and Spain, dependent upon the sport they select. If they choose a soccer event, they may be more likely to receive a better response from the more distant nation (Spain) than from their neighboring nation (United States). Additionally, since Chalip and colleagues (2003) did not exclude respondents who had previously visited the destination, they were not able to separate those people who had already formed a complex image of the destination versus those who did not (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

Xing and Chalip (2006) explored the fit between sport event and destination and found that event image and destination image need to have a certain level of congruency for the event to influence the overall destination image. Within this study, the authors artificially connected existing sport events with non-traditional destinations in an experimental setting, which might have affected their findings. For instance, they selected the Masters Golf Tournament as one of two sport events, and artificially placed it in either of two USA cities, Des Moines or Chicago. This might have prohibited an authentic response from subjects, as the association between the Masters Tournament and Augusta, Georgia is so strong that it may be hard for respondents to associate the event with any other city. Part of the popularity of the US Masters Golf Tournament are the images of burgeoning Magnolia flowers and the perception of Southern hospitality (Sampson, 1998), and because of this, respondents may not have been able to easily connect this with the more Northern Cities in the Midwest region of the USA. Therefore, we propose it is imperative to replicate this experiment in a more authentic setting, and rather than asking respondents about their personal involvement with a sport, we believe that within an

international context it is more appropriate to use nations as the variable that captures people's affinity with a sport event and its implication on destination branding (De Mooij, 2010).

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the impact the popularity of the sport in a certain nation has on the effects of promoting a hallmark sport event, in the form of the first two stages of the 2015 Tour de France event, on the medium sized city of Utrecht, The Netherlands. This particular event was selected because of the perceived congruence between the event and the city, as Utrecht and/or the Netherlands are widely known as a cycling friendly destination (Allan, 2014), and images portraying cyclists are often used in their destination branding. The first two stages of the Tour de France, often referred to as the "Grande Depart", are a component of the three-week race that is often highly bid on by cities inside and outside France and provided the event context for this study. While some scholars have argued that the entire three-week Tour de France competition itself is more appropriately labeled as a mega sport event (Ferbrache, 2013) it lacks the universal appeal achieved by other mega sport events such as the FIFA World Cup or the Olympics resulting in this label being contested (Oosterhuis, 2016). Additionally, while the overall race might still be classified as a mega event, it could be said that the individual stages do not. Rather, it is more appropriate to use the two stages as a case study to represent a hallmark event, similar to sports events such as the Super Bowl, and the Masters Golf Tournament (Müller, 2015). While these events are all well-known events worldwide, their popularity and cultural importance differs considerably from nation to nation. Therefore, this case study was ideal to collect data among non-visitors in nine different nations, selected because of the differing levels of perceived popularity of the event in each nation, and their distance to the host country. Non-visitors were chosen to better understand the effect of using sport to induce destination images, as they have not developed a complex image of the destination yet

(Tasci & Gartner, 2007). The selection of this particular case study was guided by the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: The promotion of a Tour de France stage by a host city prior to the event will induce a positive effect on the destination brand of the city globally, amongst those who have never visited the destination.

Hypothesis 2: The promotion of a Tour de France stage by a host city prior to the event will differ pending the popularity of the sport in the country of origin.

Method

Research design

To examine the proposed hypotheses, a quasi-experimental post-test research design was used. Individuals were initially screened in or out of the experiment through their response to whether they had previously visited or not visited the city of Utrecht. It was assumed that international non-visitors would know very little of the city of Utrecht, thus they would not be able to evaluate its destination image. Within this research design, the authors used different promotional information of the Tour de France stage to manipulate the destination image non-visitors from nine different nations have of a city. Respondents who had not visited Utrecht previously were randomly placed in either the treatment or control group. The treatment group viewed a brochure with information on the city, inclusive of material that stated that the first two stages of the 2015 Tour de France would be hosted in the city in five months. The control group received the same brochure, but in their case, all information on the Tour de France was replaced with generic city content information provided by the local visitor bureau (see Figure 1). Both brochures included standard information that the city uses in their online marketing promotion.

The brochure information was arranged over three columns. The left column contained two pictures. One image portrayed a busy city market with a well-known cathedral in the background. The cathedral is the largest of its kind in the Netherlands and one of the most important attributes that the city uses in their destination promotion. The other picture presented a very modern glass conference building, as Utrecht is one of the major conference destinations in the Netherlands. In between those two pictures, the following message, taken from the website was inserted: "Utrecht is the beating heart of the Netherlands. A medieval city center small enough to explore on foot. Large enough to enjoy world class festivals, modern architecture, trendy shops and interesting museums for days on end. Utrecht has a wealth of culture and history. Utrecht bustles with life. 70.000 students. An extensive number of cultural events. Friendly outdoor cafes and restaurants. Hospitable hotels. Utrecht has it all." The middle column had three components to it. A short description of the cathedral and an encouragement to explore the city by boat, as similar to Amsterdam, Utrecht has beautiful canals. The accompanying image was of one of the typical Dutch canal boats maneuvering through the narrow canals. The third component was a quote taken directly from the Utrecht tourism board website and featured in an article on the world's 10 most unsung places in 2012 published by international travel guide *Lonely Planet*: "When you visit the Netherlands, you should not forget the graceful city of Utrecht." The third column was chosen to be manipulated for the experiment. The control group brochure, at the top of the third column, had a small section that promoted the ease with which the city could be reached, and its central location in the Netherlands. Below this there were the contact details of the city tourist agency, and below this there were two pictures that featured the same attributes as the other two columns, namely, the cathedral and the old Dutch style houses alongside a canal. These were chosen in order to include the same attributes as already promoted

and so as not to change the image of the city by introducing new attributes. The treatment group brochure had information about the city hosting the first two stages of the Tour de France later that year. The column contained the dates for the event and invited people to visit Utrecht and experience the event. To de-emphasize the importance of the actual race and show the participants who are not cycling fans that this was a fun event to experience, the festival like atmosphere that is associated with the event was emphasized throughout the text. Two pictures of Tour de France cyclists racing through an historic unidentified city (similar to Utrecht), with large crowds cheering them on, accompanied the text. An important brand attribute of the Tour de France, the yellow jersey, was predominantly showcased in one of the pictures. The experiment (research) was conducted five months prior to the commencement of the event, which means that this experiment is a post-test evaluation of a promotion held prior to the event.

4.2. Participants

Data were collected among residents of the following nations: Germany, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, the United States, China and Japan. The nine nations chosen for this research were selected based on the differing degrees of popularity of the Tour de France in each nation. France was chosen because the overall event predominantly takes place in their nation, and the event is one of the most popular annual sport events on their sport calendar (Ferbrache, 2013). Belgium, Italy and Spain, were selected because professional cycling has traditionally been very popular in these nations (Van Reeth, 2013), and throughout the history of the tour they have had very successful participants (Merckx, Coppi, Indurain, etc.). The second group of countries (United Kingdom, Germany, and the United States) was selected because, over recent decades in these nations, the Tour de France has become more popular in these nations (due to the successes of riders such as Lemond, Armstrong, Ulrich, and Wiggins), but

they are regarded as non-traditional Tour de France supporter nations, lacking the associated history that other nations have (Berridge, 2012). Finally, two nations (China and Japan) were selected because they do not have any traditional affinity with the event and have not had any successful riders in the event.

Overall, 4050 responses were collected. However, after screening the data, those responses from individuals that had visited the city of Utrecht previously were removed, as their perceptions were most likely already established prior to their exposure to the brochure. Respondents who had visited the Netherlands before, but not Utrecht, were kept in the sample. This screening brought the total sample size to N=3505. Three methods for data collection were used, online collection through M-Turk, commercial research data agencies, and an intercept method by local researchers. The different collection methods prevented inter-comparisons between nations (i.e. USA residents are more positive than German residents), but it did support and allow for a within-nation comparison between the treatment groups and the control groups, as well as an overall global comparison between the treatment and control group. In each of these comparisons, the number of people who received the questionnaire in a certain way was exactly the same. Both researchers and M-Turk/marketing agencies were instructed to collect data that represented the census data in each nation, inclusive of an even ratio of gender, a wide range of age groups, and different regions in each nation¹. It is important to note that within each nation only one specific sampling method was used in order to ensure homogeneity of each nation's sample and prevent method bias. The breakdown of sampling methods for each nation

¹ China is the sole exception. The marketing research agency actively targeted individuals who had visited the Netherlands, which affected the representativeness of the sample. We left in this particular sample, because the biases did not affect the data (see results).

can be found in Table 1. The sample was fairly distributed across gender with 52% of the respondents being female and 48% male. The average age of the sample was 38 years, with the total sample well distributed between various age groups including 18% between the age of 18 and 25, 28% between the age of 26 and 35, 19% between the age of 36 and 45, 18% between age of 46 and 55, 14% between the age of 56 and 65, and 3% aged 66 and older. Education distribution was also quite equal in distribution with 6% of individuals having no high school or equivalent degree, 28% having a high school degree, 29% holding a post-secondary degree or certificate, 23% with a bachelor's degree, and 14% holding a graduate degree. Finally, as mentioned previously, the sample sizes per nation varied slightly with Belgium comprising 316 individuals (9%), China comprising 328 individuals (9%), France comprising 341 individuals (10%), Germany comprising 358 individuals (10%), Italy comprising 276 individuals (8%), Japan comprising 414 individuals (12%), the United Kingdom comprising 455 individuals (13%), the United States comprising 522 individuals (15%), and Spain comprising 475 individuals (14%). The final sample per nation is depicted in Table 2.

4.3. Measures

To examine the destination image of the city two different approaches were used. The first approach was attribute-based, and focused on what people thought about the different attributes that were associated with the city. Baloglu and McCleary (1999) referred to this as the cognitive image of the destination. Rather than adopting an existing scale, city marketers were asked to aid in the selection of the ten most important attributes they use in their advertising. This resulted in the following list of different attributes: 1) History, 2) Beautiful Scenery, 3) Interesting way of life and customs, 4) A city with international grandeur/splendor, 5) Cultural activities, 6) Good weather, 7) Quality of infrastructure, 8) Nightlife, and 9) Value for your

money. A tenth attribute labeled ‘Great events’ was added to check whether the effects of the event on the image of the city would remain limited to the attribute of the event itself, similar to what Ritchie and Smith (1991) found. These attributes allowed for the understanding of whether the effects of a sport event on the destination image of the city are limited to the event (i.e. attribute 10), or whether the effects transcend the event component and affected other attributes as well. Second, a brand association appraisal scale was used to examine how this event directly affected the overall representation of the city and focused on the affective image of the city (Baloglu & McCleary, 2013). The Psychological Listing Meaning Technique developed by Friedmann (1986) was adopted to develop the brand association appraisal scale and destination-marketing managers were asked to choose the most important brand associations in their current marketing strategies. Finally, to measure the popularity and interest people had in the event, respondents were asked how they felt in regard to the Tour de France across five questions (i.e. ‘I believe the Tour de France to be an exciting event to watch’). Each instrument was measured on a seven-point Likert scale with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 7 being “strongly agree.”

4.4. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were calculated to allow for comparisons across respondents from each of the nine surveyed nations, both in demographics (age, gender, education, etc.) and in attitudes toward the Tour de France as a sport event (see Table 3). In order to effectively answer the proposed hypotheses, several mean comparison and analysis of variance techniques were engendered. From Hypothesis One, the authors sought to understand if there was a positive effect on individuals’ destination image perception of Utrecht based upon the inclusion or exclusion of the city hosting the Tour de France Grand Depart, controlling for several variables. To answer this, a one-way multivariate analysis of co-variance (MANCOVA) was run with the brochure

type and country of origin as fixed factors and each city attribute and brand associations item as the dependent variables. As covariates, popularity of the Tour de France and nation distance from Utrecht were used. Differences were tested for statistical significance, and tests of normality and homogeneity of variance preceded the one-way MANCOVA to ensure the data were appropriate for analysis. To examine the second hypothesis, nine separate MANOVA analyses were run to more accurately examine potential differences that existed between individuals within each country in regards to the experimental condition they received, and to understand if there was truly a global effect of the event, or whether this differed from nation to nation.

Results

Mean Comparisons

In response to H1, the MANCOVA provided confirmation that the inclusion of information regarding the hosting of a major sport event (treatment group) did have a positive impact on the destination image of the city of Utrecht. Significant differences existed ($p < .05$) between the control group and the treatment group for the cognitive attribute variables of great events and nightlife. In general, the respondents in the treatment group also ranked the city higher on adjectives such as energetic, dynamic, exciting, contemporary, and cool with means ranging from 5.06 to 5.35 for the treatment group versus 4.83 to 5.22 for the control group. Individuals in the treatment group also scored higher on their perceptions of the city of Utrecht as 'small town' with the treatment group holding means of 5.00 and the control group holding means of 4.83. This is despite the hosting of the sport event, which might have been caused by the pictures of the Tour de France, that showed large crowds, and thus might have given the impression that the city was smaller. To ensure that our results were not caused by the large

sample size, which could inflate the significance of non-meaningful results, we conducted the Anderson-Darling test to examine if our sample deviated from a normal distribution. The p -value was 0.4130 which indicated that our data did follow a normal distribution and that our results were not caused by the large sample size.

The MANCOVA revealed that both covariates; popularity of the Tour de France and distance from the event, were found to be statistically significant covariates ($p < .05$). The covariate effect of Tour de France popularity explained 3.4% of the variance among the experimental and control and groups, and distance from the event explaining 4.2% of the variance among experimental and control groups. Both covariates had a positive effect on the treatment. Wilk's lambda for country of origin as a fixed factor variable was also significant ($p < .05$) and explained 6% of the variance within individuals. Finally, Wilks's lambda was significant ($p < .05$) for the main effect of the treatment and control groups, explaining 74.8% of the variance among individuals (see Table 4 and Table 5). These findings indicated that after controlling for the impacts of the covariates, the experimental treatment generated more positive perceptions regarding the destination image variables carried forward from the one-way ANOVA. While the covariate effects were significant, and the treatment positively impacted individual's destination image perceptions, the relatively low level of variance that was explained by the covariates provided impetus for the subsequent within country analysis, to better understand the differing effects of promoting the Tour de France event in different nations.

Because of the significant effect of the treatment on the global sample, and the significant effect of the covariates we aimed to examine potential differences that existed between individuals within each country, by conducting nine separate MANOVA analyses. These analyses only included the seven destination image characteristics that held statistically

significant differences in the original treatment of the global sample. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 6. The results of the analyses provided support for H2 and identified evidence that examining the data from a country specific perspective revealed different aspects and impacts of the experimental treatment. European countries that have strong cycling heritages (Belgium, Italy, and Spain) had only one statistically significant difference between individuals in the two experimental conditions. Individuals in the treatment group for each aforementioned nation reported higher mean scores of the destination image attribute of Utrecht being a city that hosts great events ($p < .05$), which means that the event attribute did not transfer to other attributes in these nations. France was the exception among the traditional cycling nations, in that they viewed Utrecht as more dynamic due to the Tour de France. In nations where professional cyclists and cycle teams have had recent success in the global cycling community (Germany, United Kingdom, and United States) respondents in the treatment group also held a higher mean score for the destination attribute of great event similar to the other European nations. However, where these nations differed from the traditional cycling nations is in their higher evaluations of the city on several brand adjectives: contemporary, dynamic, exciting, and cool ($p < .05$). Finally, in analyzing China and Japan, the treatment groups the two countries displayed different responses to the experimental condition. In China, only the attribute of nightlife was significantly different between groups. Nightlife, was found to be lower in average value for individuals who received the experimental condition versus the control group ($p < .05$). In contrast, in Japan individuals in the treatment group reported higher mean scores for the destination image attribute of great events, as well as for the image adjectives of energetic, exciting, and contemporary ($p < .05$).

Discussion

Overall, it appeared that promoting a hallmark sport event to an international audience in order to induce a destination image among those respondents who had never visited the destination does have an effect and increased how they evaluated the destination holistically. This provides empirical evidence to the recommendations that Green and colleagues (2002) made in their study towards using a sport event to improve the image of a destination. According to them, the majority of the coverage is aimed at the sport event itself, and a destination is at risk of receiving minimal coverage outside of the event. Our study confirms that destinations should develop strategies that ensure coverage of the destination apart from the sport event. Our study also lends further support for the work of Tasci and Gartner (2007) who proposed a model in which induced images are perceived to be antecedents to complex images. Through our quasi-experimental design, we were able to tease out the effects of one particular alteration to a destination's image, and manipulate the induced image of the host destination of the event. Our findings suggest that manipulating the induced image through promoting an event did have an effect on the overall complex image of the respondents, and in particular, increased their holistic appreciation of the city (measured through the adjectives).

While the results indicate that globally there was a positive effect of the event on the destination image, this positive effect masked the fact that the international market for sport tourists should be viewed as a heterogeneous market, as the effects of advertising a hallmark sport event differ from nation to nation, pending on the popularity of cycling in that nation. Implementing both an attribute and adjective scale offered different insights on these differing effects and provide more insight on the value of using both approaches as Baloglu and McCleary (1999) suggested. Similar to Ritchie and Smith (1991) the results showed that using an attribute approach to measuring destination image somewhat limits the understanding of how a sport

event affects the image of a city, as the only attribute that scored significantly higher in the treatment group, other than 'great events', was 'nightlife'. In contrast, the adjectives that described the destination holistically were affected to a much greater extent. Advertising that the city would host the Tour de France gave respondents a more favorable impression of the following adjectives: energetic, dynamic, exciting, contemporary, and cool. Promoting a hallmark sport event such as a Tour de France Grand Depart gave non-visitors in general a more positive impression of the city and gave the impression the city is actively cultivating an environment that is exciting to tourists. This seems to support the findings of Chalip and colleagues (2003) who found that one of the effects of advertising a sport event was that it was deemed to add to the 'novelty' the city offered visitors. Additionally, this also seems to support the findings of Gibson, Qi, and Zhang. (2008), in that a sport event itself can positively influence the destination image of the host city, and that similar attraction-based characteristics (i.e. exotic, adventurous, exciting, etc.) that are the strongest drivers of future travel.

When the two approaches to measure destination image are compared, the analysis indicates that a focus on the consumer's evaluation of the perceived attributes of a destination (Beerli & Martin, 2004) is less effective for understanding the effect of a manipulation than a focus on the appraisals an individual has towards a destination object in general (Li & Kaplanidou, 2013). This could indicate that the effect of one attribute manipulation does not necessarily transcend to other attributes (see also Ritchie & Smith, 1991). Therefore, the authors propose that if researchers choose to conduct a manipulation of destination image attributes in their attempt to understand how this affects respondents image of the destination, they are advised to implement an adjective-based scale that allows them to comprehend the effect of the attribute on the image of the destination overall.

Despite the significant global differences that were found between the treatment group and control group, treating the international market as a homogeneous entity might be deceptive, as both covariates implemented in the study interacted with the image non-visitors had of the city. While we expected to find some relationship between popularity of sport within a nation and the treatment effect, the results were somewhat surprising. In those nations where the popularity of the sport and/or event is arguably the highest (Belgium, France, Italy and Spain), the effects of advertising the event were minimal. It appears that advertising the event among non-visitors in these nations did not affect their image of the city. These findings can not be explained by proximity as Chalip et al. (2003) suggested. While Belgium is a neighboring nation, so are Germany and the United Kingdom (separated by a sea though), where the event did have an effect. Similarly, the mediterranean nations are further away from the Netherlands than both Germany and the United Kingdom, thus, proximity is not the deciding factor. While we can only speculate on the reasons why this did not occur, it can be postulated that it may have been caused by the fact that Belgium, Spain and Italy all have their own popular cycling events (Belgian Classics, the Vuelta a Espana, and the Giro d'Italia), and also host individual sections of the Tour de France on a frequent basis. Thus, individuals in these nations share a similar ability of having access to many comparable prestigious events. French residents do not have to travel to Utrecht to watch the Tour de France, as the event sooner or later is held close to their homes. This is different for nations such as Germany, England and the United States, where the sport has achieved some level of popularity, but where access to elite cycling events is still limited². In

² To illustrate: For the UCI World Ranking, the three tours in France, Spain and Italy have the biggest impact, followed by Major World Tour Events, which is a collection of fifteen shorter events. Ten of these events are held in one of the four aforementioned nations. No events in this category are held in Germany, the United Kingdom or the United States.

these nations, respondents who were faced with the advertisement containing the Tour de France information responded largely the same as the combined global sample. They perceived the city to be more contemporary, more dynamic, more exciting, and cooler.

While the authors proposed no significant differences between Japanese respondents, it appeared that Japanese respondents reacted similar to respondents from Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States to the advertisement. This may be due to the advent of the Saitama Criterium in 2013, a professional cycling race that is officially associated with the Tour de France, and hosted by its organizer Amaury Sport Organizers, which might have provided the Japanese population with a basic understanding of the sport. In fact, these results indicate that it might not necessarily be the popularity of the event that affects the destination image, but a minimum level of understanding of the sport or event. In Japan, (professional) cycling is neither a popular participation sport, nor a popular spectator sport (Yasumoto-Nicolson, 2010), yet the positive effects of the experiment suggests that respondents respond positively to the information as long as they understand the event, and the meaning of it to the culture of the destination they have an interest in. Finally, in a nation such as China where de Tour de France has not enjoyed any level of popularity and where it receives very little broadcasting time, the event has very little meaning to the respondents, thus the event had no positive impacts on how they viewed the city. In fact, it might be that for these respondents, the presence of the sport event hinders their perceived ability to enjoy the nightlife of the city, as this was the only significant difference between the two groups. This may be similar to the results found by Kim and colleagues (2014) where individuals with lower involvement and knowledge of the sport event held decreased perceptions of several destination image characteristics of the host city and country as a result of the sport event.

Depending on the cultural meaning of the event to the people in a nation, the authors suggest that the effect of promoting a sport event within the overall destination marketing strategies displays a bell-shaped curve. In those nations, such as China, where people are unable to provide meaning to the event, promoting the event is not effective (left end of the bell curve). In those nations where the sport is popular, but where people do not have access to a similar event, the promotion is effective (Top of the bell curve) in affecting the image of the city positively. In those nations where the sport is very popular because of its history and position in society, and people have access to similar (or perhaps even better) events, the promotion is less effective (right end of the bell curve) and our views of the destination remain unchanged. This suggests that the impact of sport events on destination image falls within the guidance offered by MacKay and Fesenmaier (2000) regarding the cultural meaning dimensionality of destination image. Due to differing levels of cultural perceptions, individuals from different nations often perceive the same destination marketing content differently. This provides some basis for the differing levels of impact of the treatment and control groups across nations (e.g. China vs. Germany) in this study.

There are several limitations to this study. First, because of logistical challenges we were unable to collect data from homogeneous samples across all nine nations, which prevented a direct comparison between nations. While such comparison was not the purpose of the study, such insights could still be valuable for our understanding of how sport events affect our image of the destination. Second, we controlled for popularity of the event, rather than understanding of the event. Yet, our results suggest that a sport does not necessarily have to be very popular in the nation of the potential visitor, but he/she needs to have a basic understanding of the cultural meaning of a sport event for the local population for it to have an impact. Therefore, future

research should implement understanding, rather than popularity as a covariate to the model.

Thirdly, we never included a manipulation check that allowed us to examine how carefully the respondents went through the brochure and how much attention they paid to the Tour de France content. As a result, we cannot contribute differences between samples entirely to the manipulation, as it might contain some measurement error.

Recognizing the differing levels of popularity of certain sport events around the world (Van Bottenburg, 2001) is important for city marketers who are hoping to use such cultural events to improve the image of their destination. Many cities offer their advertising materials in different languages and are sensitive to how their message translates to different nations (Pike, 2015), yet might not go far enough in adapting the content of their materials based on the appreciation that people in certain nations have for particular attributes present in their portrayal of a destination, in particular sport events. In this study, we show a first glimpse of the heterogeneous effects of using a cultural product to modify the image of the destination, and based on their findings, we suggest that adopting a more heterogeneous view of the global tourism market could assist marketers in minimizing advertising waste.

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Table 1.

Sampling Method per Nation

Nation	Sampling Method
Belgium (n = 316)	Paid data
China (n = 331)	Paid data
France (n = 341)	Paid data
Germany (n = 358)	Paid data
Italy (n = 293)	Self collected
Japan (n = 414)	Self collected
Spain (n = 475)	Paid data
UK (n = 455)	Self collected
USA (n = 522)	Amazon Mturk

Table 2.

Sample Demographic Percentages

Nation	Age						Gender			Education				Visit The Netherlands	
	(18-24)	(25-34)	(35-44)	(45-54)	(55-64)	(65 +)	Male	Female	None	HS	Second.	Bach.	Grad.	Yes	No
Belgium (n = 316)	21%	41%	14%	16%	6%	2%	52%	48%	6%	9%	33%	28%	24%	85%	15%
China (n = 331)	11%	66%	18%	4%	1%	1%	42%	58%	8%	74%	15%	3%	0%	19%	81%
France (n = 341)	9%	19%	24%	18%	22%	9%	49%	51%	8%	21%	31%	26%	14%	33%	67%
Germany (n = 358)	28%	23%	19%	17%	9%	4%	51%	49%	0%	29%	44%	11%	16%	67%	33%
Italy (n = 293)	15%	22%	20%	23%	16%	4%	49%	51%	0%	15%	52%	15%	18%	27%	73%
Japan (n = 414)	17%	16%	17%	25%	14%	11%	53%	47%	53%	47%	9%	25%	16%	7%	93%
Spain (n = 475)	10%	26%	25%	23%	15%	1%	46%	54%	2%	11%	15%	27%	44%	26%	74%
UK (n = 455)	1%	10%	20%	29%	38%	1%	37%	63%	3%	43%	19%	25%	10%	40%	60%
USA (n = 522)	42%	39%	12%	5%	2%	0%	48%	52%	1%	32%	10%	34%	24%	14%	86%
Total (N = 3505)	18%	28%	19%	18%	14%	3%	52%	48%	6%	28%	29%	23%	14%	33%	67%

Table 3.

Average Popularity and Interest of the Tour de France per Nation

Nation	Mean Popularity Score (1-7)	Mean Behavioral Intention Score (1-7)
Belgium (n = 316)	4.75	2.34
China (n = 331)	3.50	2.24
France (n = 341)	4.54	2.18
Germany (n = 358)	3.87	2.04
Italy (n = 293)	4.78	2.10
Japan (n = 414)	4.09	1.68
Spain (n = 475)	4.55	2.35
UK (n = 455)	3.89	2.01
USA (n = 522)	3.83	1.89

Table 4.

Global Sample MANCOVA Analysis Means and Standard Deviations

Destination Image Variable	Mean (SD)		<i>p</i>	F Statistic
	<i>Control</i>	<i>Treatment</i>		
<i>Attributes</i>				
History	5.56	5.55	.914	.012
Scenery	5.52	5.51	.851	.035
Life and Customs	5.27	5.30	.487	.484
International Grandeur	5.18	5.25	.106	2.617
Cultural Activities	5.51	5.55	.300	1.072
Great Events	5.25*	5.61*	.000	86.897
Infrastructure	5.24	5.24	.939	.006
Nightlife	5.09*	4.97*	.009	6.832
Activities	5.24	5.24	.962	.002
Good Value	4.69	4.73	.362	.831
Good Weather	4.60	4.66	.120	2.412
<i>Adjectives</i>				
Luxurious	4.53	4.54	.886	.021
Energetic	5.22*	5.35*	.001	11.668
Cosmopolitan	5.13	5.15	.760	.093
Bright	5.30	5.29	.670	.182
Safe	5.17	5.20	.595	.283
Welcoming	5.46	5.46	.998	.000
Trendy	5.07	5.09	.751	.100
Young	5.00	4.97	.586	.297
Small-town	4.83*	5.00*	.000	12.828
Dynamic	5.13*	5.25*	.025	4.999
Glamorous	4.79	4.83	.421	.648
Exciting	5.02*	5.11*	.038	4.295
Contemporary	4.97*	5.06*	.027	4.897
Inspiring	4.97	4.98	.870	.027
Cool	5.09*	5.18*	.036	4.419

Table 5.

Global Sample MANCOVA Analysis Results

Source	Wilks's Lambda	Hypothesis df	df	<i>p</i>	η^2
Covariate Effect					
Distance	.966	8	3420	.001	.042
Popularity	.933	8	3420	.001	.034
Experimental Effect	.952	8	3420	.001	.748
Country of Origin	.959	8	3420	.001	.060

Table 6.

Multi-Country MANOVA Analysis Means and Significance of Destination Image Variables¹ (C=Control group; T=Treatment Group)

Country	Great Events		Nightlife		Energetic		Dynamic		Exciting		Contemporary		Cool	
	<i>Control (C) / Treatmentl (T)</i>													
	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T	C	T
Belgium (n = 316)	5.23*	5.47*	5.04	4.86	5.24	5.17	5.21	5.20	4.57	4.66	4.56	4.75	4.81	4.73
China (n = 331)	5.71	5.79	5.70*	5.34*	5.89	5.79	6.09	5.96	5.77	5.74	5.83	5.59	5.69	5.47
France (n = 341)	5.40*	5.56*	5.36	5.31	5.41	5.24	5.64*	5.38*	5.01	4.82	5.21	5.13	5.24	5.15
Germany (n = 358)	5.30*	5.73*	5.09*	4.65*	4.91	4.88	4.98	4.97	4.76	4.75	4.98*	4.65*	4.74	4.64
Italy (n = 293)	5.68*	5.89*	5.26	5.20	5.28	5.34	5.57	5.62	5.41	5.38	5.30	5.45	4.99	5.08
Japan (n = 414)	4.65*	5.53*	4.24	4.11	4.75*	5.28*	4.43	5.15	4.51*	4.91*	4.41*	4.75*	4.72*	5.00*
Spain (n = 475)	5.10*	5.27*	5.34	5.43	5.31	5.37	4.75	4.84	5.07	5.19	4.93	5.09	5.60	5.78
UK (n = 455)	5.29*	5.69*	5.17	5.30	5.24*	5.58*	5.08*	5.33*	5.15*	5.39*	5.18*	5.41*	4.89*	5.22*
USA (n = 522)	5.16*	5.72*	4.84	4.65	5.15*	5.42*	4.95*	5.18*	5.07	5.13	4.62*	4.89*	5.09	5.23

*Mean values are statistically different at the $p < .05$ level.

¹Only variables found to be statistically significant in global MANOVA were used

Figure 1. Brochures for treatment and control group

The city of Utrecht

Welcome to Utrecht!

Utrecht is the beating heart of the Netherlands. A city small enough to explore on foot. Large enough to enjoy world class festivals, modern architecture, trendy shops and interesting museums for days on end.

Utrecht has a wealth of culture and history. Utrecht bustles with life. 70.000 students. An extensive number of cultural events. Friendly outdoor cafes and restaurants. Hospitable hotels. Utrecht has it all.

Things to see and do in Utrecht

At the center of the city, you'll find the Dom Tower, the tallest church tower in the Netherlands, measuring 112 meters high (269 ft). Take a guided tour up the tower to 95 meters where you will have one of the most impressive panoramas in the Netherlands.

Want an easy way to discover the city? Take a boat tour with Rederij Schuttevaer, who have been sailing through the canals of Utrecht for over 50 years now. They can share the history of this old Roman city, as well as providing you with a beautiful view of the buildings and artworks throughout the city.

When you are in the Netherlands, you should not forget the graceful city of Utrecht...

Lonely Planet (10 of the world's unsung places), February 14th, 2012

Tour de France Grand Depart July 1st – July 5th 2015

The city of Utrecht is proud to be the host of the largest professional cycling event in the world: the Tour de France. During these days the city will at the center of the cycling world. For two days, Utrecht will be the beating heart of the cycling world, as they host the first two stages.

This will be a wonderful time to visit our city and watch one of the greatest sport events in the world. Come stand along the sides of the two stages and enjoy the festival like atmosphere

The city of Utrecht

Welcome to Utrecht!

Utrecht is the beating heart of the Netherlands. A medieval city center, small enough to explore on foot. Large enough to enjoy world class festivals, modern architecture, trendy shops and interesting museums for days on end.

Utrecht has a wealth of culture and history. Utrecht bustles with life. 70.000 students. An extensive number of cultural events. Friendly outdoor cafes and restaurants. Hospitable hotels. Utrecht has it all.

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Utrecht at a glance

Utrecht is one of the largest cities in the Netherlands, located in the center of the nation, only a short distance away from Schiphol Airport. It is easy to reach by train or car, has plenty of activities to offer and has many bars, restaurants and café's to entertain.

Visitor center information

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3500 CE Utrecht
Telephone:
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Email:
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