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The Dissemination of Tourism Destination Images through the Media

A Content Analysis of German News
on the Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro

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Abstract

As one of the image formation agents, media has been shown to have a considerable effect on tourism destination image formation in the context of mega events and therefore also impacts tourists' destination choice. The research reported in this paper presents the findings of a content analysis on the Olympic Games 2016 analysing four popular German newspapers with regard to the destination images of Brazil from the 14th of April to the 27th of April 2016. On all six destination image dimensions Developed Environment, Intangible Environment, Political and Economic Environment, Safety, Socio-cultural Environment and Natural Environment positive and negative impacts of newspaper articles on image were identified. A positive image formation was recorded in the dimension of Intangible Environment which highlights organizational and functional characteristics of Brazil as a tourism destination. The dimensions Developed Environment, Political and Economic Environment and Safety revealed negative images that imply decreased value and limitations when choosing Brazil as a tourism destination.

The Dissemination of Tourism Destination Images through the Media

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List of Abbreviations

ANMM	Associative Network Memory Model
IOC	International Olympic Committee
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa
DMO	Destination Marketing Organization

1. Introduction

The importance of destination image in tourists' destination choice process is the result of the intangible nature of tourism products: intangibility and inability to pre-test lead to the fact that perceptions and not reality are decisive for travel decisions (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). These perceptions build the image a tourist has on a destination. Creating, reinforcing or correcting destination image are the key objectives in destination positioning and branding (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Therefore, destination image has emerged both as a variable of analysis and as a strategy in destination marketing (Gallarza, Gil Saura & Calderón García, 2002).

The Olympics are the world's largest sports event and as such trigger extensive international media coverage for the country and especially the host city as well as potentially influencing the tourism destination image. The event itself may only take place during two weeks but the attention of the media is focused on the host city long before and after the event (Moss, Gruben & Moss, 2014). Since organizers normally cannot control journalistic content, also negative incidents or attributes are portrayed by the press. On the other hand, even though many aspects are not in the control of organizers, they are able to steer reporting to favourable aspects (Preuss, 2006). In general, mega events are seen as the golden opportunity for countries to create awareness and market their nation brand to the world – not only to tourists (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015).

Consequently, there is high competition among bidding countries and cities for mega events and positive touristic development as an outcome is often used as the major justification for the high investments needed (Li & McCabe, 2013). Similarly, Brazil pursues the goal of attracting ten million tourists to its country in 2016 with the help of image enhancement by the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro (Vila, Darcy & Alen, 2014). Nevertheless, different theories and models show that an event's impacts on intention to visit are only generated through the event's effect on destination image which thereby makes it a topic of high importance for tourism development (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003; Gibson, Qi & Zhang, 2008; Deng & Li, 2013).

This paper aims to analyse which tourism destination images are shared by the media news reports on mega events. In order to empirically investigate the impact of event media on destination image, a content analysis on the Olympic Summer Games 2016 in

Rio de Janeiro is undertaken. Although the relationship of destination image and events has been analysed since decades, few empirical studies have investigated the specific impact of the media as potential image formation factor in the lead-up to an international mega event. A special focus is laid on the German market because of its purchasing power and high relevance for sports tourism. Therefore, the objective of this study is to answer the following research question:

Which tourism destination images of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil are presented in German media in the run-up to the Olympic Games 2016?

By answering this research question the paper complements current knowledge about the effects of mega events on destination image with a special focus on the pre-event phase. The results will contribute to the understanding of the relevance of pre-mega-event media reports by showing which image dimensions the media catches on especially. Practical implications include insights for tourism authorities on their destination branding and tourism planning policies for effective media collaboration strategies and promotional tools suitable for the German market.

2. Tourism Destination Image

In order to identify potential effects on the tourism destination image of Brazil portrayed by the media, the concept of destination image and its formation as well as the characteristics of mega events and the role of media have to be understood. Afterwards the impacts of mega events on destination image are assessed taking into consideration the interrelation of these two aspects. Therefore, the concept of legacy effects of mega events and the phenomenon of image transfer between mega events and destinations are described. This literature review lays the theoretical basis for the content analysis on the media effects on the destination image of Brazil in the run-up to the Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro.

2.1 Definition and Concept

Since Hunt (1971), Gunn (1972) and Mayo (1973) wrote about tourism destination image, various attempts to conceptualize tourism destination image have led to the existence of many definitions that cover slightly different aspects of the image concept.

The definition by Crompton (1979, p.18) explaining tourism destination image to be "the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination", is cited frequently. Unanimously, researchers agree on the importance of the tourism destination image for the success of a tourism destination (e.g. Crompton, 1979; Kim & Chen, 2016).

In their effort to conceptualize destination image, Echtner and Ritchie (1991) consider destination image to be composed of three dimensions or also called continuums: attribute-based and holistic, functional (measurable) characteristics and psychological (abstract) characteristics and common and unique features. In order to completely assess destination image, all these dimensions have to be taken into consideration and measured. The position of destinations along the different continuums contain relevant information for destination marketing, holistic images for example clearly categorize destinations in the minds of tourists whereas unique images differentiate destinations and create competitive advantages (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993).

The majority of studies on destination image identify two interrelated components building the basis for tourism destination image: cognitive/perceptual and affective elements (Baloglu & Mangaloglu, 2001; Ferreira Custódio & Gouveria, 2007; Hosany, Ekinci & Uysal, 2007). Cognitive components are related to tourists' awareness, beliefs and knowledge about a destination whereas affective components are an evaluation or emotional reaction to these impressions (Gartner, 1993). There is general consensus among researchers that affect is a function of cognition, saying that a tourist develops affective evaluations of a destination as a result of cognitive impressions. Therefore, affect depends on cognition and together they form an overall or a composite image which can be seen as an end-product that stimulates tourist behaviour (eg. Baloglu and McCleary, 1999b; Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015; Pike, 2016). Baloglu and McCleary's study (1999a) has shown that cognition influences overall image both directly and indirectly through affect. However, affect as such has a stronger impact on overall image than cognition. According to Kim & Chen (2016) affect is not a mere function of cognition but both reactions occur simultaneously upon a stimulus and interact with each other.

The image components are closely related to different stages in a tourist's decision-making process (Pike & Ryan, 2004). The cognitive image component describes how images are developed which puts several destinations in a tourist's awareness or opportunity set (Gartner, 1993). This set includes all destinations the tourist knows about,

no matter if he would like to visit them or not. Next, the tourist moves selected destinations to a consideration set depending on the evaluations he or she makes by the affective image component. Therefore, affect separates destinations with positive images from those with negative ones and initiates the destination selection process (Goodall, 1991). Further, Gartner (1993) identifies conation as a third image component, representing the behavioural consequence of cognition and affect. The tourist chooses one or more destinations from the consideration set and formulates a wish to travel (Pike & Ryan, 2004).

## 2.2 Tourism Destination Image Formation

The destination image formation process has been extensively studied by researchers given its implications for destination management and marketing. Gunn (1972) is the first to differentiate organic images resulting from non-touristic communication from induced images evoked by promotional activities which can be controlled by the destination. Gartner (1993) expands these so called image forming agents and considers organic images resulting from word of mouth and previous travel whereas non-touristic communication is called autonomous image. Fakeye and Crompton (1991) separate actual visitation of a destination from organic image and mention complex image as the most differentiated image resulting from reduced stereotypes and qualified perceptions especially strengthened by increasing extent and numbers of visits. Kim & Chen (2016) identified that the mental representations of a destination are continuously built throughout the potential tourists' life. More external information added consciously or unconsciously influences to the so called Prime Tourist Destination Schemas (PTDS).

The image created by actually visiting a destination is said to be one of the most important for destination success because satisfied tourists turn into repeat customers (Lee, Lee & Lee, 2005) and spread credible marketing through recommendations (Qu, Kim & Im, 2011). Positive word of mouth is in the centre of destination marketing and it requires induced images to be close to reality in order to evoke realistic expectations of a destination (Beerli & Martín, 2004). Dissatisfied tourists result in negative word of mouth, which produces unfavourable destination images that can lead to decreased destination success (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). A study on the last Olympic Games, the winter games in Sochi 2014, identified that autonomous image agents can have both

strong negative and positive effects on the sport event and tourism destination image and need to be managed through a good public relations strategy (Potwarka & Banyai, 2016). This includes managing content shared online, as the internet is becoming an increasingly important information source (Buhalis, 1998; Buhalis & Law, 2008; Litvin et al., 2008; Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015) Depending on the web platform, the internet can have the effect of induced, organic or autonomous image formation agents. It is thereby more difficult to grasp the image effects of online news and media (Llodrà-Riera et al., 2015). Numerous further studies have resulted in differing explanations of the different image forming agents so that Figure 1 demonstrates the image types used throughout this thesis.

Figure 1: Image Forming Agents
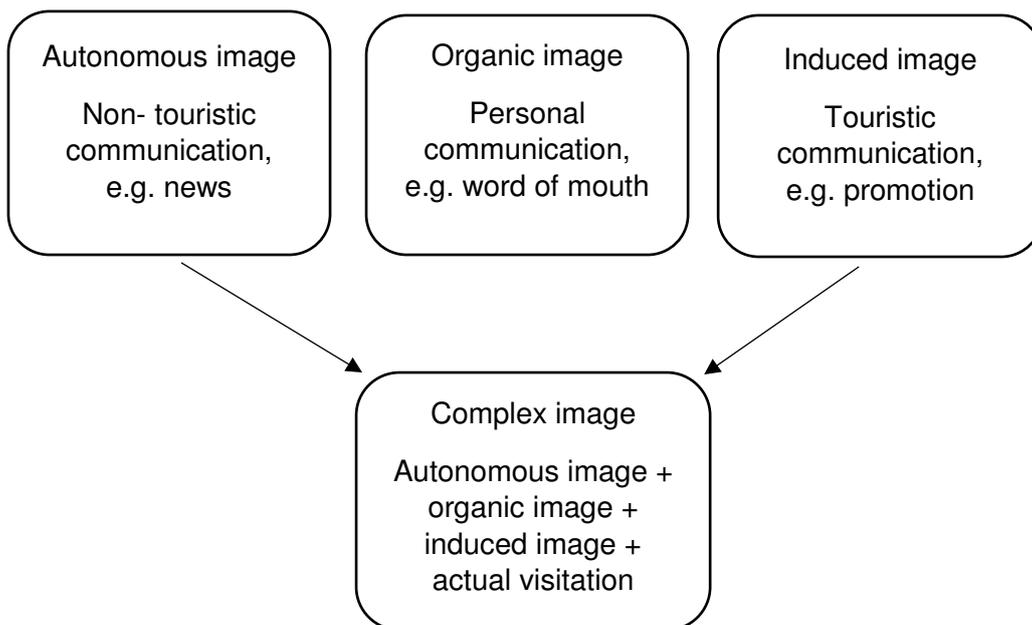
Source: Own illustration based on Gunn (1972); Gartner (1993); Fakeye and Crompton (1991)

Another approach to structure image types is the distinction between images created before and after actual visitation called secondary and primary image. According to Phelps (1986), organic, induced and autonomous image develop the secondary image. As soon as a tourist actually visits a destination he or she develops a complex or primary image. External factors directly influencing tourism destination images are called stimulus factors. Researchers have identified personal factors as an internal variable in

image formation (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999a; Beerli & Martín, 2004; Um & Crompton, 1990). The personal factors, which contain tourists' socio-demographic characteristics, psychological aspects such as motivation, values or lifestyle and general travel experience, are seen as an uncontrollable variable in image formation (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Every person creates an individual image of a destination according to his or her personal factors, which adds a selection tool that filters input to the destination image formation process (Um & Crompton, 1990).

Furthermore, destination image formation does not have a final end product but is a dynamic process. Gunn (1972) already links image formation to a customer journey of seven stages - accumulation, modification, decision, travel to attraction, participation, return travel, new accumulation – and therefore describes tourism destination image as a cyclical process. Destination image influences tourist behaviour and decisions before, during and after visiting a destination and thus is of relevance for destination marketing along the whole customer journey (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). It is not a static construct and especially autonomous images constantly influence tourists' perceptions of destinations. Independently produced media has the ability to quickly and dramatically change destination image through its high credibility and the large audience addressed by mass media. Particularly events in distant countries can change image drastically due to the low level of knowledge of the country (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). Even though it is often the case that the destination image goes back to its original image in the long-run, the strong impacts of autonomous images show implications for destinations to engage in media collaboration in order to steer positive publicity that may oppose unfavourable events (Beerli & Martín, 2004).

3. Mega Events

Tourism destinations act as stages for mega events in order to widen their portfolio of attractions, to create awareness for the destination and to stimulate the local economy (Steinecke, 2013). Due to their internationality, size of audience and image formation ability, mega events are at the same time a big opportunity but also a challenge for hosting countries and cities.

According to Getz et al. (2012) the emergence of event tourism results from the assumption that by hosting events, destinations can counter their seasonality problems and attract more tourists throughout the whole year. The Olympics are seen as the most significant mega event worldwide because they enjoy mass market appeal, global prominence and an extraordinary size of organizers, participants and audience (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015). As the name says, mega events are large in their size and significance as well as their impacts. Getz et al. (2012) state that it is not primarily the size, type, theme or ownership that defines a mega event but its function and role in creating mega impacts. Mega sport events like the Olympics, the Football World Cup or the Super Bowl are celebrated like festivals and have symbolic value which makes them interesting for politics (Getz et al., 2012). Politicians are often confronted with overoptimistic prognoses on visitor numbers, media coverage and especially long-term benefits for the city which seem to justify public funding (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). Bidding for an international mega event like the Olympic Games involves large amounts of resources and professional planning (Saboya Valente Junior & Noguera Tur, 2013). Potential host cities have to weigh up benefits against required investments and especially consider the city's long-term development plan without the event. Mega events with their promising impacts could otherwise push aside a city's long-term demands or high investment costs cannot be covered after the event which leads to deficits and the fact that other public activities suffer (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). It is critical for organizational bodies to understand that during a mega event demand is exceptionally high, which requires considerations about the reuse of facilities, temporary (accommodation) solutions and that the promotion effect of mega events can vanish quickly (Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2006).

3.1 Role of the Media

Smith (2004) states that spotlight events are a more suitable terminology for mega events due to their immense media exposure, making the role of the media a central characteristic of mega events. The Olympics put the host city on the world stage and therefore the media reports extensively about the city during the two weeks of its duration but also in the pre- and post- phases of the event (Moss, Gruben & Moss, 2014). As elaborated above, the media is an autonomous image formation agent that is uncontrollable for the destination so that it can act as a credible and trustworthy

information source (Ferreira Custódio & Gouveria, 2007). Still, there exist different types of media with varying degrees of reliability and differing objectives from informing to entertaining. Even though media has the strong ability to shape opinions, it is not an information source of scientific character (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). The independent character of the media also makes clear that the advantage of reaching millions of international spectators by the event's publicity can quickly turn into a risk when unfavourable aspects of the destination are portrayed or failures in event organization occur (Smith, 2004).

In general the media reports primarily about the event and secondly about the host city's issues or challenges and its community, especially focusing on the athletes' achievements during the actual event (Smith, 2004). Media representatives evaluate the success of an event in terms of organisational and functional aspects, including the infrastructure, whereas destination aspects like attractions, scenery or gastronomy only play a secondary role in their perceptions (Ferreira Custódio & Gouveria, 2007). In the pre-event phase more content is devoted to the destination's features which is why the effects of the period between the bidding announcement and the event should not be underestimated (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). One possibility for a destination to steer more journalistic content to the host city's characteristics are broadcasting contracts that require a stated volume of destination imagery and special camera angles (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003). A study by Brown et al. (2004) has also shown that journalists without access to event venues report more about a destination's features and people, which is why those journalists should be supported by special visiting programmes. Besides, sponsors including images of places in their promotional activities play a vital role when it comes to mega events' media because being the official event's sponsor or the sponsor of a successful national team is perceived as noble and generous (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015).

3.2 Impacts of Mega Events on Tourism Destination Image

Destination images play a key role in destination positioning and branding as tourism products compete with each other through images (Pike & Ryan, 2004). Destination image is formed before an event by the media and during and after the event also by word of mouth of spectators, participating athletes, members of official organization bodies, visiting politicians and corporate guests (Brown et al., 2004). In order to

understand the relationship between mega events and destination image, the following sections explain the phenomena of legacy and assesses the image transfer of event image and destination image.

3.2.1 Legacy Effect

The term legacy is often used to describe the sustaining effects after a mega event and is defined as all structures created by an event and remaining after the event - positive and negative, planned and unplanned, tangible and intangible (Preuss, 2006). Therefore, destination image can be part of the legacy of mega events as an intangible structure and is in the best case planned and positive to have a considerable impact on future development. Official bodies often declare that the image or branding legacy is more important and of higher value to the host than short-term economic benefits because it is an enhancement of reputation which boosts tourism growth in the long-run (Getz et al., 2012). According to Álvarez de la Torre and Rodríguez-Toubes Muñiz (2013), events have the ability to mitigate national stereotypes and create more differentiated images as well as reduce perceived destination risk. This view has put several mega events at the centre of tourism development strategies or destination branding and positioning efforts. South Africa for example still incorporates images of the Football World Cup 2010 into its tourism promotion campaigns because it reminds of the success of this event and the fact that South Africa was the first African country to host this mega event which is a strong differentiating factor (Brown et al., 2004).

The image legacy for destinations depends on the media and its perception of all aspects related to the event. The underlying precondition for positive image creation is a successful event. As investigated above, the media evaluates an event's success primarily by the degree of professional organization and infrastructure. Only if perceptions about functionality are positive, aspects like price quality, service, scenery or gastronomy can reinforce positive image creation (Ferreira Custódio & Gouveia, 2007). Another determining factor for the actual effect of event media is the degree of knowledge and amount of advertising in the respective country: if a destination is rarely marketed and relatively unknown to an audience so that held destination images are less complex, media has a particularly high impact (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003). These findings are similar to the ones of Tasci and Gartner (2007) who revealed that with increasing distance to a destination, image is more strongly affected by new perceptions.

Nevertheless, event legacy is fragile and does not only diminish over time (Ritchie & Smith, 1991) but changes in the external environment can easily cast a shadow over an event's image creation efforts (Brown et al., 2004). One example is the Olympics 2000 in Sydney which were called extremely successful in branding Australia as a tourism destination but were followed by the terror attacks in New York in September 2001 which resulted in an international security crisis. Another example is the Olympics 2004 in Athens that lost its branding effects due to the financial crisis in Greece (Panagiotopoulou, 2012). In general, it is difficult to determine the real image legacy of events because image changes by an event cannot be fully separated from those that would have been caused by regular destination development (Preuss, 2006). Nevertheless the concept of legacy is important in determining the worth of an event. It measures the return on investment of events and is particularly relevant in developing countries where opportunity costs of hosting an event are very high (Saboya Valente Junior & Noguera Tur, 2013).

3.2.2 Image Transfer

The Olympic Games are a strong brand standing for hope and prosperity, friendship and fair play and performance excellence worldwide (Panagiotopoulou, 2012). For hosts it is an honour to organize the Olympics as they celebrate the host city and portray the countries identity (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015) and in turn spectators expect Olympic spirit from the host country (Lee, 2010). However, the Olympics are not a guarantor of positive reputation and successful branding for a destination as their success depends on local factors (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). Every four years the mega event has a different character depending on the setting, the event management and the community (Getz et al., 2012). Therefore, the Olympics are in itself only a media opportunity to demonstrate economic, technological or organisational capabilities and do not necessarily have to result in brand enhancement (Panagiotopoulou, 2012).

In order to explain how mega events influence destination image, the psychological model of associative network memory (ANMM) by Keller (1991) and the theory of image transfer by Deng and Li (2013) are used. Keller (1991) describes how memory combines information nodes via connecting links depending on strength of associations (symbolized by the size of interlinking lines in figure 2) between these information nodes. Connecting links are associations triggered by both information nodes, in case of mega

sports events and destination image a connecting link could be for example the adjectives active or exciting.

Deng and Li (2013) developed their model of event-destination image transfer including the variables event image, destination image, overall attitude toward the destination and behavioural intentions toward the destination. The transfer between event image and destination image and vice versa strongly depends on media activities. Their communication shapes the impressions of the public as a mediator by drawing connections between events and destinations. Figure 2 combines the Associative Network Memory Model and the Model of Event-Destination Image Transfer and integrates the media as a decisive component influencing the public images of a tourism destination in the context of an event. By creating connecting links between information nodes, the media is in control about the nature and strength of impacts of events on destination images (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003).

Several studies have disclosed that destination image is a mediating factor between an event's image and tourists' overall attitude towards a destination (Deng & Li. 2013; Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003) and others have compared it to the spill over effects between events and products by event sponsorship (Brown et al., 2004; Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003; Xing & Chalip, 2006). When a mega event is supposed to be co-branded with a destination, the match of images is of major importance. By choosing to host a sports event, the host country or city evokes an image of being an active destination. If a destination is normally perceived as a leisurely destination, hosting a sports event theoretically leads to a mismatch and can worsen destination image (Xing & Chalip, 2006). Therefore, destinations benefit by choosing events that highlight their special features. The Olympics as the worldwide most important sports event can emphasize the active nature of a city and the variety of sports and activities there (Brown et al., 2004). A leisurely city is not advised to use a mega sports event like the Olympics in order to change its image to being more active, but should consider a relatively leisurely sports event like a golf tournament (Xing & Chalip, 2006).

Figure 2: Role of Media in Event - Destination Image Relationship
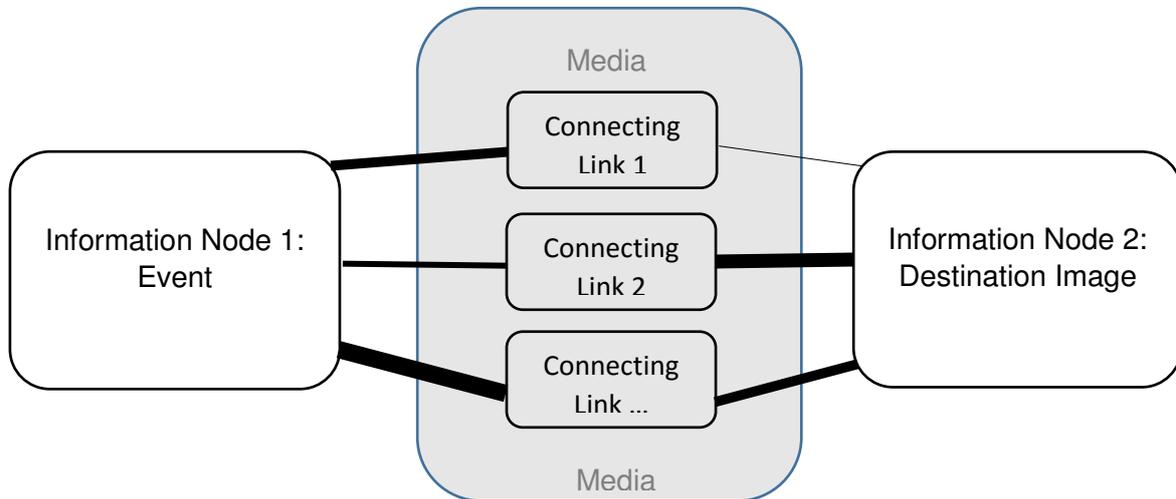
Source: Own illustration based on Keller (1991); Deng & Li (2013)

In how far event images are transferred to a destination image depends on the compatibility of image dimensions and if an event contributes to a unique market position (Chalip, Green & Hall, 2003). For example, large and imposing attractions of the destination create the perception that a city is organizationally capable of hosting a mega event. The same goes for the host country's national team or its athletes. As performance excellence is at the centre of mega sports events, athletic success is considered a sign of strength that is unconsciously transferred to other disciplines. Particularly strong image transfers appear if event venues or infrastructure are national icons as it is the case with the Maracanã stadium in Rio de Janeiro (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015).

During the planning stage of destinations about which events to host, three dimensions of image have to be analysed and clearly stated: actual destination image, the respective event's image and the image the destination wants to project (Gibson, Qi & Zhang, 2008). As a mega event is supposed to be incorporated into the marketing strategy and the communication mix, the event image has to affect image dimensions that contribute to a strong positioning of the destination which is the real worth of an event (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003). This underlines the importance for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) to understand the relevance of single image factors in the formation process for their destination and the impacts of a potential event co-branding

(Ferreira Custódio & Gouveia, 2007). Conditions for successful events in the context of destination branding are community support, professionalism of organization and compatibility with the destination because these factors determine the long-term impact of a mega event (Brown et al., 2004). Due to their credibility and large audience, media as an autonomous image formation agent can quickly change destination images temporarily, especially of distant countries (Tasci & Gartner, 2007). How an event affects a destination's image depends on the images presented by the media because it has the ability to shape the public's opinion and thus is a mediator between an event and a destination (Ferreira Custódio & Gouveria, 2007).

4. Methodology

The Olympic Games 2016 in Rio de Janeiro are used in order to empirically examine the role of independent media in the image formation process in the run-up to a mega event. Held from the 5th to the 21st of August 2016, the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro represent the first on the South American continent and are the 28th edition of the modern Summer Games. In October 2009 the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced Rio de Janeiro as the host city for the Olympics in 2016 whose competitors were Chicago, Tokyo and Madrid. In total 11,303 athletes from 205 countries to compete in 32 sports including golf and rugby as two new sports disciplines in 2016 (Rio2016™, 2016). The competitions took place in 32 Olympic venues of which half were already existing before the mega event. The city staged 39 test events in the two years before the Games there. About 7.5 million tickets were available for the sports events during the two weeks in August and the IOC expects 380,000 spectators in the stadiums and a television audience of four billion people (IOC, 2016).

The data used in this thesis is collected by a content analysis of online archives of selected German newspapers in the period from the 14th of April until the 27th of April 2016. The goal of this primary research method is to qualitatively and quantitatively measure image-creating activities by the German media and to evaluate, what type of image of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil as a tourism destination is generated among the public. The four newspapers *Frankfurter Allgemeine, Süddeutsche Zeitung, Freie Presse* and *Rheinische Post* are chosen due to their print volume and popularity in Germany

and their reputation of high quality information and credibility, which enables them to evoke a considerable effect on image formation (Informationsgemeinschaft zur Feststellung der Verbreitung von Werbeträgern e.V [Information community for the investigation of the spread of advertising mediums], 2016). These newspapers are based in different regions in Germany. The research intends to grasp the media activity on a country-wide scale.

A total of 303 articles with the keyword "Olympia Rio [Olympics Rio]" are analysed. The applied keyword is general to filter various articles related to this event but it is specific enough to exclude other types of sports events or Olympic Games in other cities from the sample. It is possible to omit the year in which the Olympics take place because the event has never been hosted in Rio de Janeiro before. The articles taken into consideration were published in a two week period, with the study time frame ending on the 27th of April 2016, one-hundred days before the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games. The study is conducted during this time frame in order to grasp the image of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil in the immediate leading-up phase to the event that takes place in August 2016.

The content analysis as a qualitative research method is based on data resulting from meanings of words and sentences in the newspaper articles. In contrast to quantitative analysis, where data is simplified and standardized, qualitative approaches always include some degree of interpretation of data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009). The analysis will firstly provide non-standardized data that then requires classification into categories which creates clarity of relevant topics. Quantifying qualitative data is achieved by counting the frequency of words or expressions classified as one unit of data under a more general category (Denscombe, 2010). As categorization implies the possible disadvantage of missing information, the qualitative analysis is beneficial to provide a comprehensive overview of the issues addressed in the articles (Krippendorff, 2013). Since the content analysis is supposed to reveal the media representations potentially impacting the image of Brazil in the run-up to the Olympic Games in Rio, the units of analysis are words in phrases in newspaper articles that can act as autonomous image formation agents. Determined by priori coding, which means 'established before data collection', the six categories used are the image dimensions adopted and adjusted from Chalip, Green and Hill (2003): *Developed Environment, Natural Environment,*

Intangible Environment, Political and Economic Environment, Socio-cultural Environment and *Safety*. These categories stand for differentiated considerations of tourists when deciding about a holiday destination or when evaluating a destination on a specific level. This category system is mutually exclusive and exhaustive so that every evaluative word or phrase of the newspaper articles can be placed in only one category (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). As some words and phrases could belong into more than one category this procedure can distort the results.

5. Findings

Of the total 303 articles including the keyword "Olympia Rio [Olympics Rio]", 102 contained evaluating comments that are considered as influential in image formation. The remaining 201 Articles are not directly related to the Olympics in Rio as they mainly deal with sports performance, qualification of athletes, doping or information about national teams, their preparations, clothing, accommodation, etc. These articles do not significantly shape people's image of Rio de Janeiro or Brazil, readers are only subconsciously reminded of the fact that 2016's Summer Olympics take place there. Therefore, awareness is created by all 303 articles while the destination image of Brazil is directly impacted by only one third of the articles. Nevertheless, the non-evaluative articles actively remind readers of the location of the Olympic Games and can create interest and the desire to gain more information on the topic, which can then lead to further information research and effects on the tourism destination image of Rio de Janeiro and Brazil.

The results of the content analysis are presented in two stages. Firstly, the qualitative analysis identifies three major issues that were extensively reported about in the time period of the study and which showed high numbers of evaluative phrases as well as strong judging reactions and statements. Secondly, the quantitative analysis further breaks down data into subcategories and frequencies of words and expressions and phrases are investigated and interpreted. The mix of qualitative and quantitative analysis reveals the destination image dimensions affected by journalistic content on the Olympics 2016 and determines if reporting is favourable or unfavourable for Brazil's tourism destination image (Jenkins, 1999).

5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

In the following, the three major topics identified in the newspaper articles are analysed and their potential relevance for Brazil's destination image formation is assessed. It is assumed that frequently mentioned terms have a higher image formation ability because repetitions of statements keep audiences aware of a topic and they also evoke the impression that something is of high importance and validity (Wimmer & Dominick, 2006). The most relevant topics according to the frequency of words are technical flaws, organizational professionalism and the political and economic crisis. The content in the German news on these topics is assessed qualitatively and is presented in the following sub-chapters.

5.1.1 Technical flaws and problems and their consequences

The most intensively discussed specific topic in the newspaper articles is the collapse of the newly constructed cycle path at the coast of Rio de Janeiro on the 21st of April 2016. The cycle path connecting the touristic neighbourhood Ipanema with the Olympic venues in Barra was considered a prestige Olympic project for the city and was inaugurated in January 2016. Because of strong waves a part of the cycle path collapsed which led to the death of two people. These are dramatic news from an Olympic city that imply a shock for potential tourists since one single negative incident can lead to an overall negative destination image (Bigné Alcañiz, Sánchez García & Sanz Blas, 2005). The media reported more about this happening which in turn unleashed a discussion about technical flaws and the potential danger of incompetent planning and construction in the Olympic city.

In 303 articles, 120 negatively evaluating expressions related to technical problems and their consequences were found which makes up 19% of total comments found. This can not only evoke the impression of unprofessional project management and insufficient planning and control but it is also closely connected to the sensible topic of risk and danger, which is also a major determinant of destination choice. Kim and Chalip (2004) have investigated that personal risks of health and safety are direct constraints to event attendance and tourist behaviour. Surprisingly, safety was not one of the most relevant topics in the newspaper articles. Nevertheless reporting about questionable technical and security standards at Olympic venues and especially the deadly incident at the cycle path can directly influence Brazil's image dimension of safety.

Another issue is the imminent infrastructure chaos that Rio de Janeiro will be facing if it is not able to complete its infrastructure projects (Vila, Darcy & Alén, 2014). Four months before the Olympic Games there are still journalistic comments about unfinished projects and time pressure for construction companies like the one responsible for the cycle path which is also involved in other Olympic facilities projects. The information that one of these projects has suffered from incorrect calculations and planning along with the reporting about deaths at other construction sites and weak controlling standards can result in a loss of trust in the competence of Brazilian organizers. This in turn can lead to the perception of an increased risk, when travelling to Brazil.

5.1.2 Rio de Janeiro's ability to professionally organize the Olympic Games

The ability to professionally host a mega event is of major importance if organizing this event is supposed to positively impact destination image (Avraham, 2014). A study by Ferreira Custódio and Gouveia (2007) proved that positive organisational and functional factors during an event are preconditions for favourable destination image formation. Furthermore event quality and participant satisfaction are essential for events to impact destination image (Lee, Lee & Lee, 2005) which is why event organizers should ensure access to information, comfort and well-trained employees to fulfil tourists' expectations (Alonso Dos Santos et al., 2014). As the first host city on the South American continent, Rio de Janeiro has to prove its professionality and ability to stem the responsibility of organizing a mega event more than others.

In the newspaper articles the Brazilian organizing committee underlines the importance of the gained experience through the Football World Cup in 2014 and wants to demonstrate its competence by staging a high number of test events. The term "test event" appears in many articles that as such only report about sports performance. Still these articles have an image-influencing nature: mentioning a test event in Rio de Janeiro evokes readers' impression that the host city is eliminating potential difficulties and contingencies by organizing test events that stage the conditions of the Olympics. Therefore, trust and the perception of professionality could be built, which might contribute positively to Brazil's image. The quoting of members of the IOC stating that the Olympic competitions in Rio de Janeiro will be successful and independent from the national crisis, reinforces this impression as the IOC is an internationally recognized institution and therefore credible. Still these statements stand in contrast to the numerous

articles reporting about insufficiencies of Brazilian event organization, which might outweigh the positive image formation effect.

The perception of Brazilian organizational competence is of high importance to tourism development: as one of the emerging BRICS countries, Brazil is often considered a chaotic and weakly structured nation and stereotypes of corruption, marginalization and crime prevail Germans' opinions about the country as negative image dimensions (Avraham, 2014). The goal of hosting this event should be to strengthen positive perceptions about Brazil that include friendliness, festivities and art (de Tavares Canto Guina & de Moura Engracia Giraldi, 2012), of which festivities should be in the focus as the unique festival organized around the Olympics is a key appeal for foreign tourists (Kim & Chalip, 2003). The fact that Brazil is aware of its chance to counter this image by hosting the Olympic Summer Games 2016 is demonstrated by the articles including aspirations and trust in the success of this event.

5.1.3 The political and economic crisis in Brazil

According to the newspaper articles Brazil is undergoing a severe national crisis in 2016, both politically and economically. A government crisis around President Dilma Rousseff that could result in her removal of office is added to the enduring corruption scandal of the national petroleum company Petrobras, emphasising once more the image of corruption being widely embedded in politics and business in Brazil. On top of this, Brazil is facing a recession putting pressure on the economy and the operations of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

The appearance of the term "crisis" as such implies negative perceptions, but several articles give the impression that Brazil's challenging situation does not affect the success of the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. It is stated that planning has proceeded far enough for financing to be secured so that the economic crisis cannot impose limitations on Olympic projects anymore. This is contradictory to the statements that organizers have requested financial aid from associations to complete infrastructure projects and the fact that stadiums were built with less seat capacity than planned. Though the latter can be evaluated as a realistic long-term planning change (Solberg & Preuss, 2007) as venues constructed for mega events are often over dimensioned for future use and can imply higher maintenance costs than provide income from other events (Preuss, 2007).

While the newspaper articles might create a favourable image of Brazilian event organizers being relatively unaffected by political and economic challenges, the fact that politics are always connected to mega events remains in place. Often national communities perceive that events have primarily a political purpose, benefitting elites, politicians and governments (Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2004). Mega events are considered strategic moments for communities to address state inefficiencies, social needs and political concerns (Cornelissen, 2012), which makes the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro in August 2016 a one-time opportunity for Brazilians to make the international community aware of their social struggles. International media presence and the fact that foreign tourists could be impacted by demonstrations in urban centres grants social movements' considerable power (Tzanelli, Korstanje & Clayton, 2014). The findings indicate that the political, economic and social situation in Brazil is a subconscious threat to positive destination image formation and must not be underestimated.

5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative content analysis counts a total of 642 evaluating expressions in the 303 newspaper articles of which 251 statements can be categorized as positive (39%) and 391 as negative (61%) (Figure 3). These findings suggest that the media content assessed in this analysis provides a rather negative destination image of Brazil through the Olympic Games creating new or emphasising existing unfavourable perceptions about the country. The findings are analysed in more detail to show which topics are most present in the media, positively and negatively and which potential image building effect these media representations have. This is achieved by the classification of statements into the image dimensions *Developed Environment, Natural Environment, Intangible Environment, Political and Economic Environment, Socio-cultural Environment* and *Safety*. The respective shares of statements in a given category are presented in Figure 4: one third of all comments are related to the *Developed Environment* in Brazil which is therefore the mostly affected destination image dimension. The second and third most affected dimensions are *Intangible Environment* (29%) and *Political and Economic Environment* (16%). Together these three categories make up for more than 75% of all comments which indicates a strong media influence by the Olympic Games on these dimensions of destination image. The dimensions *Natural Environment* (6%) and *Socio-cultural Environment* (7%) are the least mentioned

dimensions in the articles. Therefore, it is assumed that the news articles have the least image formation power on these two dimensions.

Figure 3: Frequency of Positive and Negative Comments

	Positive Comments	Negative Comments	Total
Developed Environment	76	138	214
Natural Environment	18	17	35
Intangible Environment	103	83	186
Political & Economic Environment	12	91	103
Socio-cultural environment	33	12	45
Safety	9	50	59
Total	251	391	642

Source: Own illustration

Figure 4: Percentage of Comments relevant for Image Dimensions
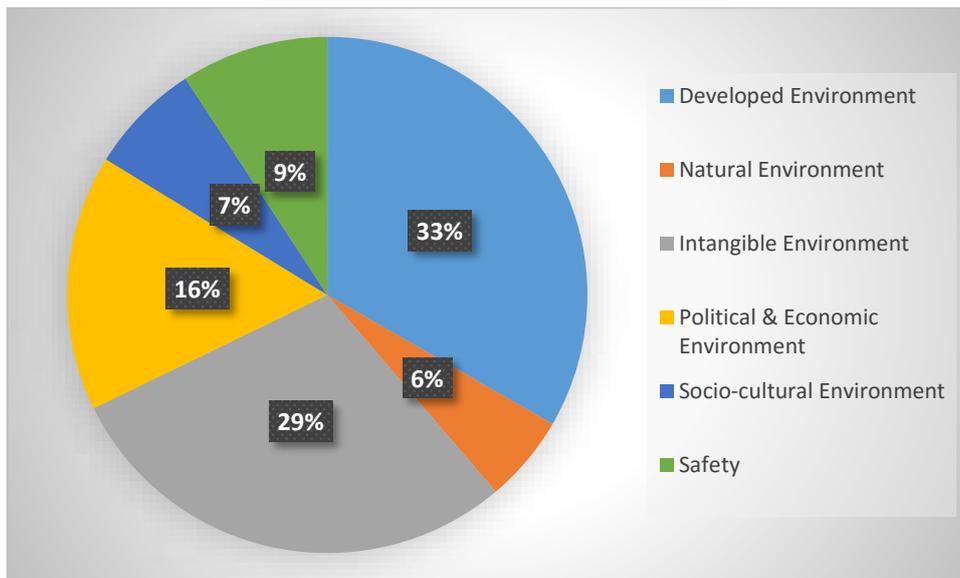
Source: Own illustration

In Figure 5 the distribution of negative comments in combination with the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro among the categories is visualised. The qualitative analysis of the newspaper articles found technical problems and their consequences as one major topic which is also reflected in the numerical representation of negative comments among the different image dimensions: 35% of all negative statements are related to the category *Developed Environment*. The political and economic crisis in Brazil is also clearly

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represented in the frequencies of negative statements: the category of *Political and Economic Environment* makes up for 26% of all negative comments which is the second highest number. Together, statements about *Developed and Political and Economic Environment* represent the majority of negative statements, which indicates that these destination image dimensions of Brazil can be negatively influenced by journalistic content about the Olympic Games. This should be a warning signal for destination managers since for example inappropriate infrastructure and political instability are strong reasons for tourists to substitute a destination (Álvarez de la Torre & Rodríguez-Toubes Muñiz, 2013).

Figure 5: Distribution of Negative Comments among Image Dimensions
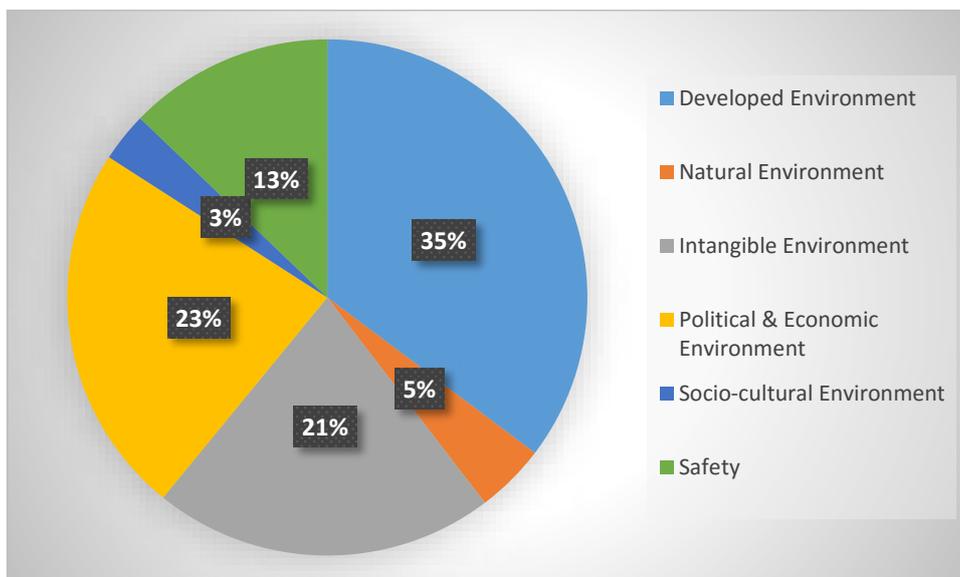
Source: Own illustration

Among the positive comments in the newspaper articles the category *Intangible Environment* claims the greatest share (41%) followed by *Developed Environment* (30%) (Figure 6). Again the findings of the qualitative analysis can be matched to the quantitative results: the positive perception of Rio de Janeiro's ability to professionally organize the Olympic Games is reflected by the high number of positive statements in the category *Intangible Environment*. This image dimension includes perceived organisational competence, efficiency and experience which are valuable attributes for a tourism destination. The high amount of positive statements on the *Developed*

Environment supports this favourable position as it can give readers the impression that Rio de Janeiro as a host city is able to professionally manage its infrastructure, facilities and other event-related physical objects due to its capabilities. However, the fact that the category *Safety* shows the lowest number of positive statements is an indication for the media spreading a perception of risk for travels to Rio de Janeiro. Tourists feel insecure due to the risk of terrorism or the Zika virus and DMOs are advised to counter these uncertainties by using the media to spread information and create trust (Toohey & Taylor, 2008; Schroeder et al., 2013).

Figure 6: Distribution of Positive Comments among Image Dimensions
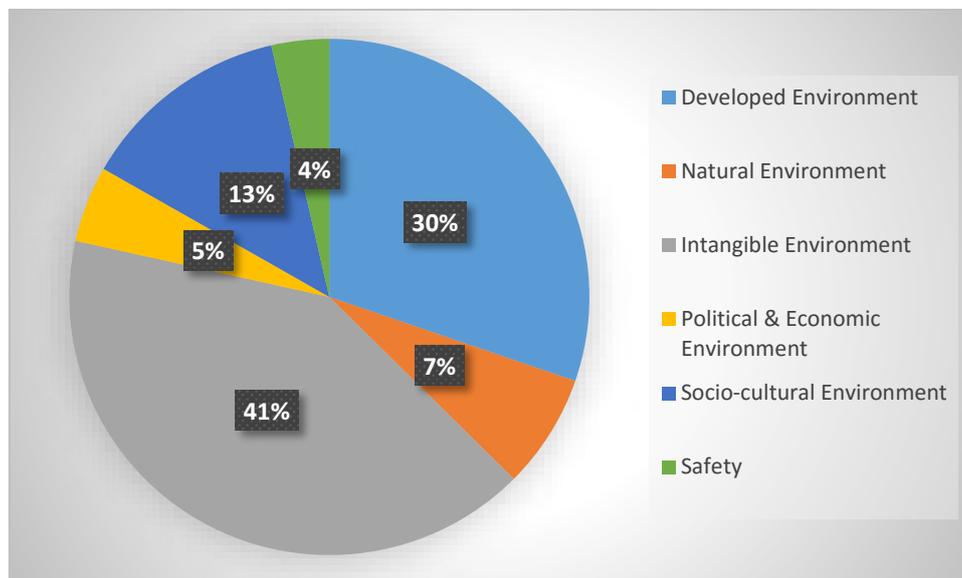
Source: Own illustration

5.2.1 Developed Environment

The image dimension *Developed Environment* summarises all statements related to infrastructure, facilities, event venues, physical tourist attractions and all purpose-built objects. A total of 214 evaluative statements is recorded in this category of which 64% are negative and 36% are positive. The majority of the negative statements is connected to technical flaws and problems and their consequences, identified as one of the three major topics in the qualitative analysis. For the image of Brazil as a tourism destination, news about for example power cuts, transportation problems and delays in constructions imply a weak position in terms of technology and quality. This evokes the impression that the challenges for Brazil as an emerging country are even reinforced by the responsibility

of hosting the Olympic Summer Games in 2016 and that the city of Rio de Janeiro is overwhelmed by this undertaking.

In this context it has to be mentioned that the collapse of a part of the newly constructed coastal cycle path in Rio de Janeiro contributed massively to the negative comments in the category *Developed Environment*. This incident triggered discussions about the quality of facilities and led to increased attention to Rio de Janeiro's infrastructure and construction projects. The collapse of an Olympic project presents a drastic short-term shock to the host city's image which can also recover very quickly (Tasci & Gartner, 2007).

However, the presence of positive judgemental statements about Rio de Janeiro's most famous tourist attractions can have a strong influence on the image of Brazil as a tourism destination. South America is still a relatively uncommon destination for Europeans, which increases the impact of media content on Brazilian tourist attractions while for well-known places awareness enhancement would be inferior (Xing & Chalip, 2006; Ritchie & Smith, 1991). Next to the Copacabana and the Statue of Christ especially the Maracanã stadium frequently appears in the articles as it is a national icon and also used as the Olympic venue for the football competition. If event venues have symbolic character, destination image formation through an event is particularly strong (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015). Besides, the "beauty of the city" is a term often used in the articles and adjectives like *spectacular*, *grandiose* and *marvellous* are used to describe Rio de Janeiro, which can affect Brazil's destination image favourably.

5.2.2 Intangible Environment

The category *Intangible Environment* includes all evaluations in connection with soft image factors like atmosphere, values or skills which are difficult to measure due to their intangible nature but have a strong influence on image formation on an emotional level (Florek, Breitbarth & Conejo, 2008). A total of 186 comments were linked to this image dimension. This is the second highest frequency of evaluative comments in this study. Here the distribution is as follows: 55% of the statements are classified as positive and 45% as negative, which represents a fairly balanced outcome.

As the biggest international sports event the Olympic Summer Games enjoy a strong brand worldwide which is characterised by values like hope, friendship, fair play and

excellence (Panagiotopoulou, 2012). These are values that Rio de Janeiro like every host city hopes to draw upon for its own destination image. The Olympics portray a country's identity and celebrate its host city (Nadeau, O'Reilly & Heslop, 2015) so that Rio de Janeiro has the unique opportunity to highlight its features, which is clearly reflected in the newspaper articles that contain terms like joy of life, passion, hospitality, fun, authenticity and happiness. In order to achieve sustainable image formation, intangible aspects have to be deeply rooted in values and must not be superficially created (Avraham, 2014). Marketers for Brazil and Rio de Janeiro should, therefore, try to communicate these positive aspects and terms to intensify the mental connection with perceptions of joy of life, passion, hospitality, fun, authenticity and happiness with the destination.

The high number of positive statements in the *Intangible Environment* category is strongly related to the perceived ability of Rio de Janeiro to professionally organize the Olympics as outlined in the qualitative analysis section. A relevant share of positive comments on this image dimension can be attributed to this topic: particularly values, attitudes and expressed opinions of politicians, IOC representatives or members of the national organizing committee contribute to positive image formation. The general impression that the Olympics are not endangered by local problems and that Rio de Janeiro is a dignified host city, is created.

This contrasts with the findings of negative statements in the very same category which portray Rio de Janeiro as an inexperienced and unprepared Olympic host city that is not able to cope with the challenge of hosting such a mega event. Organizers are accused of inadequate planning and organization, quality reductions due to time pressure and unfulfilled promises. The existence of numerous statements of both positive and negative nature shows that the journalistic content is highly speculative and subjective. The implications for destination image are that its formation depends on which type of content a tourist receives and how he or she processes this information according to his personal factors that act as a selection tool of images (Um & Crompton, 1990).

5.2.3 Political and Economic Environment

For the dimension *Political and Economic Environment* 103 comments are identified. This is the third highest number of evaluative statements. Of these 12% are positive and

88% are negative. This statistic supports the previous discussion on the political and economic crisis in Brazil. The high amount of negative statements in this image dimension category illustrates a clear opinion of the German media on the political and economic situation in Brazil. As negative statements clearly supersede positive ones, the destination image of Brazil represented by the articles is one-sided and clearly unfavourable for the country.

The predominant terms in this category are "corruption", "crisis" and "problems".. Further, frequently observed terms are "struggle" and "pressure". The tourism destination image can also be affected by the media's concern that Brazil will receive less international tourism due to its crisis. If such a concern is mentioned, the destination image of Brazil is directly made worse while other statements affect destination image rather indirectly and depend on the individual processing and evaluation of readers (Um & Crompton, 1990). The few statements that the Olympics will not be affected by the political and economic challenges for Brazil are efforts by event organizers who are obliged to communicate positively in order to maintain trust and interest of participants and spectators (Toohey & Taylor, 2008). Only one single comment is devoted to the outlook that the Olympic Games will be followed by a tourism boom, which indicates the restrained predictions of organizers.

Now the major task of organizers is to spread confidence and positive pleasant anticipation for the Olympic Games and to counter unfavourable reporting about political processes which are particularly transmitted in the run-up to mega events (Cornelissen, 2012). This can be achieved by actively involving the local community in planning and decision-making to secure community support and avoid demonstrations and boycotts that could further affect the destination image of Brazil negatively. This is supposed to be a long-term process starting with the bidding for the mega event because community support is particularly important in the pre-event phase when media exposure increases (Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2006).

5.2.4 Safety

In the category of *Safety*, 59 expressions are recorded of which 85% are negative and 15% positive. These findings lead to the general assumption that the image of Brazil being safe is negatively affected by the newspaper articles. Safety is an increasingly

important image dimension and strongly influences tourist behaviour as personal risks are direct constraints to travel choice (Kim & Chalip, 2004). For trips to the Olympic Games the willingness to accept risks is exceptionally high due to the unique power of the event as a tourist attraction (Schroeder et al., 2013). This means that although the tourism industry is flourishing during the Olympics, negative statements about safety might prevent future tourists to choose the host country as a tourism destination (Moss, Gruben & Moss, 2014).

Still there is one predominant topic in the category *safety* that influences the destination image of Brazil: while terrorism is a general threat to all countries worldwide, the Zika virus is a health risk particularly relevant for Brazil. The emergence of this health risk in South America is reflected in the newspaper articles and portrays Brazil as a risky destination. The media also reports about efforts of the Brazilian military to eliminate mosquito populations and the fact that the mosquitos are less active in the Brazilian winter which is a weak argument for a highly sensible topic such as safety. Since safety is one of the most important image dimensions for holiday decisions, which is also indicated by the distribution of comments among the dimensions in this study (9% of comments are about safety, see Figure 3), the Zika virus imposes a tremendous shock on the destination image of Brazil that has negative consequences for its overall image (Àlvarez de la Torre & Rodríguez-Toubes Muñiz, 2013).

In the newspaper articles less statements are found that show the efforts of countering the perception of threat through terrorism than through the Zika virus. This could be done on purpose since, on the one hand, explanations of risk management measures like increased numbers of security staff or cooperation with foreign intelligence services can even accelerate the perceived level of risk (Toohey & Taylor, 2008). So far, South America has been unaffected by international terrorism and by regulating and monitoring the amount and type of information about security measures communicated to the public organizers try to keep tourists' fear of terrorism in Brazil on a low level. On the other hand, information about preventative measures to mitigate risks can create confidence and increase visitation (Schroeder et al., 2013). The implications for Brazil's destination image are unclear and would require further research. Still safety issues are a frequently discussed topic by the media and potential threats like the Zika virus impose a burden for positive images of a destination.

5.2.5 Socio-cultural Environment

For the category *Socio-cultural Environment* 45 evaluative statements were identified. Despite being the second least mentioned category it shows some results for image formation. The majority of statements found here are positive (73%) while only 27% are negative. This is a positive sign for Brazil since residents' protests, social evils and child prostitution were in the focus of international media before and during the Football World Cup in 2014. During mega events social movements gain power and technological access through global publicity and an increased impact of strikes for example (Tzanelli, Korstanke & Clayton, 2014). Another critical issue is the financial return on invested resources for mega events which requires local politicians and organizers to understand concerns and expectations of communities and to provide adequate long-term solutions (Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2006).

The results of the content analysis give rise to the assumption that Brazilian organizers have learned from the World Cup and succeeded in meeting the needs of residents. The newspaper articles report about strong community support for the Olympics and that this event displays a one-time opportunity to unite the nation and guide the way into a better future. Furthermore, cultural traits of samba, carnival and being a football nation strengthen associations of Brazil and reinforce existing destination images.

Another special topic in the articles is the fact that for the first time refugees will be participating for an Olympic instead of a national team at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. This does not directly influence Brazil's destination image but shapes the image of the Olympic Games and highlights values like equality, fairness and acceptance. As a destination and an event are co-branded by hosting a mega event, image transfer between the two takes place so that these values are transferred to the city of Rio de Janeiro and can affect its image positively as an open-minded, modern and fair destination (Deng & Li, 2013).

5.2.6 Natural Environment

The category *Natural Environment* is the smallest category in the content analysis and only revealed 35 statements. The distribution of positive and negative evaluations is close to equal. Therefore, it is assumed that this image dimension is hardly affected by the newspaper articles. The positive associations about the natural environment comply

with stereotypes about Brazil: beaches, palms, sunlight and the sugar loaf are mentioned and further established as typical parts of Brazil. The negative statements are all related to pollution and the lack of environmental protection. The stated objective to clean the bay where water sports competitions will take place during the Olympic Games is used negatively. The articles report that the Brazilian authorities ordered to only clean the water for the Olympics instead of introducing a long-term solution to improve water quality and to adequately dispose sewage. This dissemination stands in contrast to the perceived attributes of exotic nature, beautiful beaches and spectacular views that are used by the media to describe the attractions of Brazil and Rio de Janeiro. If the attention of the media would be drawn more often to the lack of environmental protection and its consequences, the destination image of Brazil could suffer significantly and the country could lose its image of untouched nature and fabulous beaches. Since the number of statements in this category in this content analysis is considerably lower than in others, it is assumed that the newspaper articles do not affect the natural destination image of Brazil on a wider scale.

6. Conclusion

This study assesses which destination images the media disseminates of a country or a city hosting a mega event using the example of Brazil and the Olympic Summer Games in Rio de Janeiro 2016. It is designed in order to add to the current knowledge on impacts of mega events on tourism destination images by the media in the pre-event phase. A conceptual framework was elaborated that shows media as an important mediator between events and destination image. In order to capitalize on the media opportunity given by mega events, tourism destinations should be aware of the branding power given by the media and develop measures to steer positive image formation. This is a process not concentrated on the (mostly short) duration of a mega event, but starts with the announcement of an event and can endure for years after the event has taken place. In the competitive tourism market, tourism destinations should be aware of the branding power while at the same time acknowledging the challenges implied by hosting a mega event like the Olympic Games. In the same way that mega events can positively shape destination image by reinforcing existing associations or creating new ones, weak organization, the external environment and unrelated incidents can negatively impact a

country's destination brand and can transform media exposure from a golden opportunity into tourism's worst enemy.

The most positive image component represented in the media is the *Intangible Environment.* It can be assumed to have the strongest positive impact on Brazil's destination image. Firstly, the ability of Brazilian organizers to host an international sports event may strongly enhance the destination image of Brazil on a functional and organisational level. Secondly, the positively described atmosphere resulting from the characteristics and behaviour of Brazilians strengthens associations and emotions with the tourism destination Brazil. The emotional level created by soft factors like hospitality, passion and joy of life are important for affective, evaluative images and can directly lead to travel wishes. Furthermore the appearance of famous tourist attractions in the articles makes people recall what to see and to do in Brazil but does not change its image. In order to extend Brazil's destination image away from common stereotypes, destination marketers should aim to create new perceptions. Hence, new target groups can be addressed and competitive advantages are created which are essential in order to avoid tourists' substitution of Brazil for other destinations.

In general, negative perceptions prevailed positive ones in the newspaper articles. In the context of mega events, this could be countered by tourism authorities actively engaging in public relations, especially through press trips and collaborations. Negative perceptions were particularly frequent in the image dimensions of *Developed Environment, Political and Economic Environment* and *Safety*. This shows that the concerns of tourists about functional and surrounding factors as well as security at destinations are reflected by the media. The three image dimensions are closely related as they represent the constraints that tourists perceive when considering Brazil as a tourism destination. Risk, instability and potential difficulties complicate tourism to Brazil and make it less attractive as a tourism destination since with increased risk and complications, quality of recreation and pleasure decrease.

By hosting the Olympic Games 2016, Brazil puts itself in the spotlight not only of sports media but general public media which leads to the fact that special attention is also given to the national situation unrelated to the mega event. This especially concerns the political and economic crisis Brazil is facing in 2016 and the potential impeachment proceedings surrounding President Dilma Rousseff. For tourists, political and economic

instability indicate potential travel difficulties and limitations, for example through strikes and demonstrations. This can impact the destination image of Brazil in such a way that travelling to Brazil appears less convenient, which in turn increases the probability that tourists decide against Brazil as their holiday destination.

Several of the findings support previous studies about destination image and mega events. The primary focus of event media is on organisational and functional aspects of event-related destination aspects. This was confirmed by the organization of the Olympics and infrastructure in Rio de Janeiro being one of the mostly discussed topics in the newspaper articles. Only journalists with positive perceptions of these aspects included destination characteristics like atmosphere on a wider scale. The main image components of Brazil represented in the German media were functional deficiencies, political and economic instability, organizational professionalism and safety issues.

7. Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

The study has a set of limitations that need to be considered when interpreting its results. Firstly, it has to be mentioned that destination image formation in the run-up to an international mega event can differ significantly from during the event. As soon as competitions start, media is focussed on athletes' performance and the host city and its touristic quality recede into the background. Besides, a major limitation of this study is its narrow time frame of two weeks. The collapse of a part of the cycle path in Rio de Janeiro was the prevalent topic and resulted in increased criticism of general functional quality of facilities. For example before the incident perceptions about Brazil's developed environment were far more positive than afterwards. It is unclear if the incident leads to long-term image change or only represents a temporary shock. Thus, the findings of this study are limited and partly biased by a single event. To overcome this limitation and to decrease the impact of a single event, further studies should be extended to a longer time frame. Additionally, a study after the event would enable the assessment if perceptions created previous to the event prevail after a mega sports event.

Secondly, it did not become clear if the media representations do have an effect on the destination images of tourists. In this study only media reports are assessed and possible image effects of pre-event news are analysed. To show how these reports influence the

tourism destination image of Brazil amongst Germans, interviews or surveys with potential tourists need to be conducted. However, based on the literature review it can be assumed, that the media representations do have an impact on tourism destination images, as this was confirmed in several previous studies. Thirdly, assessing the impact of media representations on tourism destination images, is not a holistic approach as there are several other destination image formation agents. These agents interact with one another. Therefore, assessing one agent individually is a major limitation. Further, only online news reports were looked at, excluding news reports in print, radio or TV. Fourthly, it remains unclear to what extent the media representations affect the country of Brazil or only the city of Rio de Janeiro. Fifthly, the words and phrases were categorised into image dimensions based on the subjective perception of the authors. This categorisation might differ if other authors had done this analysis.

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