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Sports Franchises as Catalysts for Tourism in an Urban Setting

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Sports Franchises as Catalysts for Tourism in an Urban Setting

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Submitted for the degree of PhD

Technological University Dublin

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Abstract

This research investigates the leverage of sports franchises by destination marketing organisations for their tourism potential. It adds to the literature in covering a hitherto under scrutinised field of tourism enquiry focusing on the role of globally renowned professional football teams as agents of tourism in the cities that host them. In doing so the study links theory to practice and provides policy makers with options for implementing initiatives in collaboration with sports franchises, resulting in benefits across the wider stakeholder environment.

Underpinned by a pragmatic philosophy, the research employs a mixed methods approach within a multiple case study design that provides a comprehensive understanding of the way sports franchises and destination marketing organisations interact in the tourism space. Drawing on a diversity of subject matter from existing literature, the transdisciplinary nature of the thesis is complemented by the case studies conducted in Amsterdam and Manchester that incorporate both qualitative and quantitative data.

The destination marketing organisations of the cities featured (in Amsterdam and Manchester) prove adept practitioners in the area of tourism leverage, but their efforts in co-opting the hugely popular football clubs in either city as objects of tourism leverage fail to fully grasp the tourism potential that these organisations represent. The research identifies elements of best practice and crucially the factors that hinder optimal leverage strategies when it comes to the use of major commercially oriented sports franchises. A compelling case is made for the leverage of these entities in

locations where the circumstances permit, with the research proposing a way forward under the guise of the framework for sports franchises leverage. The framework adds to the literature on tourism leverage and has significant implications for DMOs in providing a practical template characterised by its flexibility and applicability in wider settings.

The research is a first of its kind linking professional sports franchises to leverage and destination marketing. It enhances the literature in providing insights into how stakeholder theory, destination marketing, and cooperative marketing enjoy an almost symbiotic relationship in the tourism sphere. In focusing on the leverage of renowned football clubs it has implications for policy makers, sports franchises and researchers.

Declaration

I certify that this thesis which I now submit for examination for the award of PhD, is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others, save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

This thesis was prepared according to the regulations for graduate study by research of the Technological University Dublin and has not been submitted in whole or in part for another award in any other third level institution.

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Signature 

Date 21 January 2022

Acronyms and Abbreviations

A&P	Amsterdam and Partners
ACHIEV (model)	Administration Community Heritage Infrastructure Enterprise Visitor
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ATC	Australian Tourist Commission
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BskyB	British Sky Broadcasting Group
BT	British Telecom (broadcaster)
CBS	Central Bureau of Statistics (Netherlands)
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DMO	Destination Marketing Organisation
DMP	Destination Management Plan
ECOC	European Capital of Culture
EPL	English Premier League
ESPN	Entertainment and Sports Programming Network
FA	Football Association (England)
FIFA	Fédération Internationale de Football Association
GB	Great Britain

GCC	Gulf Cooperation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GVA	Gross Value Added
IAGTO	International Association of Golf Tour Operators
IOC	International Olympic Committee
IRB	International Rugby Board
KLM	Dutch National Airline
MCFC	Manchester City Football Club
MICE	Meetings Incentives Conferences and Exhibitions
MM	Marketing Manchester
MUFC	Manchester United Football Club
NBTC	Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions
NGO	Non Governmental Organisation
NL	Netherlands
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OTA	Online Travel Agency
PPP	Public Private Partnerships
RAI	Amsterdam Convention Centre
RDAP	Reactive Defensive Accommodating Proactive (scale)
SDI	Scale of Destination Image
SME	Small and Medium Sized Enterprises

SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
TALC	Tourism Area Life Cycle
UEFA	Union of European Football Associations
UK	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organisation
USA	United States of America
VICE	Visitor Impact Community Environment (model)

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Chapter One: Introduction to the Research

1.0 Introduction

Logic dictates that Destination Marketing Organisations whilst representing many stakeholders, should leverage a location's most visible assets to enhance the attractiveness of the destination at any given opportunity. This research adopts a case study approach focusing on two contrasting destinations that share the singular trait of being home to some of the world's most renowned sports franchises. Few human activities transcend traditional borders and culture more than association football. Its universal popularity, bolstered by increasing mediatisation, has given rise to the commodification of the sport as witnessed by the emergence of instantly recognisable brands such as the football clubs of Real Madrid, Barcelona and Manchester United. The global appeal of these sporting institutions imbues their host cities with a unique resource to be tapped. Amsterdam, in the Netherlands and Manchester, in the United Kingdom, are two such cities. Whilst one may be synonymous with culture and art (Amsterdam) it is also the birthplace of the Ajax football club, which once dominated European football. Manchester has been historically linked with the sport and only in recent years has seen its tourism stock rise. Its major football clubs, particularly the aforementioned Manchester United, have propelled the city onto the world stage and facilitated its coming of age as a tourism destination.

This research is primarily conducted through the prism of the destination marketing organisations or DMOs of Amsterdam and Manchester. It investigates the opportunity that each location's respective football clubs afford for leveraging the positive

elements of image with which they are associated in a tourism context. The thrust of the study is not necessarily to attract more sports tourists but to utilise an already established resource as a mechanism to enhance the destination's profile, or meet other strategic goals of the DMO. Ultimately, the goal of the research is to identify best practices within the tourism sphere and pinpoint opportunities where DMOs and sporting organisations may collaborate in order to further develop a destination's tourism appeal. In a wider context the study's findings surpass the geographical boundaries of the selected cases and can be considered relevant to other localities sharing similar characteristics.

This introductory chapter begins by highlighting the research context and briefly presents the study's main protagonists. Thereafter follows a synopsis of the work's theoretical underpinnings and an outline of the principal research objectives. The manner in which the research is conducted is subsequently summarised. The chapter then concludes with an overview of the thesis structure and its wider significance.

1.1 Context of research: Sports franchises and tourism leverage

Kurtzman and Zauhar (2003) describe the relationship between sport and tourism as a partnership linking the "world's largest social phenomenon" with the "world's biggest industry" (p. 41). Although seemingly unlikely bedfellows, sport, and football above all, directly contribute to the tourism ledger not only in encouraging mobility of supporters but in focusing the spotlight on destinations when major games or competitions occur.

El Clásico, the highlight of the Spanish footballing calendar featuring the games between Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, comes around twice a year but is an example of huge levels of media attention focused on these two cities that attracts the interest of practically every major global news outlet, and a live TV audience in the hundreds of millions. The game, suggests Vaczi (2013), is akin to a gladiatorial contest that pits teams who are the embodiment of their cities, regions and even countries against each other. On one side stands the Spanish Castilian establishment represented by Real Madrid in their legendary all white strip, whilst on the other the rallying cry for Catalan independence and other secessionist causes in FC Barcelona whose swashbuckling playing style and panache lend an air of legitimacy to such endeavours (Lopez-Gonzalez, Guerrero-Sole & Haynes, 2014). In a similar vein English football's greatest rivalry between Liverpool and Manchester United elicits enormous publicity across countries, time zones and even continents when these two foes face each other in competition (Harris & Sears, 2012).

Spain, home to two of the clubs mentioned earlier, is a well-endowed tourism destination and a traditional powerhouse within the travel sector. In 2019 it almost topped the rankings as the world's most visited country, just behind France, with a record number of 83 million foreign travellers gracing its shores (UNWTO, 2020). Such is the influx of visitors to Barcelona, many undoubtedly attracted by its sporting heritage, that the city finds itself in the throes of a tourism backlash and the subsequent social upheaval stemming from this hitherto welcome phenomenon. Amsterdam, not unlike Barcelona, could be deemed a victim of its own success when it comes to the travel sector. As a major European city, it has long held a fascination for visitors with a journey to the Dutch capital achieving rite of passage symbolism in some quarters.

In 2019, Amsterdam, a city of 850,000 people, welcomed 22.4 million unique visitors (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2020). In recent times the local government has sought to mitigate the impact of tourism on residents' quality of life. In particular, the authorities have explored the possibility of leveraging attractions in neighbourhoods that are found outside the city centre which has become synonymous with tourism, overcrowding and the subsequent stress foisted on local residents. One such district within the Amsterdam metropolitan area is the Arena neighbourhood located some eight kilometres to the south east of the centre that serves as the home of AFC Ajax (football club), based at the Johan Cruyff Arena. The stadium itself can accommodate 55,000 spectators and also hosts almost all friendly and competitive games of the Dutch national soccer team. The area is flooded with visitors on match days. Unbeknownst to many (especially visitors to Amsterdam), however, is the fact that the Arena district is also a vibrant neighbourhood in its own right. With a myriad of attractions, football aside, ranging from major concert venues to cinemas, shopping centres, restaurants and bars, the Arena district falls within easy reach of the city centre since it is well served by the modern urban transport infrastructure. As one of many such areas and towns in the greater Amsterdam region, the Arena neighbourhood has the potential to be pivotal in the municipal authority's strategy for dispersing tourists more equitably throughout the city and its hinterland. The effective leveraging of these areas would undoubtedly help in maintaining the many benefits, enjoyed by residents and stakeholders alike, that can be attributed to the tourism sector, whilst diminishing and subrogating the nuisance factor which has become an increasing concern over time.

Manchester, a city that until relatively recently was synonymous with being a manufacturing base and thereafter a byword for urban decay as its industrial age faded, undertook an ambitious programme of regeneration from the mid-1990s onwards. From being a tourism backwater its resulting renaissance has seen the city transformed into the second most visited large destination in England after London (VisitBritain, 2019a). Its attractions vary from highbrow to popular culture and historically it provided the backdrop for Marx and Engels to pen the *Communist Manifesto* yet on the world stage the city's important cultural patrimony is dominated by its association with football and the two clubs bearing the city's name. Here, a different aspect to leverage reveals itself. In a city that possesses much potential from a tourism perspective the question that begs answering is how such an intangible element, this association with football, might be distilled and exploited for the greater good.

The research focus on social phenomena and practices are rooted in and elucidated by the theoretical constructs that are elaborated upon in section 1.2 and chapter two.

1.2 Theoretical underpinnings

The study undertaken is multi-faceted and transdisciplinary in scope. Ideally, it could be categorised neatly into a specific discipline where a dearth of previous work in the domain clearly justifies scholarly investigation. The number of actors, interactions and overlapping foci touched upon in the research render it both complex and challenging. It should also be noted that the primary hall of knowledge where this research resides; the domain of tourism, is so wide-ranging that it confounds facile categorisation. Stakeholder theory, place, cooperative and destination marketing form the foundations

for situating this work within the wider field of enquiry, whilst the concept of leverage, and the different forms it assumes, under the guise of tourism, underpin the rationale for the study. It (leverage) is the fundamental construct that permeates all aspects of this work and serves to link its disparate parts.

1.2.1 Stakeholder theory

The term Destination Marketing Organisation (DMO), often erroneously confused with destination “management” organisation, can be applied to agencies, at any level, that are responsible for the marketing and promotion of an identifiable location (Wight, 2013). Examples of DMOs include government agencies, convention and visitor bureaus, travel associations and other bodies that encourage travel to and often investment in identifiable geographical locations (Hudson, 2003). Tourism destinations usually consist of an amalgam of diverse interests, ranging from a sometimes large variety of autonomous business entities and governmental bodies, to the local population directly or indirectly engaged in the practice. Visitors themselves who experience the totality of what a destination is offering, assess the efficacy of this delicately balanced equation that is often shaped by the travails of the DMO. The divergent needs of multifarious stakeholders necessitate an understanding on the part of the DMO that is expounded upon in research under the nomenclature of stakeholder theory. Edward Freeman (1984), an early champion of the concept, alludes to stakeholder theory as being most effective when a pragmatic approach is employed. He describes the concept as being critical to the survival of organisations but contingent on encouraging, maintaining and promoting support across the stakeholder environment. The purview of the DMO perfectly encapsulates the essence of

stakeholder theory since its own performance goals can only be achieved by accommodating the objectives of those within its sphere of influence (Butterfield, Reed & Lemak, 2004). Whilst the DMO formulates its own performance goals it is also beholden to its patrons, frequently covering a wide variety of interests ranging from the public to the private sector and its ultimate success or lack thereof may be subjectively viewed through this prism. In Amsterdam and Manchester these organisations (DMOs) operate within a delicate ecosystem of stakeholder interaction. The challenges and opportunities arising from this warrant significant scrutiny and consequently form an integral part of this study.

1.2.2 Place marketing

Place marketing is a worthy foil to the concept of stakeholder theory. Although a comparatively new phenomenon, indeed up until recent times the field was relatively fallow in terms of academic scrutiny (Pike, 2005), the practice shapes the activities of many DMOs and similar agencies. Place marketing combines principles and techniques utilised in traditional marketing scenarios to promote a specific location, yet differs from conventional marketing due to its holistic approach that seeks to target a broad range of market segments and stakeholders. It is essentially concerned with satisfying the needs and wants of all actors involved in the marketing initiative. From targeting tourists to managing the aspirations of local residents, businesses and governmental agencies, place marketing is broad in scope and attempts to enhance a location's profile and people's perceptions of that location for the benefit of all concerned (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). Kavaratzis (2004) portrays place marketing as being the strategic marketing of a nebulous intangible in contrast to

conventional marketing as being clearly linked to the promotion of specific goods and services. For the DMO, place marketing initiatives are seen as long-term endeavours requiring significant planning, input and resources. *Amsterdam & Partners* (the DMO of the city and an organisation of critical relevance to this study) successfully developed and implemented a place marketing campaign around the theme of the “I amsterdam” brand (Amsterdam Marketing, 2020c). This is further elaborated upon in chapters two and three. To a certain degree, place marketing remains an abstract construct and constitutes an activity that is frequently undertaken by DMOs in an almost subconscious manner. Collaborating with stakeholders, including the general public, to promote a destination in the tourism domain, is more apt to be recognised as cooperative or simply destination marketing. It could be said that the aforementioned are derivatives of place marketing, yet all are complementary and integrally linked across a wider spectrum when related to tourism. For place marketing initiatives to succeed in fostering acceptance common recognisable themes should emerge, with consensus, whilst the principal organisation charged with overseeing such initiatives is flexible to adapt, improve and anticipate conditions necessitating changes (Paddison & Biggins, 2017).

1.2.3 Cooperative marketing

Much like its aforementioned relative (place marketing), cooperative marketing depends on the effective collaboration of multiple actors for it to be fruitful. In contrast to place marketing, the participant profile is not so broad as to be all encompassing, but requires entities operating in the same or similar environment to engage in what some might consider a counter-intuitive process for mutual benefit. Tourism

destinations play host to a whole range of businesses and associations that directly or indirectly profit from the arrival of visitors. Many of these organisations are small privately held concerns managed by entrepreneurs attempting to eke out an existence with little or no access to resources, which would permit them to market their services adequately. Others may form part of multi-national conglomerates with recourse to extensive advertising budgets whilst alliances, usually in the form of DMOs, endeavour to promote the destination as a whole despite not selling a specific product or service themselves (Zach, 2012). In a complex eco-system of dependency and inter-dependency, these diverse protagonists may seek greater leverage and economies of scale through the pooling of knowledge, finance, expertise, leadership skills and other resources so as to push the destination forward in the hope that the aggregated effect of a collective effort will be advantageous to all. DMOs are seen to epitomise the concept of cooperative marketing and in many cases owe their very existence to its practice since they, as entities, have frequently been formalised following successful cooperative marketing campaigns (Pike & Page, 2014). Leverage, when applied to tourism, as demonstrated in Amsterdam and Manchester, relies heavily on cooperative efforts.

1.2.4 Destination marketing

The idea of creating an image or brand for a destination is one of the greatest challenges in the field of tourism (Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri & Kurtulus, 2008). In order to succeed, the brand should revolve around familiar, favourable, strong and unique associations. This is the principal task of the DMO whose efforts ultimately aim at blending divergent elements into a construct that will appeal to the stakeholders it

represents and attract a sufficient number of visitors in turn. The visitor should experience the destination in a manner consistent with the positioning strategy of the DMO. A successful strategy results in expectations being met or exceeded with the possibility of the visitor becoming a de-facto brand ambassador upon returning home (Papadimitriou, Kaplanidou & Apostolopoulou, 2015). In an extremely competitive environment destinations seek to differentiate themselves in order to gain an edge over rivals. The challenge from a purely marketing perspective is to identify and categorise the distinctive elements or attractions associated with a destination. These, in turn, may be incorporated into the brand image and act as pivotal pull factors in influencing the decision making process of the potential visitor (Dahiya & Batra, 2016). Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) refer to this as leverage. Events, trends and the prevailing *zeitgeist* render effective categorisation difficult and may even conspire to transform today's destination of choice into a locality to be avoided within a very short period of time. The cities chosen for this research, Amsterdam and Manchester, act as prime examples of destinations grappling with many of these issues that by extension add a further layer of complexity into the task of trying to unravel and make sense of the tourism environment from the researcher's perspective. Leverage and its use within specific tourism related contexts facilitate a clearer understanding of how DMOs operate in such competitive environments and is consequently hugely important to this work.

1.2.5 Leverage

Leverage in the business milieu is ostensibly derived from the disciplines of finance and strategic management (Kelly & Fairley, 2018). The normal associations made

refer to the leveraging of assets, be they financial, human or other and the practice of leveraged buyouts where a company is taken over by another entity that finances the purchase through a combination of debt and equity. The latter are frequently controversial since the collateral employed in such transactions is often the cash-flow or revenue of the company which is the proposed target of such a 'buyout' (Amess & Wright, 2012). In the tourism domain all destinations, whether inadvertently or not, are engaged in the practice of leveraging some or many aspects with which their locality is associated in order to attract visitors. These can range from the tried and tested, sun, sand and sea of many Mediterranean destinations to the more unconventional and questionable use of the recent painful history of a country such as Colombia, where a number of unscrupulous tour operators leverage the country's past association with drugs under the guise of narco-tourism (Naef, 2018). As a species, human taste is so varied as to offer a myriad of possibilities to destinations looking at pull factors to elicit the interest of potential visitors. Today's unorthodoxy may become tomorrow's staple. As such, tourism, despite its current importance, retains significant potential for expansion largely due to a non-exhaustive number of elements that lend themselves to the concept of leverage (Yeoman, 2012).

Where tourism and sport overlap, leverage has oft been associated with mega sporting events such as the Olympic games and the manner in which they might be exploited commercially, resulting in positive legacies for the host city or region. Hartman and Zandberg (2015) suggest that such legacies occur ante and post event, if effective planning and cooperation have been initiated in the early stages between concerned stakeholders in the organisational phase. They also posit that these legacies transcend economics. Laurence Chalip (2007, 2017) has championed the leverage of not only

sporting events, which have been the focus of much research, but sport franchises in the service of tourism. His (Chalip's) work on leverage provides much of the inspiration for this study that seeks to build on the foundations he and his associates have put in place. Sport and sporting events have long been considered and seen as effective drivers of in-bound tourism to destinations imbued with a certain sporting patrimony, or recognised as venues where specific activities may be practiced. St. Moritz in the canton of Grisons in eastern Switzerland owes its reputation as an upmarket destination of choice for the world's jet set due primarily to its extensive winter sports facilities ranging from downhill skiing, to the Cresta run and horse racing on ice amongst others (Barton, 2011). That it is located in the spectacularly beautiful Engadine valley only adds to its allure. Despite hosting many different visitor attractions, Daytona (USA) and Le Mans (France) are synonymous with motorsport and are examples of destinations effectively leveraging a very identifiable sport to enhance their appeal to the visitor. When originally envisioned neither city could have imagined that motorsport would become so pivotal but once established, whether by design or not, authorities and organisations quickly recognised the benefits of this association and have leveraged such ever since.

The focus of this thesis looks at another sport, football and destinations, as described earlier, which are home to some of the most famous sports franchises on the planet. The mega brands of Manchester United, Manchester City, Ajax of Amsterdam and others do not necessarily see themselves through the lens of tourism for they are at heart football clubs that are also immense commercial entities, who by default, in some cases, have outgrown their home bases in becoming iconic symbols of these cities recognised the world over. Leveraging these associations for wider benefits in such

locations is the challenge faced by the DMO but it also represents a serendipitous opportunity. This forms the basis for the research the aims and objectives of which are explained in the next section.

1.3 Aim of the research

This thesis is informed by the discipline of destination marketing, its complex relationships with different tourism practices, particularly the space covered by sports tourism and the potential for leverage afforded by major sport franchises in a locality. The central focus of the research is to determine whether a case can be made justifying the leverage of sports franchises for tourism ends and if so, the manner by which this might be achieved. Following an extensive review of the literature, outlined in chapter two, it became apparent that this field of enquiry has scarcely been the subject of serious academic investigation. It is hoped that the amalgamation of diverse themes in one body of work, hitherto having been more frequently scrutinised on a stand-alone basis, sheds some light on a relatively uncharted but noteworthy topic meriting further investigation by interested scholars.

The research is primarily conducted from the perspective of DMOs, or other similar cooperative entities within a city or region, whose purview is the promotion of said location as a tourism destination. The contextual background for the study incorporates the cities of Manchester (UK) and Amsterdam (NL) in a multiple case study format and deals with the questions of how, if, and even why the respective DMOs in each city might utilise the presence of globally recognised sports franchises in these locations as agents of tourism leverage. The Manchester based football clubs of United

and City are known the world over whilst Ajax of Amsterdam is the premier football club of the Netherlands. On the surface these are very different destinations that do, however, share some characteristics, the football clubs aside. Both face differing challenges in their ongoing relationship with a tourism sector that plays an increasingly important role in the daily lives of their citizens. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations of this thesis provide insights for policy makers in both cities and perhaps further afield.

A thorough examination of the literature resulted in themes emerging that warranted investigation in order to efficiently tackle and understand the complex issues inherent to both destinations. This understanding is essential in determining whether a case for leverage can be justified and informs the manner in which the research was conducted. These themes feed into the study's premise pertaining to leverage and constitute the study's de facto research objectives. They cover the following areas:

- An examination of the reasons behind the emergence of sports franchises as tourism products. The tourism credentials of the sports franchises come under scrutiny as do the manner by which they have assumed the characteristics of visitor attractors. An understanding of these aspects forms a vital starting point in providing a basis for leverage.
- Research into the long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal. For leverage initiatives to succeed the DMO requires stable enduring partnerships. It is therefore essential to consider whether the sports franchises fulfil such criteria within the tourism domain.

- Identifying the impact of the sports franchise on the perception of place and destination image. By default some sports franchises are imbued with place markers (as is the case in Manchester in the names of both major football clubs). The associations made between the sports franchise and its host city are investigated in some detail since these have the potential to determine the extent to which leverage is feasible.
- An examination of the relationship between Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and the sports franchises in each city. This is considered a prerequisite to initiating strategies involving leverage that require the consent and participation of the sports franchises.
- Insight on DMO interactions and engagement with stakeholders in their respective environments. The relationships that the DMO maintains and nurtures at an operational level are important predictors of its ability to garner cooperation for leverage purposes.
- An investigation of tourism leverage initiatives in both locations including the current state of play between the DMO and the sports franchises, with the stated objective of identifying best practice. Current and past examples of leverage actions undertaken under the tutelage of a DMO reveal experience in the field and speak of capacity to develop successful initiatives with the sports franchises.

These elements overlap and are in many respects complementary. The initial three looking specifically at issues surrounding the sports clubs are precursors to any subsequent suggestion of engaging them as leverageable assets in the conventional

sense. The following three elements examine the role of the DMO and the manner in which it relates to the football clubs along with other interested stakeholders. They also investigate whether leverage is already practiced plus its context. Finally, where current examples of effective leverage are identified, these together with other recommendations, are subsumed into a prototypical framework or model of best practice which is considered a fundamental objective of the study.

1.4 Overview of the research design

This section provides a brief overview of the methodological approach adopted for the study. A more detailed justification and explanation of the methodology employed is described in chapter four.

Given the complexity and characteristics of the research undertaken a multiple case study design was deemed the most suitable manner in which to proceed. Tourism lends itself well to this method and studies over time have produced work that is both methodologically sound and transparent in terms of the procedures followed in the gathering, analysing and storing of data (Xiao & Smith, 2006). The case study approach is particularly expedient when “how” and “why” questions are posed, as in this research (Yin, 2009) and where knowledge of the topic under investigation is lacking or incomplete, as highlighted by the review of the literature (Punch, 2005). The cities of Amsterdam (NL) and Manchester (UK) form the basis for the research and thus necessitated investigation separately before comparisons could be made. On first glance and whilst both attracting significant numbers of visitors annually, they have very different experiences as tourist destinations. Of tantamount importance to

this exploratory work, however, was the fact that they do share a critical characteristic, namely both being home to high profile football clubs. Thus, the research design selected results in theoretical rather than literal replication of findings based on this carefully tailored multiple case study approach (Yin, 1998).

Case studies by their very nature are prone to yield an abundance of rich contextual data. In this project a mixed methods framework was deployed to gather information in both quantitative and qualitative formats. A total of 17 in-depth semi-structured interviews were held with participants in the two locations and beyond. The key informants ranged from tourism practitioners to individuals associated with the football clubs, leading personnel of DMOs and academics interested in the field. An online pilot study was initially conducted to facilitate in developing appropriate survey items to be included in the subsequent visitor surveys. These involved intercepting actual visitors in the respective locations to ascertain, amongst others, the associations made between the location and football clubs or football generally along with the extent to which these variables played a role in influencing the decision to visit. In total these surveys garnered in excess of 1000 responses. Substantial quantities of archival evidence were gathered in a variety of formats ranging from DMO reports, to newspaper cuttings, and online media feeds. These helped in providing a broader and deeper context of the tourism environment and influence of the sports franchises prevalent in both cities. A content analysis study was also undertaken that examined the proprietary websites and social media platforms administered by the DMOs in both locations so as to gauge the efforts the latter made in leveraging their location's respective sports franchises (football clubs), or football generally, in the online space. The study also extended to other major European cities and acted as an interesting

benchmark in highlighting DMO strategies employing leverage as a tool. Finally, participant observation as a technique of investigation was also used sparingly but assiduously (Mackellar, 2013). The researcher's experience as a past and current sports tourist, plus his familiarity with the two cities, permitted corroboration of certain issues that emerged or indeed led to subsequent questioning the veracity of such. It was also critical in facilitating the formulation of appropriate survey items and establishing an informal protocol for the conducting of semi-structured interviews.

In this study, the multi-faceted approach taken to the research enabled triangulation of findings with the objective of limiting the impact of inherent biases characteristic of each method when considered individually. Were one single method used in the gathering of data the potential for erroneous reporting of events tends to increase. The use of multiple channels for the gathering and analysis of information only enhances the validity and reliability of this study's findings. Whilst the research was conducted prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 that exposed the tourism sector's susceptibility to external factors, the researcher is confident that the findings still hold true in the emerging post pandemic environment.

1.5 Significance of the study

This thesis lays the foundation for an area of academic enquiry, previously underserved, that transcends the normal boundaries of such and also appeals to the general public interest. The main protagonists of this research appear to make for unlikely companions. World famous football clubs, DMOs, and the destinations themselves are subjected to an in-depth investigation looking to discover whether

compelling evidence exists for employing sports franchises in the service of tourism as important agents of leverage. If such a determination were made, the benefits accruing could result in the enhancement of a destination's tourism appeal and a more prosperous visitor economy reflected in the betterment of the tourist experience and residents' quality of life.

The review of the literature covers a variety of subject areas that highlight the need for a more holistic approach in uncovering synergies that provide a logical basis from which to move forward. The work of Allan, Dunlop and Swales (2007) relating to Glasgow's "Old Firm" and its economic impact on the Scottish city acted as an initial catalyst for further investigation (p. 63). That seminal paper, coupled with the discovery of Chalip's (2004) forays into the field of leverage, underpins the research and facilitated in blending the work into a coherent narrative. Whilst sports tourism and destination marketing have spawned a large body of critically acclaimed academic work the consolidation of the disparate elements that concern this study, via the concept of leverage, is a critical first and long overdue breakthrough.

1.6 Structure of the thesis

The research follows standard norms for the format of a doctoral thesis. To follow a footballing metaphor it is essentially a work of two halves. The initial four chapters provide the context and background to the research with the final three chapters presenting the study's findings and their interpretation. The introductory chapter sets out the context and rationale for the research, briefly touching on issues that are dealt with in increasing detail as the work progresses. This is followed by a review of

relevant literature addressing a number of key areas of interest that provide both insights and justification for the study that is multi-disciplinary in nature. The literature review is followed by a chapter introducing the selected cases and their main protagonists that provides factual contextual information relating to both destinations. The first half of the research is brought to a close with chapter four and a detailed outline of the study's strategy of inquiry, including the research philosophy, methods adopted, along with explanations as to how data were collected and analysed. The second half of the study covers the research findings with chapter five communicating the results separately as individual cases before proceeding to the cross-case comparisons and discussion of chapter six. Here the findings are interpreted in relation to the literature with inferences made that address the principal issues. The thesis culminates in chapter seven where conclusions are drawn and implications based on a synopsis of the key findings provided. These lead to recommendations with an overview of the study's limitations and suggestions for future avenues of inquiry then rounding off the work.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

A comprehensive review of the literature is an essential undertaking for all research (Veal, 2006). It helps the researcher gain an insight into their chosen field positioning the knowledge in space and time thus pointing the way and laying down the possible rationale for further study by exposing the scope, breadth and depth of what has come before. In an era of information overload an academic literature review is more pertinent than ever in filtering out that which is of critical importance from that which might be interesting but is peripheral, incidental and non-authoritative in a particular field of study (Schultz, 2011).

A systematic examination of the literature aids in delimiting the boundaries of a subject, focuses the researcher on discovering the essential variables of relevance to their topic, identifies the most influential authorities within the field, exposes relationships between ideas, practices and theories, whilst highlighting the main methodological approaches that have been used in the past and revealing those which might be most appropriate for future research (Randolph, 2009). Essentially a thorough synthesis of the literature demonstrates the depth of the scholar's knowledge and exhibits their capacity for adding to that knowledge.

For the purpose of this study the literature review integrates a number of formats; historical as in tracking research in the field chronologically and conceptual, relating

theory to practice (Randolph, 2009). The phenomenon of tourism cuts across many disciplines that can render it difficult to interpret (Echtner & Jamal, 1997). It is hoped that the holistic approach described, facilitates analysis and leads to a clear understanding of the issues at hand whilst identifying those meriting further investigation.

This chapter is divided in two sections. The first considers topics forming the basis for understanding the theoretical frameworks that influence the work and operational environment of Destination Marketing Organisations. Such understanding is fundamental since it shapes much of the subsequent research that is primarily conducted with these organisations in mind. Stakeholder theory and how organisations interact and cooperate in developing appropriate marketing strategies are crucial in gaining a broader appreciation for the work of the DMO. This is reviewed in some detail, as are the concepts of destination image and place marketing that underpin the work of these organisations. The field of leverage through the prism of tourism is an equally salient factor in exposing the complexity of the task facing the DMO and how it applies appropriate tools and mechanisms to positively enhance the profile of the destination it represents.

The second section delves into areas that help define the rationale for the study. These include a brief introduction into how tourism has emerged as a recognisable practice over time and how its development has spawned different strands of activity and areas of interest. The field of sports tourism, under its many guises, but notably inspired by the popularity of football is of particular relevance to this work. The role of the sports

franchise and its association with destinations and in how they are perceived is also reviewed.

2.1 Section One: Tourism destinations and theoretical foundations

2.1.1 Selling the local globally

In Europe, and to a lesser degree in the United States, major sports franchises have deep roots in local communities (Abosag, Roper & Hind, 2010). Their stories often reflect the fortunes of these communities that have helped forge the reputation of their respective city or region. They become a part of the social fabric and nurture civic pride in people who see them as representations of their own dreams and aspirations (Herstein & Berger, 2013). On a wider scale, the folklore surrounding renowned sports franchises can imbue them with characteristics that capture the imagination and feed into a quality that is much sought by the contemporary traveller; that of authenticity (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). The latter is a much debated construct since it lends itself to the subjective, yet is eminently relevant to this study since the premise of this research leans very much on how organisations (DMOs) leverage what are essentially local authentic experiences as platforms with global tourism appeal. This section concerns itself with providing an overview of the complex environment linked to the effective marketing of tourism in locations where such activities are usually assumed by DMOs. The success of these endeavours depends on many variables that are further elaborated on in this chapter, but first a brief preamble is offered into the principal factors that have upended the tourism paradigm and indeed the place of sport in society. This is followed by what constitutes a destination.

With the onset of the digital age and the consequent ease of accessing information, the nature of tourism has been transformed. The mass tourism described by Urry (2002) depicting the crowded promenades of Blackpool in the early 20th century or the packed

beaches of Spain's *costas*, has been disrupted by rapid technological advancement. The information age, improved transport links and visitor congestion in many traditional destinations have ushered in an era where travellers seek more unique, authentic and bespoke experiences. In an increasingly homogenised world, the aforementioned stimuli have combined to fundamentally revolutionise, amongst others, the tourism accommodation sector. The sharing economy (Avdimiotis & Poulaki, 2019) has permitted the emergence of platforms such as AirBnB and HomeAway; companies positioning themselves in the marketplace catering to the needs of a better informed and more demanding public. Large hospitality chains have adjusted their business models in an attempt to meet these same demands in the face of such stiff and nimble competition that has grown exponentially over the last decade. In response to the transformed requirements of the visitor, DMOs too have adjusted the market offering and adapted to embrace the concept of "glocalisation", described by Soulhard, McGhehee and Stern (2019, pp. 91-104) as designing experiences that celebrate the local cultural context while also taking the traveller's worldview into consideration. The sport of football and its most famous protagonists are no strangers to this concept and have ridden this technological wave negotiating media broadcasting rights that have propelled the sport into the global spectacle it has become today (Curley & Roeder, 2016).

2.1.2 The nature of destinations

Scholars have long been at loggerheads when considering the elements that constitute a destination (Framke, 2002; Pearce, 2014). Hall (2008) defines a destination as the geographic location to which a person is travelling. The importance of any

geographical unit as a tourism destination is determined by three prime factors: attractions, amenities, and accessibility, which are sometimes referred to as tourism qualities of the destinations. Hall (2008) further describes a tourist destination as a geographical area of viable territorial scale where tourism is a predominant activity both from a demand side (tourists) and a supply side (consisting of infrastructural developments and local employment opportunities). Destinations should provide a mix of appealing products complemented by sufficient services in order to attract the visitor. Some locations find this problematic due to spatial, logistical or environmental constrictions whereas others enjoy a surfeit of services to meet most demands.

Where challenges arise, human ingenuity occasionally provides the solution. The Lascaux caves in France depicting some of the oldest paintings known to man have been closed to the public since 1963 yet the innovative use of technology has ensured that the site in southern France remains one of the most visited tourist attractions of the region. A complete replica has been built to scale close by where visitors, aided by technology, engage in a rich interactive experience. Likewise, in Amsterdam, a city struggling to cope with tourist numbers, the Anne Frank house/museum is unable to adequately satisfy visitor demand. As an alternative, the facility provides a virtual tour of the house that can be accessed online from any location. Such developments further cloud the issue as to what constitutes a destination. People travelling to a destination will always attempt to imbue it with a perceived boundary. In the case of a small island this boundary is physical and clearly visible whereas in other cases the boundaries may be political, administrative or market-oriented in nature (Kotler, Bowen & Makens, 2013). The increasing use of technology, interactive online experiences and virtual or augmented reality transcend such boundaries. The ethically sound development of

tourism products for the future is likely to be shaped by serious environmental concerns and as such technological evolution could quite plausibly form the basis by which destinations will be defined in the coming decades (Yeoman, 2012). For an experience to be memorable it must lend itself to the emotional and immersive factors that engage the individual. Although not carbon neutral, virtual tourism is evolving to the point where it triggers the senses yet is relatively benign in terms of its environmental impact (Martins, Goncalves, Branco, Barbosa & Bessa, 2017).

Medway and Warnaby (2008) describe destinations as multi-faceted and the sum of many parts. Image, brand, perception, history, culture, residents and physical attributes all play a role in this complex hierarchy. No two destinations are identical but all share common characteristics. A destination is the amalgamation of both tangible and intangible factors. Its ability to influence the well-being of the visitor is abstract to a level of being practically unquantifiable yet individual feelings of well-being interpret the experience whether that be prior to visitation, during, or post visit (Reitsamer & Brunner-Sperdin, 2017).

Tourism destinations and the agencies involved in promoting them need to clearly identify the market offering including the more ambiguous intangible elements. Effective marketing plays a huge role in this effort and is further complicated in the case of the DMO as it seeks to gain competitive advantage in a crowded marketplace whilst simultaneously placating the interests of its many stakeholders.

2.1.3 Insights on stakeholder theory

Whilst the traveller may, if they so choose, experience tourism as a solitary pursuit, the development of products and concepts associated with tourism often involve the goodwill and cooperation of multiple partners. The ability of destinations to provide the visitor with an experience that is noteworthy and appreciated is predicated on the level of stakeholder cooperation according to Gopalan and Narayan (2010). Freeman's (1984) work focusing on the collaboration amongst partners (stakeholder theory) in complex business and organisational environments warrants particular attention from tourism scholars, particularly those investigating the nature of destinations and the characteristics that define them.

Given the fragmented configuration of tourism destinations it comes as no surprise that organisations are commonly put in place in order to actively promote and market the destination at the behest of a diverse set of interests. These interests range from commercial entities actively involved in the tourism sector to those on the periphery and governmental agencies, often fulfilling a regulatory role. It could be argued that amongst all interested stakeholders the most important, and frequently overlooked, are the residents of a destination whose attitudes and interaction with the visitor play a critical role in how a location is experienced and the extent to which the promotional efforts on its behalf are successful (Epp, 2013). The agency normally charged with this task is the DMO and its main objective is not simply to successfully promote a location but to do so in a fashion that meets with the satisfaction of all stakeholders.

Edward Freeman (1984) devised a theory based on organisational management and business ethics that has struck a chord with many practitioners in the field of destination marketing and management. Freeman described a stakeholder as any individual or group that can affect, or is affected by the operations of an organisation. His stakeholder theory posits that the success of an organisation is dependent on its ability and willingness to strive towards producing positive outcomes for all actors associated with it. A significant challenge in applying the theory to a practical setting derives from the stakeholders themselves and their diversity of objectives, which may differ to that of the focal organisation. In order to mitigate the potentially negative consequences of such, Freeman (1984) argues that it was incumbent on organisations to recognise the diversity of requirements within the stakeholder environment. In its earliest iterations proponents suggested that survival of the organisation was the primary objective whereas Freeman in his seminal work, *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*, (published in 1984) advocated that a pragmatic application of the theory in management would lead to both a successful and sustainable organisation rather than one that simply survived. Stakeholder theory was held up as an ethical alternative to Friedman's assertion (1970) that the core role of a business is to serve the interests of its investors and shareholders. This can only be done by maximising profits and shareholder value. Advocates of stakeholder theory took great umbrage at such declarations but do include shareholders as one of a plethora of interests that must be considered in ensuring organisational survival and success.

A focus of Freeman's work related specifically to the external environment of an organisation and its relationship with it (Wolfe & Putler, 2002). The argument went that the *raison d'être* of a company was to serve some requirement of its external

environment, which was described as dynamic thus demanding, as a fundamental principle, that management continually monitored and responded to changes within it. Freeman's work soon spawned mutations of his theory described by Laplume, Sonpar and Litz (2008) as "descriptive, normative and instrumental" (p. 1159). All relate to the manner in which organisations behave i.e. descriptive being "how" they behave, normative looking at how they "should" behave with instrumental monitoring how behavior "impacts" on performance. Donaldson and Preston (1995) argue that the three were interrelated and complementary. Normative stakeholder theory provides the ethical foundations for how organisations should behave, much championed by the concept's progenitor, Freeman, but the evidence suggests that efforts to satisfy one group of stakeholders invariably comes at the expense of others. Instrumental stakeholder theory is therefore essential in highlighting the connections, should they exist, between an organisation's behavior and its impact on others. In advocating a broader version of stakeholder theory Egels-Zanden and Sandberg (2010) almost return full circle incorporating elements of Friedman's 1970 treatise to suggest that instrumental stakeholder theory can only be effective, in a commercial environment, if at its base, is the objective of maximising shareholder wealth.

2.1.3.1 Stakeholders: Why?

The heart of stakeholder theory implies that a broad diversity of interests is catered to. The actual term, stakeholder, and how it is defined appears equally broad and is subject to dispute in certain quarters. Freeman's (1984) theory is reflective of an environment where practically anyone with even a tenuous link to an organisation can affect its ability to function optimally, a particularly challenging assertion for DMOs where

multiple interests are in play due to the diversity of the stakeholder environment. Others, including Laplume et al. (2008), believe that such an interpretation of the concept is unrealistic in that it extends responsibility beyond the reasonable and thus implicitly undermines the approach advocated. Harrison and Chalip (2005) imply that stakeholders, by their very nature, have something at stake that can be defined in a relatively straightforward manner; an element of value, be it human, physical or financial that is essentially at risk and not necessarily at the stakeholder's own volition, although this would ideally be the case. Risk becomes pivotal to the dynamics of stakeholder theory since those with more at risk may seek greater influence within or over the focal organisation.

Tourism destinations constitute a diversity of interests reflecting equally diverse levels of risk as alluded to by Harrison and Chalip (2005). Freeman (1984) addresses the issues of risk with the caveat that the stakeholder's understanding of its risk will most likely differ from that of the focal organisation. This raises concerns as to how resources are allocated, the level to which stakeholders are involved in or allowed to influence decision making, the treatment of stakeholders and whether adequate mechanisms exist for highlighting their concerns. The focal organisation should endeavour to recognise how others define their stake and understand the criteria by which their requirements are met in the knowledge that different strategic issues determine the level to which stakeholders perceive risk (Bryson, 2004).

Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) described stakeholders as cooperative, competitive or threatening; each presenting distinctly different challenges. Further categorisation

suggests that the voluntary or involuntary nature of their interaction with the focal organisation must be acknowledged. The hosting of the world cycling championships in Harrogate, Yorkshire, in 2019 may be cited as an example where initially cooperative local residents (voluntary stakeholders) turned adversarial due to the mismanagement of public spaces by the organisers, resulting in long-term damage to property and public amenities. The now involuntary stakeholder citizens have rejected overtures from the organising body to host future events in the town (Leeming, 2019). Whilst mutually beneficial collaboration is the preferred outcome of stakeholder theory, organisations are frequently motivated to engage with other stakeholders based on what Skinner (n.d.) describes as negative reinforcement whereby the focal organisation consciously engages with stakeholders in order to avoid negative consequences such as a loss of support or potential retribution. This is an especially salient point for DMOs who often find themselves at the whims of political developments that can result in unforeseen consequences affecting operations.

According to Scherer and Patzer (2011) stakeholder theory takes on very pluralistic overtones in terms of addressing ethical concerns related to the management of an organisation that is involved with others in producing a desired end. In reality gathering interested parties around a table or seeking to forge alliances with such is no guarantee of success. An understanding of different yet related constructs is essential in ensuring objectives are met. The focal organisation should be literate with the tenets of game theory whereby a set of stakeholders performs a number of actions resulting in some form of reward or payoff (Sheng, 2011). It should also take into account social exchange theory. Closely aligned with rational choice theory, social exchange theory emphasises the social characteristics of cooperative exchanges such as an anticipation

of reciprocity, the expected elevation of status or recognition, influence over others, altruism and the perception of efficacy plus direct rewards (Ward & Berno, 2011). It is also crucial that an organisation, and for the purposes of this study, a DMO, is fully familiar with resource dependency theory in order to identify the strategies stakeholders may employ in attempting to influence an organisation. At its base resource dependency theory, within the wider stakeholder environment, suggests that each actor possesses different resources which form the basis of power. As a consequence of this organisations are co-dependent because of different attributes due to their divergent environments. In a resource-based relationship power is thus contingent on the level of dependency which can vary widely (Nienhüser, 2008). The work of Frooman and Murrell (2003) describes how stakeholders can either directly or indirectly influence an organisation through the control of resources, again painfully relevant to the DMO where resources are often limited. Their work, however, fails to consider stakeholders who, due to a lack of such and thus, power, are incapable of influence yet are still impacted by decisions taken by the focal organisation.

Trunfio and Della Lucia (2019) have most recently suggested that application of stakeholder theory, in its truest form, creates value in generating intangible outcomes ranging from improved reputation of organisations, mutual loyalty, and enhanced organisational performance. These intangibles provide the basis for competitive advantage, particularly in the realm of destination management, and are founded on trust and cooperation. Hahn (2012) supports this with the assertion that the manner in which an organisation interacts with individual stakeholders engenders a circular affect that influences the entire stakeholder environment of the focal organisation but maintains that trust, recognition and reciprocity are pivotal to the success of such. In

his initial treatise Freeman (1984) emphasised that the successful adaptation of his theory should be based on the voluntary participation and inclusion of all stakeholders. In practice this may be difficult to achieve but he further argues that the focal organisation should undertake to satisfy, of its own accord, the interests of affected stakeholders since only then can it motivate them to engage effectively and voluntarily with one another. De Bakker and den Hond (2008) note that effective engagement of actors within the stakeholder environment is determined by the focal organisation's perception of each stakeholder's salience, an issue addressed in section 2.1.3.2.

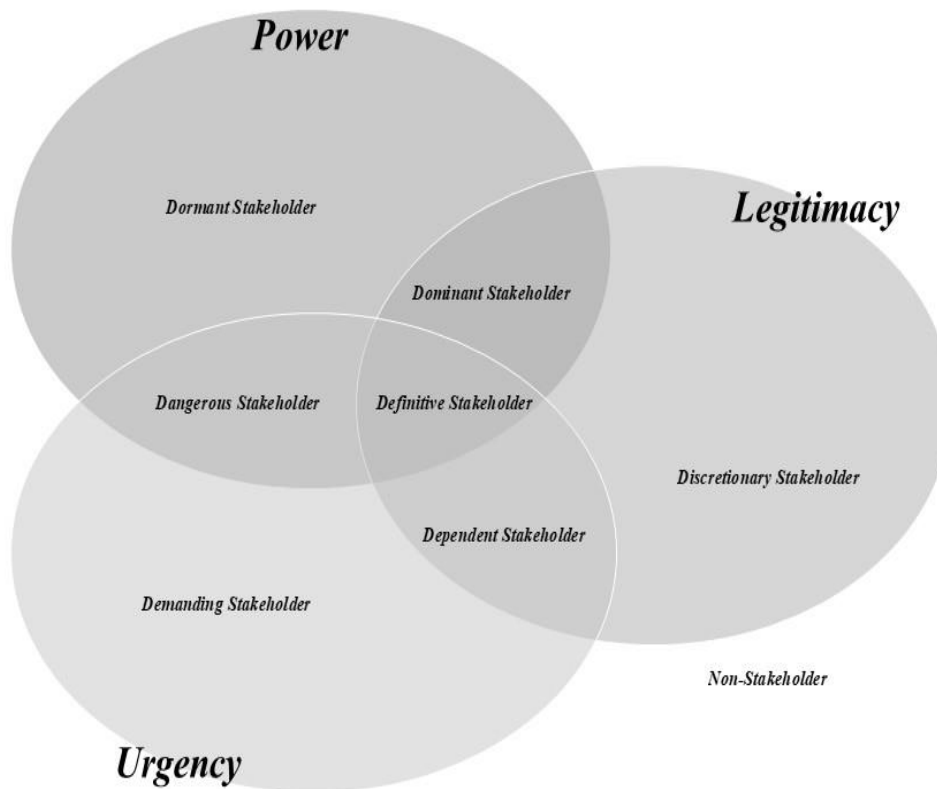
2.1.3.2 Stakeholder Salience

“If a primary stakeholder withdraws its support of an organisation, the organisation will cease to exist” (Clarkson, 1995, p.106). This assertion, if true, is a determining factor in how organisations interact, ignore or cooperate with others in achieving individual and collective goals. Normative understandings of stakeholder theory respect all actors as being significant. Instrumental interpretations of the theory recognise that organisations cannot necessarily accommodate the interests of all stakeholders due to logistical and resource limitations. This conjures up the issue of defining how organisations differentiate between stakeholders in terms of their importance, not only in achieving the organisation's objectives, but also in understanding the degree to which each stakeholder values its contribution to said objectives. In the case of a tourism destination, with such a complex ecosystem of interested parties, the DMO is charged with the task of firstly identifying the principal actors and subsequently prioritising their role in terms of importance (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

The process of identification and prioritisation of partners is known as stakeholder salience and a much cited model was developed by Mitchell, Agle and Wood in 1997. The aforementioned researchers' seminal piece of work based the level of stakeholder salience on three distinctive attributes; power, legitimacy and urgency. These determine the stakeholder's perceived ability to cooperate with and threaten the focal organisation. Power is described as the extent to which a stakeholder can impose its views on an organisation. Often this is resource based. Legitimacy is defined by Mitchell et al. (1997) as being socially constructed and favourable based on a set of acceptable norms, values and beliefs. The third attribute, urgency, refers to time sensitivity and how a stakeholder's stake is determined by its association with time and agency. The model (see figure 2.1), as designed by Mitchell and his associates, was a tool to assist management in allocating resources efficiently. It categorised stakeholders based on the extent to which they exercised the aforementioned attributes. A party possessing all three was considered a definitive stakeholder and as such should be accorded a high priority status and one not to be ignored. Such an entity is perceived as legitimate in exercising its power. Moderate priority actors, known as expectant stakeholders, were said to cover two of the three attributes whilst latent stakeholders, possessing but one characteristic, were considered low priority. Definitive stakeholders aside, the other stakeholder types lent themselves to further sub-categorisation. Expectant stakeholders could be considered as dominant, dangerous or dependent whilst latent stakeholders were sub-divided into dormant, discretionary or demanding. Even within sub-categories varying degrees of priority may be recognised. Mitchell et al. (1997) referred to demanding stakeholders, possessing the characteristic of urgency, as akin to insects that can be bothersome on occasion but not meriting much consideration from management in making decisions.

Figure 2.1

Stakeholder Typologies



Note: Adapted from Mitchell, R.K., Agle, B.R., & Wood, D.J. (1997). Toward a theory of stakeholder identification and salience: Defining the principle of who and what really counts. *Academy of Management Review*, 22(4), 853-886.

Over the course of time stakeholder identification and salience has been tested and supported empirically by numerous studies across a wide variety of disciplines. Conaty and Robbins (2018) recognise its importance in the effective management of non-profit organisations. Weitzner and Deutsch (2015) take a slightly different perspective on the issue of salience placing it in the context of motivation and social influence in

prioritising the stakeholder role whilst Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) clearly highlight its importance to tourism destinations and the management, including the marketing, of such.

Some studies have advocated management strategies that respond to stakeholder needs based on the reliable identification of their importance. The RDAP scale developed by Clarkson (1995) describes how organisations interact with others within their sphere of influence in terms of being reactive, defensive, accommodating or proactive. Others conclude that focal organisations engage with interested parties based purely on the latter's ability to threaten or cooperate with the organisation. From the tourism and destination marketing perspective this is a field of much interest and indeed provides a framework by which DMOs organise their efforts (Epp, 2013).

2.1.3.3 Stakeholder theory in tourism

Tourism locations range in size and complexity. The city-break phenomenon (Dunne, Buckley & Flanagan, 2007) with major cities appealing to the time strapped visitor occupy the complex end of the tourism location spectrum. Cities invariably offer a wide breath of attractions and services that involve a considerable swath of providers and stakeholders. For the tourism offering to be successful DMOs engage with respective stakeholders to greater or lesser degrees depending on their previously described levels of saliency. Stakeholder engagement and some adaptation of stakeholder theory is apparent in the operational environment of most DMOs. Numerous studies have focused on stakeholder engagement and the role of the DMO whilst others take the perspective of how decisions are made in destinations lending

themselves to such complex interactions. Epp (2013) takes the view that the good governance of DMOs and their performance is dependent on the impact of stakeholder engagement and highlights the absolute necessity of clear communication within the process. Trunfio and Della Lucia (2019) talk of stakeholder intangibles and how building trust ultimately results in competitive advantages. Carr and Liu (2016) attempt to measure stakeholder perspectives in relation to social and environmental stability in tourism dependent economies, whilst for Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) exploring stakeholder identity in tourism destinations is fundamental to developing appropriate management strategies.

Stakeholder theory is particularly prominent in studies linking tourism with sustainable development. Despite recent practices and accusations of greenwashing when it comes to travel and tourism, many destinations are acutely aware of the potential degradation of the environment in which they operate (Zhang, Ritchie, Mair & Driml, 2018). Environmental issues often result in real social problems such as is the case with one of this study's major protagonists; the city of Amsterdam. It is therefore almost expected that DMOs adopt an approach that recognises the issues and mitigates negative impacts where and when possible. The involvement of stakeholders in fostering pro-environmental behaviour within tourism has also been the subject of much scrutiny. Byrd (2007) suggests that stakeholder involvement is pivotal in encouraging sustainable practices for both present and future tourists as well as the host communities. Researchers at the then Dublin Institute of Technology (Flanagan, Griffin, O'Halloran, Phelan, Roe, Burke, & Tottle, 2007) developed a dynamic model of sustainable indicators in tourism destinations that relied heavily on stakeholder engagement. Across the globe the continued expansion of the tourism sector raises

serious issues of sustainability reflected in the work and concerns of researchers internationally.

Few studies have been undertaken whereby sports franchises are considered as vital stakeholders in the domain of tourism, although Chalip, (2006) along with Sparvero (2007) and O'Brien (2007), frequently makes the case for them to be included and leveraged as pivotal actors in destinations where a rationale exists to do so. How DMOs engage with these actors for mutual benefit and that of others on a destination wide level is one of the principal foci of this thesis. A firm understanding of stakeholder theory should facilitate the DMO in identifying the characteristics inherent to the sports franchise forming the basis for a relationship that prioritises the role of the latter when required (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). It is not uncommon for DMOs to actively promote frequent interaction between different stakeholders in order to develop a network of interconnected parties who recognise and value each other's contribution (Mistilis, Buhalis & Gretzel, 2014). In locations where conditions are favourable sports franchises could be introduced into such networks so as to stimulate an environment of familiarity and trust.

2.1.3.4 Limitations of stakeholder theory

Stakeholder theory appears particularly apt to the realm of the DMO and that of managing and marketing a destination. It has been suggested (consciously or subconsciously) that practically all such organisations utilise this approach in some format, which essentially proffers the question as to whether it is simply a management strategy (McComb & Boyd, 2017). Key (1999) considers it to be a valuable tool in

strategic management but argues that it fails to provide an adequate theoretical basis in explaining the behaviour of organisations. Loi (2016) lauds stakeholder management as a core competence of organisations that work in challenging business environments characterised by different value systems. He (Loi, 2016) contends that with no two environments identical, stakeholder theory provides a set of parameters to consider, but that its application restricts standardisation and thus broader replication. Other critics point to stakeholder theory being borne out of an American cultural context that is not universally applicable (Hansen, Bode & Moosmayer, 2004). Despite increasing globalisation, diverse cultural contexts necessitate different approaches although advocates provide evidence for its successful application in countries ranging from Australia to the Netherlands (Hansen et al., 2004; Heugens, van den Bosch & van Riel, 2002).

Prior to the development of the stakeholder saliency framework (Mitchell et al., 1997), the original theory of Freeman (1984), whilst critically acclaimed, lacked what Laplume et al. (2008) termed “practical significance” (p. 1161). By so broadly describing the stakeholder environment as anyone within that arena who could influence or be impacted by the behaviour of the focal organisation, Freeman’s theory, in failing to identify the levels of stakeholder importance, did not lend itself to empirical testing. Mitchell et al. (1997) filled this glaring omission with the development of their stakeholder typology model. The model has been applied and tested in a wide variety of economic sectors ranging from agriculture and finance to construction and tourism (Khurram, Pestre & Charreire-Petit, 2019). It is widely recognised as making an important contribution to management literature yet some limitations remain. In a more contemporary context stakeholder theory is very much

likened to the notions of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and business ethics (Jahn & Bruhl, 2018), both concepts that build upon the framework as set out by its progenitor, Freeman.

2.1.4 Place marketing

From the perspective of tourism destinations, place marketing plays a fundamental role underpinning actionable marketing strategies whether geared for an internal or external audience. It could be considered complementary to stakeholder theory since its effectiveness is contingent on stakeholder consensus (Boisen, Terlouw, Groote & Couwenberg, 2018). Place marketing combines principles and techniques utilised in traditional marketing scenarios to promote a specific location yet differs from conventional marketing due to its holistic approach that seeks to target a broad range of market segments and stakeholders. Place marketing is about satisfying the needs and wants of all actors involved in the marketing initiative. From targeting visitors to mediating the aspirations of residents, businesses and governmental agencies, place marketing is broad in scope and attempts to enhance a location's profile and people's perceptions of that location for the benefit of all concerned (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). Kavaratzis (2004) describes place marketing as being the strategic marketing of an abstract intangible in contrast to conventional marketing as being clearly linked to the promotion of specific goods and services. Others, including Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993) consider the concept of place from a good-dominant logic perspective, whereby it is a value embedded amalgamation of products that constitute a competitive advantage in the global marketplace. This view has been challenged by a number of scholars. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) contend that place marketing differs greatly

from marketing in the traditional sense due to special characteristics ranging from its complex nature, the variety of its products, the necessity of stakeholder involvement and the logistical challenges pursuant to such. It also deviates from the more abstruse concept of place-making that is practitioner led and linked more closely to urban development and management (Dupre, 2019). Morrison (2010) along with Pike and Page (2014) argue that the uniqueness of places precludes the option of applying the standard marketing mix (comprising product, price, place and promotion) in developing appropriate marketing strategies. The more holistic tourism marketing mix, incorporating a broader array of elements, is deemed a more appropriate tool in facilitating the development of coherent place marketing initiatives.

Products have long been associated with places. Champagne and Scotch whiskey are clearly two such products with strong links to certain regions yet it could be argued that neither product, particularly in the case of Champagne, conjures up any real connotation of place. Likewise, foodstuffs such as pizza, and pasta are synonymous with Italy whereas Parma ham enjoys legal protection as a product that can only be manufactured in that particular region (Fernandez-Barcala, Gonzalez-Diaz & Raynaud, 2017). Similarly, wine regions throughout Europe employ quality control systems whose other primary purpose is to delimit the area or place within which wines are produced. Other products may be imbued with place characteristics. The example of the quintessential Swiss watch matches the product firmly in the psyche with Swiss characteristics of reliability, attention to detail and expense. The ubiquitous Irish pub is similar in that it evokes images or sentiments specifically related to one country or place. There are also many instances where the product is an actual place or location.

Real estate companies are in the business of selling locations to which they often attribute an invariably positive intangible essence of place.

2.1.4.1 Place marketing research

Although a relatively modern phenomenon, as witnessed by the paucity of academic literature in the field (Pike, 2005), the marketing of place has a long history (Ashworth & Voogd, 1994) with Barke (1999) and Kavaratzis (2004) suggesting that the practice of place marketing has progressed over time and is an ever evolving arena of inquiry. Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) echo the sentiments of other researchers suggesting that place marketing is not a new phenomenon but covers a sector that has been practitioner led for much of its existence. National and regional bodies, with the assistance of consultancy firms, have long been engaged in the practice. Place marketing has given rise to an increasing volume of academic literature but this in itself is relatively recent. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) conducted a state-of-the-art review of the topic that highlighted a quite dramatic increase in interest from 2009 onwards. In fact, their study purported to show that the number of academic papers published on the subject in one year, 2009, being the equivalent sum of all papers published in the preceding decade. Despite this dramatic increase in output, and not unlike stakeholder theory, place marketing is still viewed with suspicion in some quarters as a field worthy of academic investigation. That is not to say that the subject is considered uninteresting, but relates to the struggles within the research community of producing work in the domain leading to empirically testable hypotheses that lend themselves to generalisations. Ultimately, this concerns the development of a generally acceptable theory of place marketing (Skinner, 2008).

A number of criticisms are levelled at the field. Firstly, there appears to be a dearth of evidence-based research that can measure the impact or success of place marketing campaigns. The practitioner led approach, often conducted at the behest of public authorities, through the medium of consultancy firms, singularly fails to produce verifiable evidence that can accurately measure effectiveness (Niedomysl, 2004). Secondly, case studies have previously populated the literature. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) claimed that up to 65% of all academic papers on the subject were comprised of qualitative descriptive papers that covered one to three cities or regions. Although presumably a suitable approach, particularly when concerned with idiosyncrasies of places, these studies may not form a legitimate basis for the development of a suitable framework to be deployed in the testing of hypotheses. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, the multi-disciplinary nature of place marketing has added to the confusion and resulted in scholars considering its origins from different perspectives. Lucarelli and Berg (2011) mention these as being spatial, where the resulting work is empirical or critical, in contrast to a purely marketing starting point advocating a conceptual or prescriptive approach. The disciplinary crossover inherent in place marketing can be both frustrating and advantageous. Frustrating in that there is increased room for confusion due to these different starting points, terminologies and theoretical frameworks, whilst advantageous in that it involves a range of disciplines that only add to the depth and richness of studies undertaken in the domain. Lastly, one of the most serious supposed weaknesses in this area is the reticence of some researchers to advance generalisations based on their works. The perceived lack of confidence in doing so hints at this being an area of scholarly inquiry lacking maturity and at risk of stagnation (Niedomysl, and Jonasson 2012).

Boisen et al. (2018) suggest that, despite much work accomplished, there remains some confusion as to what place marketing actually entails. They put forward the notion that the literature has been devoid of a common understanding and that place branding, place promotion and place marketing are often used as synonyms. The nomenclature was thus seen as interchangeable with repercussions for policy formulation, as well as for the development of a coherent theoretical conceptualisation in the field. The subsequent conceptual confusion lies perhaps not at the feet of academics but is rooted in the practitioner led efforts of cities or regions operating in increasingly competitive environments. Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2008) posit that place marketing is so broad as to encompass both branding and promotion, but in a much wider context and is most significantly characterised by representing a shift towards a customer centric approach. Boisen et al. (2018) contend that place marketing, place promotion and place branding are, in fact, three distinct concepts that whilst closely aligned, have different objectives that require different approaches. The aforementioned researchers attempt to address the conceptual confusion describing place promotion as supply-driven, place marketing as demand-based and place branding as identity-driven. Somewhat contentiously they claim that the relationship between these three concepts should be considered successional, and that whilst place marketing takes precedence over place promotion (often momentary time sensitive reactions to supply), both are subordinate to place branding which by its very nature influences place in its entirety. Place branding, it is said, requires a broad and complex support base in a location which transcends that required for place marketing or promotion. Boisen et al. (2018) in reframing these concepts provide a framework for practitioners and academics alike in undertaking more pertinent structured studies and developing effective strategies. Ashworth (2000, 2010) along with Kavaratzis and

Ashworth, (2007) write extensively on these issues and recognise the importance, relationships and interdependence of each. Where their work differs is in the interpretation of place branding and place promotion being the progeny of place marketing which are considered broader in scope and thrust.

2.1.4.2 The practicalities of place marketing

Whilst this thesis is primarily situated in the tourism arena, place marketing at its most fundamental level consists of cities, regions and countries involved in spatial competition for capital according to Kavaratzis (2004). This further complicates the development of a coherent theory covering the domain. Capital, as defined by Kotler et al. (1993) consists of four elements when discussed from the place marketing perspective. These are businesses, tourists, residents and investments. Places do not attract these elements uniformly and in many instances make specific choices as to what the scope of place marketing covers. According to Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) well established small tourism focused resorts may centre their place marketing strategy around residents and visitors, mitigating the potential for social friction. In a major city the strategy is wont to be much more concentrated on the wider range when it comes to competing with similar locations for capital. The large swath of territory covered by place marketing, coupled with its complex multi-disciplinary nature again, adds to the challenge in formulating an approach to theory that is widely accepted, plausible and pragmatic. Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) bemoan the use of taxpayers' money on projects or campaigns that result in outcomes that are difficult to measure. They also critically question the rationale of the discipline in that its practice may become increasingly difficult to justify given the fact that most questions surrounding

it remain largely unanswered. Along with Skinner (2008), Boisen et al. (2018) and Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012) feature at the vanguard of a movement that aims to provide a firm theoretical basis and structure for further developments in the field of place marketing.

Place marketing must be a long-term process and should be strategically implemented. In their paper towards integrated place marketing, Braun, Otgar and Van den Berg (2003) set out the choices to be considered and particularly emphasise the on-going nature of the process in that it should be constantly re-evaluated. Although primarily associated with tourism, place marketing should expand its scope beyond that sector and encompass all aspects of urban development and involve the local community. Academics and practitioners have taken heed of this and extended the range of their studies and campaigns in more recent times. As highlighted earlier, the discipline is essentially a competition for a finite amount of capital in an environment that goes well beyond the world of travel and tourism covering residents of locations, businesses and inward investment. In this context local communities are the primary stakeholders and their attitude towards place marketing ultimately dictates how effective any initiative will be (Palmer, Konig-Lewis & Jones, 2013). From a tourism perspective the local community not only act as ambassadors for the location, but provide the services and products dispensed. Perhaps most importantly they create the essence of place that is integral to branding efforts (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2008). At every juncture the literature espouses the benefits of collaboration amongst stakeholders and reiterates the importance of Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) in promoting and nurturing this collaboration (Wang & Xiang, 2007).

2.1.5 Destination marketing organisations and place branding

Place branding, is also subject to a long history but according to Anholt (2005), is frequently misunderstood, a sentiment echoed by Boisen et al. (2018). Who can forget the iconic “I heart NY” logo introduced in 1977 to promote tourism in the state of New York? Commissioned by the state’s department of economic development and designed by renowned graphic artist Milton Glaser, this instantly recognisable logo has become synonymous with New York City where the original sketch is now part of the permanent collection at the Museum of Modern Art in Manhattan. Glaser’s design was borne of a time where consensus suggested the city might fail and that everything held dear by its residents could disappear. It was an era characterised by economic stagnation and social malaise accentuated by escalating violence that hinted at a city entering a phase of interminable decay. The reaction to this, although, eminently simple, resulted in Glaser’s graphic that represented the feelings of people in that moment who, faced with potential catastrophe, felt a strong emotional bond with each other and their city (Sherwood, 2018). The logo’s simplicity quickly caught the public’s imagination and it has become the visible manifestation of the city’s brand, copied the world over to varying degrees. As an image it is effective, but place branding in its entirety is an altogether more complex matter (Boisen, 2015).

2.1.5.1 Branding and place

Anholt (2005) attaches the word “difficult” in attempting to describe what a “brand” represents (p. 117). He (Anholt) believes that it is a widely misunderstood and misused construct that has been appropriated by journalists, politicians and popular culture generally to the extent where it has lost meaning. Brands have become equated with

everything from people to policies and incited a backlash from sections of society resentful of brands, globalisation and rampant capitalism. This has resulted in brands and branding assuming negative connotations in some quarters. Anholt (2005) laments this, particularly in the context of place branding where its effective use may bring about economic and social value to locations if imaginatively applied. Brand can be imagined in three ways; “popular, simple and advanced” (Anholt, 2005, pp. 116-121). The popular understanding is the most ambiguous and confuses branding with a myriad of other marketing disciplines. An example of the simple understanding of branding is provided above where Glaser’s New York iconography assigns a broadly recognised visual image to a place or product that is used in packaging, promoting and identifying the place (or product). In a conventional sense this is branding as a marketing service designed by specialist firms at the behest of cities, regions, countries and other commercial or not for profit entities. The advanced definition of branding as espoused by Anholt (2005) incorporates the simple understanding but extends it beyond the tangible and covers a wide swath of organisational strategy, consumer behaviour, stakeholder motivation, communication, ethics and purpose. It is not simply a technique that lends itself to succinct definition but a field of theory and practice that by extension inhabits an analogous plain to both stakeholder theory and place marketing. In a similar vein to Boisen et al. (2018), Anholt (2005) suggests that place branding, although widely misunderstood, takes precedence over place marketing and as an activity is not an add-on or the culmination of the marketing effort but a practice that informs it in its entirety. Whereas place marketing is concerned with propositions and transactions (Boisen et al., 2018), place branding’s primary goal is to add value in a broad sense through the use of narratives that both differentiate and add relevance.

The sometimes negative connotations associated with branding derives from the simple understanding of it, as described by Anholt (2005). In practice place branding, when applied to destinations, is much more than designing a catchy logo alongside a memorable slogan as if a destination were nothing more than a product on a shelf or in a showroom. Destinations are complex. Whilst destination components can be promoted or even purchased, a destination as represented by a city, region or nation, cannot be sold in the traditional way. Anholt (2005) compares place branding in destinations to the efforts of some major corporations who produce many different products but tend not to promote the company brand directly as in Procter & Gamble or even Alphabet Inc., the parent company of Google. He suggests that destinations are effectively promoted indirectly via their products, associations or sub-brands and that this requires a strategic approach. This approach is, from a tourism standpoint, often led by the organisations described hereafter.

2.1.5.2 Heterogeneity of the DMO

A destination marketing organisation (DMO), not to be confused with a destination “management” organisation, is responsible for the marketing and promotion of a city, region or nation in a tourism context (Wight, 2013). The first recognisable DMO was established in St. Moritz, Switzerland in the mid-19th century, a development that led to the founding of similar organisations throughout Europe and North America. The principal task of these entities was to advertise their respective locations in order to stimulate visitor arrivals. Later, in 1879 Blackpool’s municipal authorities even imposed a local property tax to fund the advertising effort of the British coastal city (Pike & Page, 2014). Visitor and convention bureaus sprung up over time as did

national tourism offices particularly in the aftermath of the Second World War. No uniform organisational structure dictated the form that a DMO should take and to this day that remains the case. In fact some confusion reigns in terms of what a DMO actually does and what it is responsible for. In certain jurisdictions the DMO existed in the form of a fully funded governmental agency. In totalitarian states this frequently remains the case (Zhang, Chong & Ap, 1999). Tourism, as an economic driver, has often been considered the poor relative to the production and manufacturing sectors. The fortunes of the DMO have fluctuated accordingly and in many cases these organisations have been consolidated into public-private partnerships (PPPs) as state funding has dwindled. The PPP format, involving multiple stakeholders, has serious implications for decision making with the ambient political climate playing an important role (Hudson, 2003). Funding remains a critical issue with the remit of the DMO under constant review.

The heterogeneous nature of the DMO is reflected in the related academic literature. The practitioner led demands of the field, coupled with the threat from funding sources, does not endear the sector to academic scrutiny. Ruhanen, Scott, Ritchie and Tkacynski (2010) completed a review of just one aspect related to the organisation of DMOs and corporate governance. Their findings identified multiple understandings of governance and its dimensions that highlight the difficulty in building a coherent and significant body of literature on a wider level. Academics with an interest in applied studies have completed much of the research related to DMOs. This adds to the difficulty in formulating a generally acceptable theoretical consensus since many of the works undertaken are concerned with destination specific challenges (Pike & Page, 2014). Ashworth (2000, 2010) argues that tourism destinations are unique from a

marketing perspective and their complexity necessitates an approach that by definition delves into geography, economics, psychology and sociology amongst other disciplines. This points to the diversity in the domain and reflects the constantly changing dynamics of tourism and what is required of the DMO. In the literature, Pike and Page (2014) state that some academics erroneously refer to DMOs as destination management organisations. This inappropriate descriptor suggests an element of control over destinations that few, if any, DMOs actually exercise since they engage with stakeholders and have neither the resources nor the mandate to function as such. Local authorities or other governmental assets usually manage destinations, and in locations where tourism plays an important role, these are extremely powerful actors within the stakeholder environment. The purview of the DMO, as described by Page and Hall (2008), sees them operating within confines that limit their ability to manage or control. At best they liaise with stakeholders but are often assumed to occupy a leadership role within destinations (Leiper, 2008). These organisations have few points of contact with visitors and rely on feedback to understand the visitor experience which in itself, outside of promotional promises made, is reliant on a whole host of other factors ranging from the attitude of the local population towards tourism, to local governance.

For some time researchers could barely agree on what constitutes a destination. Leiper's model (1979) categorised a destination as a place the consumer travels to temporarily. This is now widely accepted and has been expanded upon, placing the DMO at the nexus of supply and demand where it connects both in order to maximise the use of the destination's resources. A tourism destination usually comprises a large number of autonomous entities, yet as stipulated by Williams and Palmer (1999),

tourists/consumers purchase a product based on the totality of the experience that the destination is offering. Its success is therefore clearly dependent on how well developed the network between independent and inter-dependent organisations is constructed (Gartrell, 1991; Kotler et al., 2013). Studies now show that establishing mutually beneficial relationships between all the different suppliers of the tourism experience add significant value to the destination product (Palmer & Bejou, 1995; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007). In the tourism context however, the most common form of co-operation is the loosely formed alliance of tourism organisations such as regional or local tourism associations and other marketing entities (Wang & Krakover, 2008). Gretzel, Fesenmaier, Formica and O'Leary (2006) suggest that the ultimate task of the DMO is to develop an image for the area, coordinate relationships between private and public tourism industry partners, provide information for visitors and lead the overall promotion of the destination.

2.1.5.3 Destination branding challenges

The idea of creating an image or brand for a destination is one of the greatest challenges in the tourism industry (Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri & Kurtulus, 2008). In order to succeed the brand has to revolve around familiar, favourable, strong and unique associations. The long-term success of marketing programmes of a brand is affected by the knowledge of such brand in memory and this familiarisation may be achieved through various activities that promote the name, the logo and the slogan utilized; concepts that help build brand equity (Biscaia, Correia, Ross, Rosado & Maroco, 2013). Russel and Pryor (2000) believe that consumers store knowledge about brand in memory, whilst Keller (1993) states that conceptualisation of brand knowledge has

two dimensions; brand awareness and brand image, both referring to a set of associations that consumers relate to. A brand is necessary therefore to identify the product, in this case a destination, and distinguish it from competitors. It has to create an emotional link with the consumer, in order to give the latter a tangible reference point, which should be vivid, alive and more complete than the sense conveyed by the generic offering (Ekinici & Hosany, 2006). Destination brands are similar, in some ways, to corporate brands, as they act as a unifying force for elements such as leisure, investment and business tourism plus stakeholder and citizen welfare products (Trueman, Klemm & Giroud, 2004). Destinations, like corporations, are subject to ever increasing marketing complexity (globalisation, government policies, natural environment, to name but a few) and increasing marketing costs (Xie & Boggs, 2006). With an abundance of challenges facing them Wang and Xiang (2007) propose that it is therefore important for those organisations charged with promoting destinations, to optimise collaboration between the different stakeholders at each and every level so as to increase the attractiveness and competitiveness of their respective locations.

2.1.6 Cooperative marketing in destinations

Destinations play host to a variety of businesses and organisations that benefit from visitor arrivals. The vast majority of these entities are SMEs (Small-Medium sized Enterprises) operating in the private sector, with many of them family held concerns. The individual resources of such organisations limit the extent to which they can market themselves effectively as stand-alone operators. Certainly, there have been occasions where due to creativity, innovation or pure luck an SME may stand out and successfully differentiate itself in the marketplace despite such resource deficiency.

The use of guerrilla marketing techniques, virality, memes and influencers have somewhat levelled the playing field in this era of social media (Navratilova & Milichovsky, 2015), but for most operators the lack of access to resources determines the ultimate outcome of the marketing effort. In the more popular destinations large multi-national hotel chains or tour operators dot the landscape, but even here the marketing endeavours of these companies are often dictated by a head office whose main concern is in the marketing of the company brand rather than being specifically focused on a particular location (Rishi & Gaur, 2012). Zach (2012) suggests that in destinations where the tendency might lean towards competition amongst local protagonists the argument can be made for destination-wide cooperation where knowledge and resources are pooled in an effort to market and promote the locality as a whole, resulting in benefits for all parties. Such collaboration, according to d'Angella and Go (2009), encourages social inclusion amongst stakeholders and a sense of joint responsibility. More often than not, these efforts are directed by the DMO whose role allows it to act, in ideal circumstances, as an independent arbiter since it promotes the destination as a whole rather than focusing on its specific tourism products.

Despite being a recognisable entity with its own administration, budget and business practices, the DMO is essentially an alliance consisting of partners and benefactors. This usually takes the form of an official contractual relationship between parties with the DMO in service of its members who may represent commercial interests, NGOs or the state itself. These members, as previously alluded to, differ in terms of interests and priorities and the role of the DMO is to subsume those interests into a common narrative accepted by all. This can only take place where trade-offs are made, building consensus in the process (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Cooperative or collaborative

tourism marketing involves developing a strategic coalition that promotes the destination in a collective way (Jetter & Chen, 2012). Gardiner and Scott (2014) strike a cautionary note in claiming that whilst cooperative or collaborative marketing initiatives undertaken by destinations can be successful and provide many benefits, they are also prone to failure depending on the motivations and actions of those involved.

DMOs are most frequently the axis around which the development of cooperative marketing efforts revolves. A fundamental role of the DMO is in bringing stakeholders together to actively promote the destination. A cohesive and well-planned cooperative marketing strategy is often the public face of the DMO, but establishing the conditions leading to such can be challenging due to the number of actors and potentially divergent interests involved. Zach (2012) makes an important observation in highlighting that DMOs themselves are often small understaffed organisations, susceptible to the vagaries of local politics and/or budgeting constraints. Despite the many seemingly insurmountable obstacles, cooperative marketing is championed by experienced tourism professionals and scholars alike since it empowers the local stakeholder, often the most passionate proponent of the destination, and gives them a sense of ownership over the process (Wang & Krakover 2008). This is a recurring theme in the literature when it comes to successes in the field since engaged and highly motivated individuals willing to sell the destination first, knowing that their businesses will ultimately benefit, play perhaps the most important role of all. When this dynamic is missing or when there is a lack of trust, coupled with a fear of competition, cooperative marketing efforts flounder, as demonstrated by Jetter and Chen (2012) in their work on knowledge sharing and tourism alliances.

The benefits of cooperative marketing range from providing greater access to markets, broader visibility, economic efficiencies and increased social capital, ultimately enhancing customer or visitor convenience. Detractors of such an approach within the field of tourism are few and far between, but one potential drawback can be found in the reluctance of competitors to collaborate and share information. Cooperative marketing in other spheres, originally touted as a panacea at the beginning of the 21st century, has met with less than spectacular results particularly when considered from a risk and return perspective (de Man & Luvison, 2019). Wang and Krakover (2008) espouse the concept of “coopetition”, where businesses not only compete but collaborate for mutual gain on an equal footing, and conclude that this horizontal approach is singularly appropriate in the context of tourism localities and destination marketing (p. 126). D’Angella and Go (2009) consider the DMO as a social network at the heart of the cooperative marketing effort and argue that its impartiality in fostering social inclusion and cultivating social capital amongst its many stakeholders confers on it a certain legitimacy that is vital in ensuring durable collaboration. This legitimacy is built on trust, the involvement of stakeholders in decision-making and, most importantly, their perceived levels of satisfaction with the DMO. When the ideal conditions are met, the DMO can focus its activities on leading marketing communication strategies that match its internal resources (satisfied and engaged stakeholders) with opportunities afforded in the macro-environment (Pike & Page, 2014). Such opportunities are often closely intertwined with the image held of destinations which in the case of this thesis focuses on an association with sport.

2.1.7 Destination image and sport

Beautiful landscapes, scenic routes, good weather and the ability to appreciate the tourism experience in relative isolation or with family were traditionally considered amongst the primary motivators behind holidaymaking. Deregulation of the airline industry in the 1990s and the phenomenon of budget airlines have resulted in people taking shorter recreational breaks (Diaconu, 2012). The travel motives behind these shorter breaks differ greatly from those of the traditional holiday, with push factors ranging from escapism to socialising and enhancing self-esteem, coinciding with pull factors of ease of access and the availability of cheap flights (Dunne, Buckley & Flanagan, 2007). Cities have been quick to capitalise on this trend and have taken centre stage with hitherto unfashionable destinations such as Tallinn (Estonia) in Eastern Europe and Dublin (Ireland), on the western fringes of the continent, thronged with tourists engaging in short-stay city breaks (Davison & Ryley, 2010). That some cities have been more successful than others in attracting visitors is not always directly attributable to an over-abundance of easily identifiable attractive features but often down to the concerted efforts of local stakeholders and DMOs in creating an image of the locality that is both interesting and appealing (Medway & Warnaby 2013).

Image and the associations people make with destinations are fundamental to understanding and effectively promoting them (Carballo, Arana, León, & Moreno-Gil, 2015). In a highly competitive global marketplace image differentiation is of paramount importance since it is a determining factor swaying intent to visit. Chi and Qu (2008) demonstrate a clear relationship between a locale's image and visitor satisfaction stating that the more positive the image is, the more likely the visitor will

experience satisfaction. The idea of image defies facile definition since it is a highly personalised and subjective concept, but Alocer and Ruiz-Lopez (2019) describe it as a perception of place formed from a set of impressions. The image held by a tourist of a destination depends very much on individual experience relating to thoughts and emotions. The role and importance of image in being a driver of success in tourism destinations has given rise to a significant body of literature and remains of paramount interest today. One of the first academics to pursue the topic of destination image was Gunn (1972) who looked at how images were formed via two dimensions; organic and induced. The organic dimension was said to arise from sources that lay outside the sphere of control of those wishing to develop the image. These sources could range from different types of media to the social domain, including family and friends. The induced dimension originated from sources that actively sought to promote or publicise a destination i.e. essentially marketing endeavours. Urry, (2002), Urry & Larsen (2011) frequently refer to destination image and the contention that tourist consumption is largely aesthetic and image oriented. The aesthetic dimension of image formation in the modern era combines the organic and induced dimensions revealing itself on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook (Wacker & Groth, 2020). User generated content travel reviews as hosted on platforms such as Tripadvisor have further piqued the interest of scholars grappling with an ever evolving technological environment and the consequences for destinations. So much of the content is now beyond the purview of the DMO as to present serious challenges from an academic perspective in terms of understanding the phenomenon and the practitioner led field of destination marketing that must deal with the repercussions (Tamajon & Valiente, 2017).

Destination image influences tourist behaviour before during and after visitation. Gartner (1993) developed a model focusing on the cognitive, affective and conative components that coalesce to form the image. The cognitive components represent the beliefs and knowledge of the visitor with the affective more concerned with the emotions or feelings experienced whilst the conative highlights behaviour and intention (Pike & Ryan, 2004). The hierarchical nature of the model was validated by the study of Agapito, Pinto and Costa-Mendes (2013) suggesting that the impact of the cognitive on the conative component is stronger when mediated by the affective component. The subjective nature of image further mitigates the opportunity to accurately measure how it is perceived, although this has not prevented researchers taking to this challenge with gusto. Gursoy, Uysal, Sirakiya-Turk, Ekinici and Baloglu (2014) collaborated on the well-received *Handbook of Scales in Tourism and Hospitality Research*. Their state-of-the-art composition acts as a reference guide for researchers the world over attempting to measure characteristics relating to the tourism phenomenon. These include motivation, behavioural and image scales amongst others. Echtner and Ritchie (1993) presented a framework for rigorously and successfully capturing all components of destination image that covers a very broad list of attributes. Jenkins (1999) puts forward a two-phase model suggesting that accurate measurement of image should first be grounded in qualitative research eliciting appropriate constructs that can be examined through a quantitative lens. In the past decade Byon and Zhang (2010) applied a scale of destination image (SDI), using structural equation modelling, to accurately predict tourism behaviour intentions. The significant body of work devoted to measuring destination image is indicative of its importance to the field since it is widely accepted to be an antecedent of tourist satisfaction (Alocer and Ruiz-Lopez, 2019).

As stated previously when referring to place marketing, the primary challenge is to imbue a locale with associations that are memorable, recognisable and sub-consciously implanted in the collective psyche. Examples of cities clearly identified with a certain image would include Milan in Northern Italy, which is immediately associated with fashion, Las Vegas with gambling and Florence with art (de Carlo, Canali, Pritchard & Morgan, 2009). Whilst the aforementioned locations offer much more than their immediate associations each represents a clear image of place that is difficult to refute from an outsider's perspective (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007). Sport can be added to the list of attributes most easily associated with place if one were to stretch the previous list to Daytona (car racing), Green Bay, Wisconsin with American football, St. Moritz (winter sports) and Manchester with football (White & Absher, 2013). Limerick city, in the west of Ireland, with a rich sporting heritage and impressive amenities, has looked at distinguishing itself as Ireland's sporting capital in a region encompassing destinations of outstanding natural beauty (Fitzgerald, 2013). Indeed, some localities have looked to sport and particularly the role of renowned sports franchises as vehicles to use in promoting a city or region (Sparvero & Chalip, 2007), whilst others that are home to world famous brands have failed to take full advantage to effectively leverage the asset in their midst. The cities of Barcelona and Manchester spring to mind, whose respective football clubs reach a global audience that destination management and marketing organisations can only dream of.

2.1.8 Leverage and the sports franchise

Sparvero and Chalip (2007) note the importance of professional sports teams in the creation of community value. Economic impact studies have claimed that well known

sports franchises play a significant commercial role in the life of cities and regions (Allan et al., 2007), yet such studies are narrow in scope, their findings are often of dubious reliability and they fail to take other relevant aspects such as social, cultural and environmental impacts into consideration. Sparvero and Chalip (2007) suggest that public administrators should shift their focus from impact to leverage which in a tourism context, as espoused by Toohey (2008), can be described as striving for long term sustainable benefits.

Many of the world's most famous sports franchises have deep roots and close links to the locality in which they find themselves. This is certainly the case for most of the high profile professional soccer clubs in Europe (Abosag et al, 2010). In North America cities occasionally vie with each other to attract established or newly minted franchises to their locale with promises of state subsidies, tax breaks and even the construction of state-of-the-art facilities such as stadiums and training complexes (Johnson, Whitehead, Mason, & Walker, 2012). Such an approach is often associated with political short-termism and has been widely discredited since it invariably hones in on highly optimistic economic impact projections that are difficult to justify. In extreme cases a sports franchise might emphasise its own importance to a region and threaten to relocate if public funds are not made available to help in improving facilities, or in the building of a new stadium ,as was the case of the New York Yankees and the construction of the new Yankee Stadium (Daily News, 2008). The exaggerated projections of franchise owners encouraging the use of public money in developing the Brooklyn Barclay Arena in New York strikes another cautionary note, in contrast to Manchester City Football club's tenancy of the council owned former commonwealth stadium in a hitherto unfashionable neighbourhood of Manchester that

has helped stimulate social and urban regeneration (Propheter, 2019). Sparvero and Warner (2013) suggest that money, prestige and image engender a successful sports franchise with the ability to influence public policy on a local level. It is therefore quite remarkable that those charged with designing and enacting public policy decisions systematically fail to recognise the potential for leverage provided by sports teams. Both the aforementioned authors emerge as major protagonists for leverage in the field of sports tourism, emphasising the need to look at economic development, place marketing and community wellbeing as the principal areas of opportunity.

Leverage should not be confused with legacy as is often the case when researchers turn their attention to sports tourism and mega-events. The legacy or lasting impacts of mega-events are an important area of study with the visible manifestation often being that of urban renewal (Matheson, 2010). One of the very few examples of a huge sporting event being successfully leveraged for tourism gains was undoubtedly the summer Olympics hosted by Sydney, Australia in 2000. The Australian Tourist Commission or ATC, the national DMO, was actively involved with the city's bid to host the event as far back as 1992. As soon as the games were awarded to Sydney the ATC's major task was to capitalise on the unique opportunity afforded the tourism sector (Morse, 2001). A business unit was specifically created to identify opportunities for leverage and was so successful that the format has been copied elsewhere in such cities as Pittsburg and Greenville in the USA, where agencies have been created within the actual DMO structure specifically focused on leveraging sport for tourism ends (Pouder, Clark & Fenich, 2018). The ATC developed a five-pronged strategy that honed in on potential long-term gains for Australia based on dynamic growth of its tourism sector. The objectives included increasing visitor arrivals resulting in

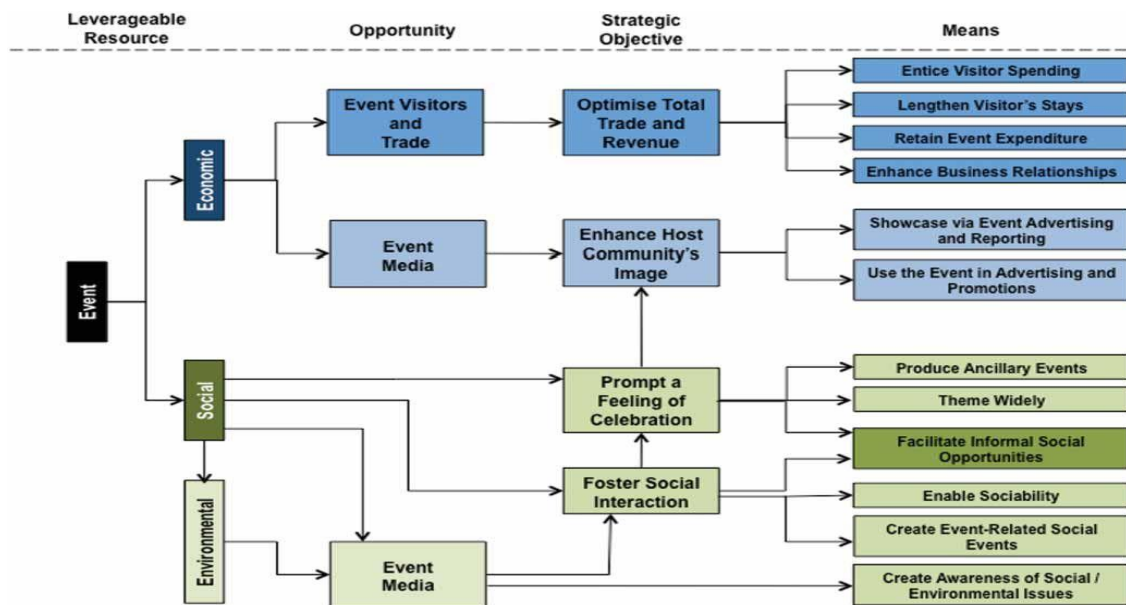
enhanced export earnings from international tourism, a more equitable geographical dispersal of visitors across the country and raising the profile of the tourism sector domestically as one of the nation's leading providers of employment and wealth. It also perhaps inadvertently leveraged the event in engendering community pride and well-being with lasting effects for the country, consequences that are supported by Chalip (2004) and Sparvero and Chalip (2007). The Australian DMO argued that its strategy of leveraging the 2000 Olympics advanced Australia's destination brand image by at least 10 years and significantly improved the quality of the tourism product thus ensuring its future viability (Morse, 2001). The International Olympic Committee (IOC) so lauded the success of the Sydney 2000 model that it hoped it would be carried forward as a benchmark for future cities hosting the games. Unfortunately, Sydney's successor, Athens, was unable to replicate this success and alongside Montreal in 1976 is considered to have squandered an opportunity that ultimately tainted the allure for other cities in bidding for the right to hold future games (Bason & Grix, 2018).

Beesley and Chalip (2011) strike a cautionary note in suggesting that replicating a successful model of leverage, as was the case in Sydney, in another location, will yield similar results. The organisers of the Beijing Olympics in 2008 attempted such an endeavour, based on the Australian experience, particularly in terms of attempting to leverage the opportunities afforded by the games to non-host cities such as Shanghai. The results were disappointing and suggest that the success or lack thereof when attempting to leverage sport in destinations is very location specific but not impossible.

Chalip (2017), Chalip & Leyns (2002), Chalip (2006), O'Brien and Chalip (2007), Sparvero and Chalip (2007) plus Beesley and Chalip (2011), champion the concept of sports leverage across their combined works. The consistent argument made is that successful leverage of a sports event or potentially a sports franchise, requires strategic planning, an effective transfer of knowledge, coupled with the understanding that this is an iterative process. They emphasise, in particular, that leveraging sport for tourism purposes must not be a one-dimensional activity solely focusing on economic benefits but should seek to maximise social and environmental capital as per the framework illustrated in figure 2.2 that relates to sporting events.

Figure 2.2

Leveraging Events to Maximise Social, Economic and Environmental Gain



Note: From Beesley, L.G., & Chalip, L. (2011). Seeking (and not seeking) to leverage mega-sport events in non-host destinations: The case of Shanghai and the Beijing Olympics. *Journal of Sport & Tourism*, 16(4), 323-344.

Where possible these benefits are not confined to the host community but trickle down to the region and in the case of mega-events, non-host cities. The IOC has taken steps to assuage such concerns. The forthcoming iterations of both the summer and winter games, to be held in Tokyo and Beijing respectively, will make use of multiple venues that fall well outside the hinterland of the actual host cities (International Olympic Committee, 2020).

Mega-events are synonymous with legacy and urban regeneration as can be seen in the case of the Barcelona summer Olympics of 1992 and the Commonwealth games of 2002 held in Manchester (Carlson & Taylor, 2003). Improved infrastructure including sports facilities, accommodation and transport links undoubtedly add to the attractiveness of a destination and improve the quality of life of local stakeholders. Leveraging, on the other hand, highlights not only short and long-term outcomes but how communities can derive sustainable on-going benefits from hosting sports events, or successful sports franchises engaged in season-long competitions (Karadakis, Kaplanidou & Karlis, 2010). Aside from the work of Allan et al. (2007) looking at the economic impact of season long competition in Glasgow Scotland, and Sheffield Hallam university's report on the value of football to Manchester, few scholars have investigated this phenomenon. In fact, most of the studies conducted have involved market research initiatives undertaken at the behest of DMOs such as VisitBritain's (2019b) *International Buzzseekers Football Research*, a marketing intelligence report tracking the number of international visitors with an interest in British football. Proctor, Dunne and Flanagan (2018) identify the arguments in favour of leveraging season long competitions and successful sports franchises for tourism purposes, whilst also highlighting the lack of research in the field. Using successful sports franchises

for promoting tourism requires a differing approach when set against mega-sports events but also comes with the considerable competitive advantage in that the infrastructure, both sporting and public, is already in place (Allan et al., 2007).

2.1.9 Tourism models

One of the objectives of this research is to investigate and discover ways in which the attractiveness and international notoriety of a successful sports franchise can be leveraged for optimal effect by the organisation charged with promoting tourism in that locale. Models of tourism development attempt to organise information in a manner that can be easily interpreted and understood, whilst also predicting phenomena that may occur and the relationships between them (Getz, 1992). It is hoped that a study of the work completed in this domain helps lay the foundation for identifying critical elements of best practice within the sphere of sports tourism and leverage.

The most enduring tourism destination development model of all is undoubtedly the Tourism Area Life Cycle (TALC), developed in 1980 by R.W. Butler (Andergassen, Candela & Figini, 2013). Although still a relevant heuristic, the TALC model has significant limitations. It is primarily a descriptive and deterministic construct that fails to take the variety and distinct characteristics of destinations into account, but it has inspired the development of other frameworks. These range from environmental (Roe, Hrymak & Dimanche, 2013), to forecasting demand (Claveria & Torra, 2014), logistical (Cole, 2009), to socio-cultural (Funk & Bruun, 2007) and consumer behaviour/decision making (Dunne, Flanagan & Buckley, 2011), amongst others. The

VICE model, an internationally recognised model for destination management, looks at the interactions between visitors, the industry serving them, the community impacted by their presence and the environment where tourism actually takes place. It has been successfully tested in a number of locations (van Niekerk & Coetzee, 2011), as has the ACHIEV model developed by the Dublin Institute of Technology, focusing on indicators relating to administration, community, heritage, infrastructure, enterprise and visitors in a tourism context (Flanagan et al., 2007). A common thread linked to the successful application of the aforementioned models undoubtedly revolves around the level of stakeholder engagement in the process (Griffin, 2009) and as such, their relative success is indebted to the tenets of stakeholder theory.

Pike (2004), in suggesting that the rationale of the DMO is to enhance a destination's competitiveness, set in motion a stream of research conducted by scholars such as Ritchie and Crouch (2003), Dyer and Kim (2003) plus Mazanec, Wober and Zins (2007), that looked at developing frameworks to measure destination competitiveness. He, (Pike, 2008), concluded that no widely accepted model exists and certainly none that is causal in nature. Chalip (2006) argues that researchers and those charged with managing destinations should turn to leverage rather than mere economic impact in the quest to equitably spread the benefits of tourism to all stakeholders. In collaboration with O'Brien (2007b), he develops a model for social leverage, building on previous constructs of economic leverage and one other for generating a sense of liminality around sporting events. Although of particular interest to this study, many of these models remain empirically untested and have not been deployed in the context of a location encompassing a sports franchise engaged in seasonal competition.

Models are useful to the extent that they provide a theoretical picture of the object of study. They may look at concepts from a variety of angles describing patterns and identifying phases of change, often in a linear fashion, but frequently fail to explain why certain things happen and how they might be controlled more effectively where possible. The great challenge in developing a model, particularly one related to a complex industry in constant flux such as tourism, is to generalise it to the extent that it will become a valid tool applicable in more than one specific context. It is also widely recognised that the creation of a model whose reliability is beyond question, is both practically and logistically impossible (Kirkup & Major, 2006). A first best step in this direction is undoubtedly to gain insights as to what, how and why certain initiatives work in particular locations.

Having reviewed the theoretical underpinnings for the study in section one of this literature review, the next section shifts focus to consider the interplay of tourism and sport ultimately characterised by destinations and their associations with the world's most popular sport, football.

2.2 Section Two: Tourism and sport: game, set and match?

2.2.1 An evolutionary process

In order to understand the basis for this study it is perhaps important to note that the evolution of the tourism phenomenon has coincided with that of civilisation over a considerable period of time (Adler, 1989). From humble origins its practice has transmuted into the complex and ubiquitous concept prevalent today.

As a multi-faceted industry, tourism, whilst lacking a coherent structure, does lend itself to a variety of themes or serves distinctive segments of the market (Kotler et al., 2013). In the modern vernacular and depending on the participant's proclivities, tourism may be labelled with a wide variety of prefixes from adventure to dark, eco to sex, medical to jihadi, genealogical to space; in essence a non-exhaustive list of activities and interests. Sharpley and Telfer (2015) argue that the phenomenon has become mainstream to the extent that it is considered as having merged with general social practices such as shopping, dining out in restaurants or even attending sporting events. According to the United Nations' World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO, 2018), international tourism arrivals numbered almost one and a quarter billion in 2017, with domestic tourism numbers amounting to a staggering figure somewhere between five and six billion people during the same year. The UNWTO (2018) goes onto claim that tourism accounts for 10% of the world's GDP, is responsible for one in ten jobs and the importance of the sector is ever increasing with projections placing the figure for international tourism arrivals set to hit close to two billion people annually by 2030. Covering a multitude of interests and spawning many derivatives, one area of particular importance is discussed in section 2.2.2. Sports tourism, broadly

classified as activity tourism, according to Weed (2006b), is of paramount relevance to this research. It is a multi-faceted and diverse sector (Hudson, 2003) replete with its own idiosyncrasies that is currently experiencing steady growth.

2.2.2 Sports tourism

Pigeassou (2004) characterises sports tourism as an economic and social activity whose attractiveness is based on anthropology and aesthetics linking sporting practice to mobility. In general terms it might be defined as travel from the region of one's primary residence to engage in or participate as a spectator of a sporting event (Gibson, Attle & Yiannakis, 1997). Sport is a complex phenomenon since it may satisfy a number of universal human needs to varying degrees at any given moment; be they physical, intellectual, emotional, psychological, social or other (Vinnoker, 1988). In modern times sport has been co-opted by cities and regions for the positive economic and social impacts it may result in as well as a means of re-branding destinations that will ultimately be more appealing to visitors or tourists (Herstein & Berger, 2013). The notion of sports as a rationale for travel is not new and its evolution partially mirrors that of tourism as a whole.

In his seminal article on the historical perspectives of sports tourism Zauhar (2004), traces the contours of sports tourism over time beginning with accounts from the Olympic, Pythian and Isthmian games in what is modern day Greece, where large numbers of athletes, facilitators and spectators transported themselves from areas of traditional residence to participate in or witness, sporting contests. Naturally, this gave birth to products and services that would be recognised today as forming part of

tourism, catering to the traveller's needs. These ancient peoples were not unique in engaging in such practices and Zauhar (2004) fastidiously depicts evidence of sports tourism as being a relatively common phenomenon inherent to many cultures regardless of geography or location. The Roman, Byzantium and Persian empires ruled such vast swathes of territory that diversion in the form of sports and entertainment played a significant role in keeping their populations quiescent.

Yet more evidence of the links between sport and travel have been associated with the Islamic Golden age and throughout the turbulent history of Europe prior to the advent of the Renaissance, which in turn saw the emergence of sports such as tennis and early forms of football. It was much later, however, and as a consequence of industrialisation, that sport became more organised and indeed, popularised. Many of the world's great sporting organisations grew out of the need to give structure to sports such as association football, cricket, rugby and horse racing as their popularity soared following the second wave of the industrial revolution in the nineteenth century.

The sports tourism sector has taken on added importance in the twentieth and twenty first centuries thanks in large part to the influence of mega-events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA World Cup (Knott, Fyall & Jones, 2016). Satisfying the needs of athletes, and the accompanying visitors, inevitably led to more interest in studying this phenomenon, not simply in terms of how it impacts many aspects of society but in how it can be managed effectively for the benefit of all. The advent of sports related museums and halls of fame not only highlights the importance of sport in a cultural

context but resulted in the formation of another sub-sector combining an interest in sport with heritage. Whole resorts have been founded around sporting themes; indeed, many winter resorts such as Chamonix (France) and Zermatt (Switzerland) owe their existence to the sports tourist whilst sporting tours whether participant based or spectator driven have become increasingly established as societies enjoy more prosperity.

Zauhar (2004) clearly demonstrates the historical and cultural importance of sports tourism noting the manner in which both elements are inextricably linked and complementary. Hudson (2003) suggests that, up until recently, the two were rarely integrated by academics or practitioners but the common contribution, particularly in economic regeneration, health and well-being, plus the immense publicity generated through the hosting of internationally renowned sporting events, have blurred the lines between the two and make them worthy of investigation as a bona fide subject of scholarly research. Ramshaw and Gammon (2017), expanding on such themes note the increasing acceptance of heritage as an integral component of this field of study, where the sports heritage experience takes precedence over “the action on the field of play” (p. 126), with implications that are largely unexplored.

2.2.3 Sports tourism typologies

A primary need of humans is to compare their level of skill to others in a similar environment and in this context represents the normative definition of sport. However, the practice of sport can also be a singular, group and non-competitive practice. It

might be purely in the pursuit of personal fitness that is never fully realised according to Neville (2012). Zauhar (2004), citing Vinoker (1988: pp 16 -17), gives the following definition of the purpose of sporting contests; “a sport contest is a voluntary, agreed upon, human event in which one or more human participants oppose at least one other human to seek the mutual appraisal of the relative abilities of all participants to move mass in space and time by utilising bodily moves which exhibit developed motor skills, physical prowess, physiological and psychological endurance, and socially approved tactics and strategy”. As a counterweight Zauhar (2004) cites Coakley (1982, p. 12) defining sport as a “diversion, amusement or recreation; a pleasant pastime which can be pursued in the open air as hunting, fishing, skiing or trekking.” It can be clearly seen in analysing the above definitions that sport covers immense ground and with almost all forms of the phenomenon, from hiking to climbing, and running to chess, tourism related activity becomes apparent once participants are moved to displace themselves for the purpose of participating in, or attending, sport related events or practices (Hudson, 2003).

The most prevalent themes recurring throughout sports tourism literature relate to those sports and practices scoring high in popularity and with enhanced profiles due to the pervasive influence of modern media on post-modern culture (Urry, 2002). Mega-events, including the Olympic games (both summer and winter), have been studied by a multitude of researchers (Hagn & Maennig, 2009; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004; Preuss, 2005; Karadakis & Kaplanidou 2010). Despite being four yearly offerings, the Olympics, FIFA World Cup (soccer), IRB World Cup (rugby) and the various world cricket competitions fall under the typology of Sport Event Tourism (Getz, 2008) as do regularly scheduled sporting events such as soccer league formats,

horse racing meetings and other similar activities organised on a seasonal basis. This form of sports tourism is usually experienced and studied from the spectator perspective due to the often large audiences attracted to such contests.

Much of the research surrounding sport event tourism, as described earlier, finds itself firmly entrenched in the domain of economic impact studies, according to Preuss (2005), or legacy planning (Matheson 2010), with the study of the latter, in particular, requiring a longitudinal perspective which is often lacking due to the target audience of such research. In more recent times researchers have gradually moved away from narrow economic impact studies to enquire of the social and cultural impacts of sporting events. Ohmann, Jones and Wilkes (2006), in one such study of the soccer World Cup hosted by Germany in 2006, suggest that whilst social impacts are immediately noticeable and measurable, cultural impacts can only be assessed over time and consequently require a much greater commitment on the part of the researcher. Sustainability, particularly when pertaining to the natural environment, has also played a prominent part in the debate with Collins, Jones and Munday (2009) supporting the use of ecological footprint analysis and environmental input-output modelling to measure the environmental effects of hosting mega sporting events.

In an age where technology grants instantaneous access to information and the urge for convenience and contemporary relevance acts to selectively distort or filter out contrasting narratives, the evolution of sports tourism has seen it most recently incorporate elements normally associated with heritage studies (Ramshaw & Gammon, 2017). Sports heritage is not necessarily based on the human tendency to indulge in nostalgia in relation to past events but can be categorised by its tangible and

intangible elements. The former might refer to stadia, museums and artefacts whereas the latter might reference the culture and rituals surrounding certain sports. This emerging typology for sports tourism comes with the argument put forth by Smith (2006) that heritage is illusory and simply a set of values placed in objects and traditions. Nonetheless, heritage, as a concept, has opened up a whole new arena for sport within the sphere of tourism. The event, whether being involved in it as a participant or spectator, becomes peripheral. The surrounding narrative takes precedence, and with it, opportunities for businesses to meet the demands of the heritage seeking sports tourists (Wood, 2005).

2.2.4 Snow on the fairway and the open road

Some sports are more readily associated with tourism than others. Winter sports make for perhaps the most visible and easily understood forms of sports tourism. Focusing on skiing and snowboarding, the winter sport experience is invariably participant based, although the major contests lend themselves to the realm of sport event tourism (Hudson, 2003). Despite being a highly complex and competitive industry, the development of the sector over time, coupled with the challenges faced and the manner in which the sports and their resorts are marketed, provide the prospective researcher with a firm foundation upon which to expand into other areas of sports tourism.

Many parallels can be drawn between golf and winter sports tourism. The former is also long established and even served by its own trade association in the guise of the International Association of Golf Tour Operators (IAGTO). Despite its Dutch origins golf was initially associated in an organised format with Scotland and depicts images of pristine landscape and relative relaxation that is at odds with the potentially

catastrophic environmental damage inherent in the development of new golf courses (Videira, Correia, Alves, Ramires, Subtil & Martins, 2006). It is not surprising that much golf tourism related research has dealt with this issue in detail and the great dilemma within the field of weighing such concerns against the potential economic benefits accrued and the well-heeled participants the sport attracts (Priestly, 2006).

Cycling tourism has come into its own in recent years and is yet another example of how a sporting practice can be consumed or experienced via a variety of typological lenses (Fairley, Gibson & Lamont, 2018). The cycling “grand tours”, featuring the *Giro d’Italia*, *Tour de France* and *Vuelta a Espana*, are important sporting contests that attract global media attention. They are also well attended spectator events resulting in significant visitor inflows to regions where the races take place. The heightened and stylised media coverage of the competitions showcases these countries from a tourism perspective to a worldwide audience, becoming an important tool in the armoury of the respective national DMO. The region of France surrounding one of the country’s iconic cycling climbs, Mont Ventoux, is a Mecca for the active cyclist who can follow the same road circuits as the professionals at their own pace gaining a memorable authentic experience. The myth and legend surrounding many of these races has also given rise to the development of a deep cycling heritage resulting in a proliferation of museums and other facilities dedicated to preserving and potentially exploiting said heritage (Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014).

2.2.5 Adventures in the extreme

With most people of the developed world living in urban conurbations adventure tourism encompassing travel, sport and outdoor recreation, is considered a substantial

and ever expanding subset of tourism proper and indeed sports tourism (Hudson, 2003). The appeal of the outdoors and a partial communion with it through sporting activity constitutes what Urry (2002) describes as “the romantic tourist gaze” (p. 43). What is known as adventure tourism covers a vast array of activities ranging, for example, from abseiling to climbing, mountain biking to kayaking and goes as far as to cover the more extreme sports such as bungee jumping and base jumping. Adventure tourism may take place over varied terrain ranging from urban settings to the more dramatic landscapes of desert or even polar environments. One might even include the burgeoning space tourism sector as falling under the umbrella of the adventure tourism segment (Carter, 2010). As previously stated, the domain of adventure tourism has provided much literature in the wider field of sports tourism which Weed (2009) describes as being of the highest quality contemporary peer-reviewed research. According to travel futurologist Ian Yeoman (2012) adventure tourism and by extension tourism in its entirety, will be heavily impacted as it evolves, by technological advances and the role of augmented reality in particular. Virtual technology moderates the risk inherent to many adventure tourism practices and its development is on course to further broaden the reach of such over the coming decades.

It is clearly evident that sports tourism covers a wide mixture and combination of interests each meriting scrutiny in their own right. The high profile nature of the practice often brings it into the arena of public policy and is of legitimate interest to planners, and others, vested with the responsibility for promoting and developing countries, regions and cities (Devine, Boyle & Boyd, 2011). This brief overview has mentioned the grand themes normally associated with the practice but omits, for the

most part, one crucial sub-sector, that of soccer/football tourism; a highly visible and global manifestation of sports event tourism that is dealt with in greater detail in section 2.2.6.

2.2.6 The Beautiful game and tourism

‘Some people believe football is a matter of life and death, I am very disappointed with that attitude. I can assure you it is much, much more important than that’ (*Daily Mail*, 1 December, 2009).

The above quote is attributed to the late Bill Shankly, former manager of Liverpool Football Club who led the team to great success in the 1960s and ‘70s. Although tongue in cheek it does encapsulate some of the gravitas that surrounds the sport and the manner in which people relate to it. The term football covers many variations of the game. In most corners of the world it is synonymous with association football whereas in North America it is used to describe the gridiron variety of the sport. In Australia and New Zealand it is used as a moniker for rugby or Australian rules, whilst in Ireland the term is often associated with Gaelic football (Fulton & Bairner, 2007). For the purposes of this study the terms football and soccer will be used interchangeably to identify association football which has FIFA (Federation International de Football Association) as its governing body. Whilst the etymology of the word football appears clear to the linguist, the game’s origins are much contested, according to Curry (2014), despite assertions that it can be traced back to pastimes associated with the ancient Celtic peoples of Britain and Ireland.

Football can be a compelling spectacle. At its best it is described as the beautiful game, whilst at its worst it has provided the trigger for a brief war between Honduras and El Salvador in 1969. Foer (2004) makes a somewhat outlandish claim that it also offers a plausible explanation for the geopolitical workings of the world, but there is little unusual in it making the claim to be the world's most popular sport both from the participant and spectator perspective. The Union of European Football Association's (UEFA) champions' league final reached a global audience of 360 million individual viewing locations in 2013 (fcBusiness, 2013), whilst FIFA (2007), in a survey conducted in 2006 of its member associations covering 207 countries, put the number of active participants in organised competitive football at 270 million. To many, these figures appear rather conservative. Although unverifiable it has been suggested that almost half the world's population watched some part of the world cup in 2018 (FIFA, 2018). Such interest inspires large numbers of people to regularly travel significant distances from their traditional abodes in order to experience live games first hand or revel in the almost liminal nature of sites associated with the folklore of the sport (Filo, Chen, King & Funk 2013). These displacements may be likened to pilgrimages with the fervour displayed by participants often assuming religious overtones of its own (Hunt, Bristol & Bashaw, 1999). The football tourist experience is a subjective one based on individual proclivities. However, it would be dismissive to suggest that it begins and ends with the 90-minute duration of a standard game. It is a combination of the tangible and intangible consumed pre, post and during the actual visit which in itself may include elements entirely unrelated to the actual sport.

2.2.6.1 Rise in popularity

Given the nature of the sport and the ease with which it is practiced, precluding, for the most part, the purchase of expensive equipment, football has enjoyed popularity in almost every corner of the globe with the possible exception of the United States, although even there it is still one of the most prevalent participation sports according to Wallerson (2014) and slowly becoming more mainstream. Despite major football events such as the FIFA World Cup and the English FA cup final historically attracting considerable TV audiences, it was only with the emergence of Rupert Murdoch's BSkyB media group in the 1990s that regularly scheduled competitive league football became widely available to a global TV audience (Andrews, 2003). It should be noted, and is of some importance to this research, that Murdoch's media conglomerate attempted to take control of Manchester United Football Club during this period. Although the takeover bid was unsuccessful, being blocked by the UK government's anti-trust authority, it clearly recognised the position of the Manchester club as one of the sport's leading protagonists that could be leveraged to increase audiences around the world. Ultimately, BskyB fell back on the English Premier League in its entirety, which along with the UEFA Champions' League, became the vehicles of choice for the media enhanced globalisation of the game as a spectacle (Brown, 2007). Other broadcasters have entered the fray in recent years ranging from the American based ESPN Corporation to Irish broadcaster Setanta Sports and the BT group, whilst in certain countries individual clubs have been able to negotiate their own lucrative TV rights, such was the case until recently with Real Madrid and FC. Barcelona, competing in Spain's *La Liga*. Andrews (2003) highlights the fact that many clubs have established their own in-house TV channels in order to further engage with their global audience.

The spectacle provided by football and the vicarious participation of the individual as a spectator has given rise to the phenomenon of football tourism where supporters travel to witness their favourite team playing and along with others present, provide vocal encouragement in an exhibition of shared identity and passion. Indeed Zauhar (2004) notes early examples of this behaviour occurring as far back as Byzantine times. Increased efficiency in transport links (Baranowski, 2007) coupled with the rise of the budget airline (Diaconu, 2012), particularly relevant to this form of vacation which is normally of short duration, offers the perfect back-drop for growth in this sub-sector of tourism although exact figures are hard to come by. VisitBritain (2012), the United Kingdom's national tourism agency, calculated that almost one million overseas tourists attended a premier league game in 2011. These figures continue to grow and a recent study undertaken by the same organisation in 2018 suggests that visitors from as far afield as Brazil and China place attending a live football game as a "must-do" activity when visiting the country. Of particular note in the aforementioned study was the aspiration of visitors to attend a game at Old Trafford involving Manchester United (VisitBritain, 2019b). In 2019 the national tourism body concluded that overseas visitors attending football matches in the UK spent 1.4 billion GB pounds accounting for 5% of all inbound tourism spend in the country (VisitBritain, 2021).

The increasing popularity of the sport as an entertainment product has enabled it to enter the mainstream as a primetime event. People the world over discuss the plays made, referee decisions and goals scored following on from a night of UEFA champions league action. Even the most "important" news and current affairs platforms are not immune to reporting on these spectacles. In a world where the lines between celebrity and influence are blurred it is no longer unusual to find star football

personalities consulted on matters totally unrelated to their field. Such are the reputations and respect in which these people are held that it is now commonplace to find many of them gracing the serious international talk show circuit, penning books on a multitude of subjects, using their influence to highlight noteworthy causes or immersing themselves in politics. Former world player of the year, George Weah, whose career saw him play for some of Europe's leading clubs including Chelsea, Paris Saint Germain and AC Milan, is currently serving as Liberia's 25th president (The Economist, 2019). Sir Alex Ferguson, iconic coach at Manchester United, was appointed to a long-term teaching position in management and leadership at the Harvard Business School upon retirement from his footballing role in 2013 (Elberse, 2013). More recently the captain of the victorious USA women's soccer team, which won the World Cup in 2019, became embroiled in a politically loaded spat with then US President Donald Trump, drawing great praise and some vitriol from a domestic and worldwide audience. Indeed, football has outgrown the boundaries of its own rules and its popularity has been exploited as a force for social action and good on many occasions. UNICEF, for example, routinely leverages the celebrity of its football ambassadors such as David Beckham in campaigning and working for the betterment of children's lives across the globe (UNICEF, 2019).

In purely economic terms the football industry generates considerable wealth. Deloitte's annual review of the 2017/18 season saw an increase of 11% on the previous season with revenues generated across the major European competitions rising to €28.4 billion. The industry has experienced growth on a continual basis over the 18-year period that Deloitte has conducted its review of the sector's finances. A key component of this revenue is the result of lucrative broadcasting deals that further

enhance the profile of the sport across the planet and by extension that of the countries and cities whose clubs routinely occupy this media space. The sport's three biggest brands, which according to Forbes (2018) include Manchester United, Real Madrid and FC Barcelona, were worth a combined €12 billion in 2018 and feature annually high on the list of the world's most valuable sports franchises. The emergence of these brands, the prestige of the sport's competitions, most notably the English Premier League (EPL), Spain's *La Liga* and the UEFA Champions League, resulting in the aforementioned broadcasting deals, have propelled the sport into the realm of global business. This in turn has aroused the interest of researchers who hitherto may have consigned this field to the peripheries of scholarly enquiry (Hill, 2006).

In many respects much of the research conducted in and around the subject of football, up until the advent of the 21st century, focussed less on the sport than the unsavoury social aspects associated with it. A popular workingman's past-time was seen as a platform for the disaffected to express their frustrations and feelings of powerlessness through violence in the form of hooliganism. Sociologists and others felt compelled to investigate this phenomenon within the context of society as a whole whilst governmental agencies struggled for solutions to police the problem (Pearson, 2012). Major tragedies defined the era ranging from the death of 39 people at the Heysel stadium in Brussels in 1985 (Lewis, 1989), to the Hillsborough disaster of 1989 where 96 people lost their lives. The latter event was less the result of actual hooliganism than the ineptitude of authorities in attempting to deal with it through inadequate safety and security measures (Nicholson & Roebuck, 1995). In the final decade of the 20th century football found itself at a critical juncture. Bill Murray (1998) in his *History of Soccer* paints the picture of a widely popular sport stigmatised by the actions of a

disruptive minority which, in collaboration with governments in certain jurisdictions, used the negative context of hooliganism as a catalyst to re-structure its future and in particular the spectator experience. Punitive measures were imposed on clubs and countries deemed to be lax in cracking down on hooliganism with, for example, English clubs being banned from all European competitions for a period of five years as of 1985. Corraling fences were dismantled, standing terraces replaced by all seater areas and competitions revamped. By the early 1990s the foundations were well in place for a transformation of the game's fortunes and the experience of those attending games. Although still feeding off local tribalism, football as a spectator sport became eminently more family friendly. The construction of modern all-seater stadia attracted a younger and more diverse audience. The increased safety features of such arenas contributed to spectator comfort but have not always met with the approval of traditionalists (Wright, 2019b). Stadia incorporating additional amenities such as restaurants, shops, hotels, museums and tours became destinations in themselves where the entertainment was not confined to the field of play alone.

This metamorphosis ultimately enhanced the sport's reputation and facilitated in broadening its global appeal. Research follows where human interest leads and soon thereafter football related studies branched out from the disciplines of sociology and sports performance to the actual business of football. The commercialisation of the activity has sparked the interest of numerous scholars referred to in this thesis. The subject area lends itself to many angles of enquiry and has also spawned accredited educational programmes, with institutions such as the Football Business Academy in Geneva, Switzerland, offering a professional master's degree and Solent University's honours bachelor degree in football studies amongst others (Doward, 2016).

2.2.6.2 Global brands and tourism potential

Few corporations on the planet have the brand recognition enjoyed by the world's major football clubs. Manchester United and FC. Barcelona are as recognisable to most people as are Coca-Cola and Pepsi. Whereas the latter are not synonymous with a particular locality, save for their country of origin, the former are practically the visible representation of place on a global scale; in this case the cities of Manchester and Barcelona. The emergence of these mega-brands, some might say to the detriment of football's competitiveness, is a significant cultural phenomenon and is down, in large part, to the media enhanced profile of the game and the commodification of sport into tangible elements which can be bought and sold (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010). Not only have clubs been commoditised, but players, such as David Beckham and Cristiano Ronaldo, have developed highly successful brands around their personas (Vincent, Hill & Lee, 2009).

The overarching concern of clubs in the past was not necessarily to attract more visitors or tourists to their stadiums (which routinely sell-out on match days) but in selling branded merchandise to supporters throughout the world. Such merchandising ranges from team kits to the services and financial sector under the guise of credit cards, insurance and banking. This has been adapted in more recent times with the aforementioned franchises each hosting extensive football themed museums showcasing the history of their organisations which appeal to visitors as well as locals (Appel, 2015). In the case of Manchester United, the club's museum welcomed over 300,000 people in 2013 (Bourne, 2013) and won the region's award for best large tourist attraction. Evidently such attractions provide the brand with yet more

opportunities for selling merchandise with tourists spending more on such goods than locals (Abosag et al., 2010). Stadium tours and their related museums are now commonplace throughout the footballing spectrum, but are not confined to association football with rugby and other sports quick to apply the same principles in order to broaden their customer base and add to the bottom line (Wright, 2019b).

The sheer global appeal of these sporting brands imbues them with a liminal quality transforming them by extension into sites of interest to visitors. A study conducted by the University of Sheffield Hallam (2013) calculated that hotel occupancy rates rose by an average of 15% on days when Manchester United played at its Old Trafford stadium and that the gross value added (GVA) of football to the Greater Manchester region was some £330 million during that same year. Stadia associated with the sport have become iconic settings attracting visitors of differing hues and interests. Many of these sightseers could be categorised as sports tourists whilst others simply crave the recognition from peers as having visited such locations, recognition that often manifests itself via social media postings (Lyu, 2016). Nostalgia can influence intention to visit and the storied pasts of football grounds such as the Bernabeu in Madrid, Old Trafford, Manchester and Barcelona's Camp Nou, transcend sport and enter into the realm of culture and heritage. Few people would fail to be moved by witnessing the Kop at Liverpool singing the club's anthem, *You'll never walk alone*, under the floodlights on a cold night or taking in the impressive sight of the "Yellow Wall" at Borussia Dortmund's stadium where 25,000 supporters congregate on matchdays creating a cacophony of noise subsumed in a sea of yellow flags and scarves. Football clubs, as commercially driven organisations, have systematically gone about improving the spectator/visitor experience at stadia in recent times and

added amenities to further encourage spending from customers (Ginesta, 2016). The new billion pound stadium of Tottenham Hotspur Football Club in London, with a 62,000 all-seater capacity, contains 65 food & beverage outlets, a micro-brewery and meeting spaces that can hold up to 2000 guests at any one time (BBC, 2019). The drive behind the expansion of stadium facilities is not simply to improve the matchday experience of spectators, but to provide locals and visitors compelling reasons to frequent the stadia at other moments and for reasons other than to take in a game of football. Ultimately, football clubs have branched out from the core business of football to that of entertainment, hospitality and the visitor experience. These, in turn, provide additional revenue streams that have transformed the sector and further broadened its appeal. Of significant financial importance to football clubs are the sponsorship deals struck between them and other business entities looking at leveraging a positive association with the sport and a particular club. Manchester United have blazed the trail in this regard. Such is the value of the sponsorship deals brokered by the club that its CEO, Ed Woodward, has been quoted as suggesting that the club had outgrown the sport of football and that results on the playing field were not indicative of the overall performance of the organisation (Financial Times, 2016). Sport sponsorship agreements range from the ubiquitous shirt sponsorship, Chevrolet's deal with the aforementioned football team amounted to in excess of €500 million over seven years, to stadium naming rights, becoming the preferred beer partner of a club as in Liverpool F.C's association with Carlsberg beer and all things in between. Appropriate fit between sports franchise and commercial partner is an increasing concern in the modern era of sponsorship and tourism bodies, particularly DMOs, are utilizing this to great effect (Biscaia, Correia, Ross & Rosado, 2014). In the EPL alone the teams of Arsenal and Cardiff were sponsored by the tourism

organisations of Rwanda and Malaysia respectively in 2018, whereas two of the sport's wealthiest franchises, Paris Saint Germain and Manchester City, are closely associated with the nation states of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

The commercialisation of football, its global reach and the emergence of the mega-brands combine to make this an area of interest to tourism authorities, none more so than local DMOs of cities where conditions may be favourable. The complex yet interesting challenge facing these agencies is to tap into the tourism potential of the local football franchise(s) in order to promote the destination for the benefit of all stakeholders (White & Absher, 2013). Sparvero and Chalip (2007) argue for the leverage of professional sports teams in providing benefits for their host cities but also recognise that factors need to be identified that potentially hinder or facilitate effective strategies for doing so.

2.2.6.3 Destination association and impact

Cities such as Barcelona, Manchester, Madrid and Liverpool possess many discerning characteristics that both define and differentiate them. From being seats of political power to centres of industry, music and distinctive architecture, these locations, to greater or lesser degrees, have become poles of attraction inciting the curiosity of visitors. Madrid might be home to the Prado museum, Barcelona the backdrop for Gaudi's whimsical edifices, Liverpool the birthplace of the Beatles and Manchester the canvas for the distinctive art of L.S. Lowry, yet few people would describe these cities so narrowly, such is the array of attributes that define them. One such attribute is undoubtedly each city's association with football via their best-known football

clubs. Whilst many sports franchises delve into the realms of fantasy or mythology in assigning names for themselves, the clubs from the aforementioned cities clearly align themselves with their respective locations incorporating them into the brand name (Evans & Norcliffe, 2016). In Manchester, both City and United are quintessentially Mancunian despite attracting worldwide fans and interest. Likewise, Guschwan (2015) suggests that in Madrid, Barcelona and Liverpool the principal football clubs are inextricably identified with their home cities due to incorporating their respective geographical locations into the brand name. It is unavoidable, given the media hype surrounding the sport, that these football clubs become representative, on a global scale, of their cities. It is also not surprising that the link made between club and city is perceived differently depending on individual interest and exposure to the sport (Pouder, Clark & Fenich, 2018). Destinations appear to struggle with the manner in which these significant attributes might be leveraged for the greater good in a tourism context, something that this study endeavours to investigate.

The countries of Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have controlling interests in the clubs of Paris Saint Germain and Manchester City respectively. In a curious twist on destination association with sports franchises and according to Krzyzaniak (2019), these states have been accused of exercising soft power strategies aimed at enhancing their global reputation in a world that occasionally eyes them with suspicion. Questions over human rights in both nations have had implications for the football clubs who in turn have been subject to accusations of whitewashing and unethical business practices.

White and Absher (2013) posit that countries and not just regions or cities should promote the use of prominent sports clubs to heighten the host country's image on an international scale. They claim that successful sports franchises can directly sway intent to purchase behaviour and generate positive impressions of the country-of-origin image. In order to facilitate such outcomes agencies of the state along with other vested interest groups should, suggest White and Absher (2013), pursue opportunities to allow non-nationals to watch these globally prominent sports teams play either by providing audio-visual/internet platforms for viewing or encouraging teams to visit such countries to engage in contests, which may in turn result in reciprocal visits in the form of tourists. The Sheffield Hallam study (2013), on analysing the value of football to Greater Manchester, contends that clubs are already invested in this process. Almost all the major franchises embark on pre-season tours to foreign locales providing the opportunity for simultaneous trade missions to accompany them. Tangible results of such a strategy are difficult to quantify and judge with no significant studies available to date on the impact that purely successful football clubs have made. There can be little doubt that sports teams are deeply connected with particular locations although in the United States they may uproot periodically. Given such associations Sparvero and Chalip (2007) propose that they should be utilised for optimum effect as leverageable assets. Whilst this thesis focuses on sports franchises the impact of destination association with football in general is clearly demonstrated by the increase in the number of Chinese visitors to Croatia and Iceland following the FIFA World Cup of 2018 where both teams' performances exceeded expectations. Despite being off the conventional tourism trail of the Chinese consumer both Croatia and Iceland enjoyed significant media exposure in China during the course of the competition resulting in increased demand (Wenqian, 2018).

Much of the research surrounding football clubs has focussed almost exclusively on economic impacts or alternatively investigated the negative social aspects associated with the sport, namely football hooligans who Weed (2002) describes as “undesirable sports tourists” (p. 46). Allan et al. (2007) chose Glasgow as the setting for their research on assessing the economic impact of the “Old Firm” (comprising of Celtic and Rangers football clubs), over the course of an entire season, based on the large influx of sports tourists who regularly visit the city to attend games. Both Glasgow clubs have supporters’ clubs dotted around the globe and their season ticket holder list, even back in 2004, included 8% who lived outside of Scotland. Using a two region Input Output model they concluded that the net economic activity generated by this regular seasonal activity was the equivalent of hosting the summer Olympics once every twelve years. In contrast to hosting a mega-event, regular season sporting competitions, such as the Scottish Premier League (the competition to which the study is linked), do not require state funded infrastructure projects nor do they call for much in the way of public support. The infrastructure is already in place and in attracting visitors over the course of the traditionally less favourable months for tourism (autumn, winter and spring) the “Old Firm” was seen to mitigate some of the effects of seasonality in the tourism sector. It is an important piece of literature within the field of football tourism but such studies often fail to quantify the multiplier or knock-on effect accurately and thus can be misleading (Alves, Cerro & Martins, 2010). They also fail to measure other potential impacts ranging from environmental to the social and cultural. Another study conducted by Roberts, Roche and Jones (2016) used similar techniques to measure the net economic impact of a then premier league club, Swansea City, to the region of south Wales. It found that there were substantial positive benefits to the regional economy from hosting a premier league club, including

increased employment but again did not address the wider issues. A similar investigation by Konecke, Preuss and Schutte (2017) examined the regional economic impact of FC Kaiserslautern in Germany. In reality there is little empirical research in the domain of football tourism outside of that relating to competitions such as the world cup which takes place once every four years and is classified as a mega-event. Ohmann, Jones and Wilkes (2006) undertook one such study dealing with the perceived social impacts of hosting the 2006 world cup on the residents of Munich. The research was conducted very close to the actual staging of the tournament and the outcomes were largely perceived as positive. A minority of residents noticed increases in crime, prostitution and displacement of locals, which had been major concerns prior to the event. Other iterations of the world cup have given rise to some unusual pretexts for research including a study on pediatric injury and mortality rates conducted by Zroback, Levin, Manhliot, Alexander, van As and Azzie (2014) during the course of the competition in South Africa in 2010. Yet another project highlighting the prominence of football and its widespread influence investigated the impact of the competition on the Doha stock market following the announcement of Qatar as host country for the competition in 2022 (Al Refai & Eissa, 2017). In general terms, however, the subject of football, the many clubs which form the basis for its popularity and its links to tourism within destinations, is an area that is poorly served by the literature.

2.2.6.4 Football fans, tourists and others

Football as a sport is compelling for many different reasons and what attracts one may not necessarily appeal to all. The action on the field of play replete with often sublime

moments of skill or the cantankerous behaviour of the personalities involved enthrall and occasionally disgust in equal measure. Wright (2019b) argues that attending football games and visiting stadiums is akin to a modern day secular pilgrimage for many since they are associated with so much history and folklore. Wherever the primary motivation lies, Smith and Stewart (2007) make the case that football enthusiasts are not a homogenous audience and that sports franchises are ahead of the curve in recognising this. They have revamped, and in many cases, completely rebuilt stadiums offering products and services catering to a diversity of tastes.

Hunt et al. (1999) contend that specific types of sports fans exist; temporary, local, devoted, fanatical and dysfunctional. It is important to understand the behaviour of each category if one wants to be able to devise appropriate segmentation strategies leading to increased spending or alternatively to modify behaviour that is deemed undesirable. Although such terminology may be anathema to the football fan (Kennedy & Kennedy, 2012), they are indeed consumers and as such respond to similar stimuli and influences as the traditional consumer. Where sports tourists and football fans in particular differ is in their level of loyalty to the brand (in this case the team). Whilst a “temporary” fan may change allegiances Hunt and his colleagues (1999) are quite categorical in stating that the majority of the type engaged in football tourism; “devoted” or “fanatical” simply will not (p. 439). Quite surprisingly it has been suggested that a team’s success does not rate as the most important indicator of a fan’s allegiance, according to Parry (2012), although it would be imprudent to rule this out as an important motivating factor in cultivating brand loyalty. Such a dynamic creates what is tantamount to an oligopolistic market type structure (Kotler et al., 2013).

Not all those in attendance at football matches are necessarily fans in the traditional sense (Hunt et al, 1999). The push factor in influencing visitation may be varied, such as feeling an obligation to attend a game so as to please or appease the sensibilities of a significant other or family member(s). Run as commercial organisations most football clubs are aware that such consumers make up a non-negligible part of the market they serve. In response to this, and as previously alluded to, clubs operating in what is a very competitive sphere, strive to transform the visitor experience into a holistic commercial opportunity. They are constantly seeking to develop and exploit new revenue streams normally situated in and around the confines of the stadium. These may range from accommodation to dining, retail, entertainment and even educational options. Addis (2005, p. 729) defines the combination of the latter two elements as “edutainment” where technological advancements and the public obsession with such opened up an area where these convergent forces have had implications for education on the whole. Football stadia hosting museums and tours were quick to co-opt edutainment into the market offering through the use of virtual reality and other inter-active technologies that, whilst relevant to the traditional fan, are also of interest to others. For some clubs, edutainment has opened up an entirely new market segment as in attracting school visits where the use of technology not only provides insight into the organisation’s history but can be applied to other educational concepts. This effectively nurtures future generations of fans/consumers in the process (Ballofet, Courvoisier & Lagier, 2014).

Edutainment is also a mechanism used by stadia and clubs in attracting tourists who are more concerned with culture and nostalgia rather than regular fandom as in attending actual games. These may be classified as sport heritage tourists (Ramshaw

& Gammon, 2017). Football has often led the way in this field and although the tourist's individual motivation may vary, the obligation to visit the stadium is absolute. Inglis (1996) coined the term *stadiumitis* to identify a particular sub-segment of sports heritage tourists who feel compelled to visit all 92 stadia of clubs playing in the English top flight leagues. In highlighting the phenomenon Wood (2005) suggests that the aforementioned challenge, although unusual, is not restricted to domestic *afficionados*, but international in nature, with Dutch and other European sports heritage tourists having completed the circuit. Wright (2019a) posits that edutainment tools can be positive forces in documenting and effectively commemorating a stadium's heritage, particularly in an era where many historical stadia have been demolished to make way for the more safe and modern edifices of today. Heritage tourism in football is concerned with much more than stadia and is often driven by historical events, games and players according to the aforementioned researcher. It constitutes a sector that overlaps between traditional fandom and culture that is occasionally demarcated along generational lines. Football clubs understand that heritage is being created on a continual basis and that it should be curated in a manner that adds value to the target audience regardless of the motivation of such.

People attend football matches or visit stadiums for a wide variety of reasons that defy facile categorisation. In the era of pervasive social media usage, it is even suggested that some individuals go simply for no other reason than to be seen in a location and consequently enhance their stature on certain social media platforms (Wang, 2014). The challenge for sports franchises and destination marketing organisations is therefore to understand this fractured marketplace and, where possible, to attract more visitors whose primary motivation for travel may not be purely seen through the prism

of sports tourism but whose awareness of the destination is significantly influenced by it. Not all cities possess such exploitable sporting patrimony but a notable few, particularly in Europe, enjoy almost ideal conditions, were they to avail of them.

Hunt et al. (1999) maintain that the consumer of sport tourism comes in many guises and as such proffers a challenge to marketers who are required to adjust the offer so as to suit the wants and needs of a particular market segment. These supporters, and on occasion those accompanying them, will each perceive the destination or place of consumption in a different manner. The appreciation of place will in turn conjure up yet different associations in the minds of those living locally whether they be positively disposed towards the local sports franchise or not. It is clear that destination image is a complex subject ultimately raising the issue of identity (Snelgrove et al., 2008). In a city such as Manchester that is home to two well-known sports franchises, regularly competing against each other in the same sport, the role of identity takes on even more blurred and confusing connotations depending on the perspective from which it is considered (Bernache-Assollant et al., 2007). Despite such challenges, identity and how it is perceived can be used as a force for good in the toolbox of the DMO. Football fans often identify so closely with their team that others in turn see them as being representative of the club, and by extension, their cities of origin. In a best case scenario such individuals assume *pro bono* ambassadorial roles for the destination which can result in repeat visits coupled with promoting the destination to others inspiring visitation. A virtuous circle may in fact come into being where the ambassadorial contingent becomes increasingly large bringing with it great benefits for the locality (Palmer et al., 2013).

One downside to such a phenomenon is the potential to dilute the local identity if ever larger numbers of non-locals, emanating from different geographical locations, are publicly associated with a specific sports club. A very public example of this phenomenon is the generally accepted stereotype of most match-going Manchester United fans coming from outside of Manchester and its hinterland. This is actually a false dichotomy (Brown, 2002) but remains a media heuristic that can lead to local resentment of the “out-of-town” supporter and a subsequent loss of social capital. Questions can also arise as to the authenticity of the experience if local identity is diluted to the point of being unrecognisable (Urry, 2002). In terms of city branding and place marketing this can be problematic since in order for the brand to work effectively all stakeholders must feel a level of involvement (Timur & Getz, 2008). A second downside to any form of reliance of an ambassadorial role for sports fans may simply be down to the mind-set of the individual fan, especially the devoted adept, who can, on occasion, exhibit evidence of irrational behaviour (Hunt et al., 1999). The psychology behind supporter engagement and the influence they exert over the non-fan and others thus feeds into the heart of the challenge faced by the DMO in developing effective strategies of leverage (Smith & Stewart, 2007).

2.3 Summary

This review of the literature depicts the context in which tourism has given rise to many derivatives, with sports tourism being principal amongst them. The sports tourist can be an active participant travelling to a destination to engage in the practice of a sport or a non-active, vicarious participant as a spectator. The study of mega-events such as the Olympic Games and the FIFA world cup have been the focus of much of

the sports tourism literature. Long-term legacies and economic impact have taken precedence over other important variables such as socio-cultural and environmental effects, whilst the potential for the effective leverage of sports from a destination's perspective has been championed by few within the community studying these issues.

For much of its existence sports tourism research lacked methodological diversity with a positivist approach employed by the vast majority of practitioners up until the early part of this century. The methods utilised suggested that the field was attempting to justify its own existence to the larger research community by applying techniques mirroring studies in other more mature areas of investigation. Sports tourism covers such a vast area, with a myriad of sub-sectors, that over time and almost inevitably the field matured with a variety of methodologies adopted reflecting the diversity inherent to the sector.

No sport can vie with association football in popularity. It is the largest participation sport on the planet and is enjoyed as a spectacle by countless millions globally. Devotees of the sport travel in large numbers to watch their clubs play, yet few significant studies have investigated this phenomenon from anything but an economic or sociological angle. Football is big business with the most important actors transformed into some of the world's most recognisable brands. Were this in any other arena such brands would be the focus of great research interest, yet this overview exposes the lack of serious exploration of organisations that enjoy worldwide acclaim and regularly feature in media headlines. Section 2.6 aptly demonstrates this dearth of academic enquiry with the business literature providing the basis for many of the

points discussed therein. Moreover, the failure of destination marketing organisations to harness the power of such brands, based in their localities, suggests a deeper malaise and a level of confusion as to how to exploit the reach of these brands who can act as drivers for inbound tourism for the benefit of all stakeholders.

The rationale driving this study is to ultimately identify factors or elements of best practice that might be replicated in different locations ensuring that DMO's maximise the potential offered by highly visible sports franchises in a tourism context. In order to advance worthwhile recommendations, the relationships between the brand and the locality must be investigated as well as their implications in a wider setting. These organisations operate in a field that is very much guided by the principles of stakeholder theory and a clear understanding of this is essential to their good governance. Tourism and football clubs seem unlikely bedfellows, but the evidence suggests that the most famous football clubs associated with particular locations not only act as catalysts for tourism but reflect the essence of place to a large global audience, which should not be ignored by Destination Marketing Organisations. In reflecting on the literature, it becomes quite apparent that this is a domain where few, if any, studies have been undertaken with practically none focusing specifically on the global reach of renowned sport franchises that may ultimately offer optimal opportunities for leverage.

The next section, chapter three, introduces two cities where potentially favourable circumstances allow for combining tourism with sport bound by the construct of leverage that is so central to this research.

Chapter Three: A Tale of Two Cities

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides background information on the principal actors that form the basis for this research. The study concentrates on the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester. Both are tourism destinations that have evolved in different ways owing their place in the world to events of the recent and not too recent past. These cities represent different things to different people. Indeed, it is that which makes them eminently interesting places to visit. Amsterdam is a city immersed in art and culture. It also holds the accolade for being one of the most liberal municipalities on the planet (Shorto, 2014). Manchester, in the north of England, once synonymous with heavy industry, now leaves its mark on the world through its football clubs and music scene, yet both cities are so much more than the aforementioned. These are dynamic metropolises that, for a variety of reasons, have proven to be poles of attraction for what Urry (2002) calls the *Tourist Gaze*.

Cities have always enticed visitors whether for purposes of increased employment prospects, as travel hubs with network connections, and of course for the many cultural attractions or diversions that they invariably offer. Euromonitor (2019) compiles global statistics on tourism each year where the world's major conglomerations such as Hong Kong, London, Paris, New York and Bangkok regularly feature in the top ten most visited locations on the planet. The rise of the city break (Dunne, Buckley & Flanagan, 2007), facilitated by deregulation of the airline industry, has seen city/urban

tourism come into its own with vast numbers of people regularly indulging in short city break holidays.

DMOs and other researchers frequently interrogate tourists in situ to discern or uncover elements that have inspired them to travel. Studies have indicated, for example, that a significant number of visitors to Whitby in North Yorkshire are motivated by the role the town played in Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (Reijnders, 2011). Rio de Janeiro's carnival attracts almost one million spectacle motivated revellers each year (Mariutti & Giraldo, 2013), while Las Vegas surprisingly is not only a gambling Mecca but attracts tourists interested in nightlife, entertainment and museums (Fuat-Firat, 2001). Visitor motivation is complex and the lines will often be blurred with a combination of factors coming in to play. Dublin, a popular city break destination, was designated the fourth UNESCO city of literature in 2010 yet visitor perceptions of the city rarely relate to this auspicious accolade and cite the friendly and fun nature of the location and its inhabitants as being the primary motivating factors to visit. With such a contrasting array of attributes policy makers, frequently via under-resourced DMOs, are faced with the unenviable task of choosing the most marketable assets to exploit so that the often-long-term objectives for a destination are achieved.

Amsterdam and Manchester are fascinating locations in this respect since to varying degrees they are over-endowed when it comes to visitor attractions. They face different challenges in how to manage or encourage the influx of tourists, yet by chance or design and just within their grasp can be found some of the most marketable assets on

the planet that could be co-opted to facilitate in this mission. For practically 12 months of the year (even during the off-season), the media spotlight shines on the football clubs of Ajax of Amsterdam and the Manchester behemoths of United and City. From a tourism perspective these organisations, in essence global brands, represent an untapped resource that makes a potentially compelling case for leverage.

This section also includes information providing context highlighting the contemporary tourism environment forming the backdrop for the research in both locations. Documentary evidence was gathered pertaining to visitor numbers and composition as well as the evolution of the hospitality sector in Amsterdam and Manchester. The role of the respective DMO, as evidenced by their corporate literature, was also noted along with brief insights into some of the challenges they face. For expediency purposes abbreviations are used hereafter to identify the DMOs of both cities and the sports franchises of interest in Manchester:

Amsterdam DMO, Amsterdam&Partners – *A&P*

Manchester DMO, Marketing Manchester – *MM*

Manchester United Football Club – *MUFC*

Manchester City Football Club – *MCFC*

3.1 Amsterdam

From inauspicious beginnings as a 13th century fishing village, the city of Amsterdam and its hinterland have grown into the role of commercial and cultural capital of the Netherlands and as a major European visitor destination; home to a myriad of

attractions that often delight, occasionally dismay, but most often intrigue foreign and domestic visitors. It is a city where highbrow meets lowbrow, where the iconic portraits of Rembrandt vie for the public's attention next to the gaudy facades of the red-light district. It is also a city bearing witness to the horrors inflicted on Europe during the 20th century, most notably catalogued by the minutiae of a young girl's life as she hid from occupying military forces (Anne Frank House, 2020), yet also celebrates alternative lifestyles, most visibly depicted in its tolerance towards the consumption of soft drugs in its iconic coffeeshops. It is a contradiction yet exudes a confidence, sophistication and vibrancy that complement one another; a combination that make Amsterdam an essential stopping-off point on many a tourism itinerary.

3.1.1 Past to present

Commercial activity in the form of exacting tolls from passing beer and herring traders navigating the river Amstel and its tributaries gave rise to establishment of a settlement surrounding what is now Dam Square in the heart of the city during the early part of the 13th century. The original inhabitants, displaying signs of the business nous that remain an essential characteristic of the city, quickly learnt the art of brewing and became expert boat builders thus enhancing the town's reputation. Count Floris of Holland formalised these activities in the latter part of the same century and in 1306 the bishop of Utrecht granted Amsterdam city rights. Trade flourished and Amsterdam grew to be an important trading partner of the Hanseatic League although did not enjoy actual membership status (Liggio, 2007).

Amsterdam developed rapidly and with the creation in 1602 of the Dutch East India Company, (the world's first multi-national), the city entered its "Golden Age" on the back of great wealth where the arts flourished and the appearance of the town was transformed (Schama, 1988). The legacy of this period is still seen today in the city's buildings, canals and in the great works of Rembrandt, Vermeer and Jan Steen amongst others.

Although it underwent a period of stagnation following the infamous tulip crash that is often referred to as the world's first major recession (Thompson, 2006), the Amsterdam spirit could not be quenched and as home to the Dutch East India Company it remained a major centre of international trade, particularly the spice trade and other exotic commodities. With the construction and opening of the North Sea Canal in the 19th century, the city's importance was only solidified and it expanded whilst also becoming a focal point for the lucrative diamond trade (Shorto, 2014).

By the turn of the 20th century Amsterdam was well established alongside the likes of Paris, London, Berlin and Vienna as being one of Europe's great cities. An ever-growing population enabled the city to expand beyond its original confines and the construction of monumental architectural masterpieces, including the main railway station, added to the city's character and attractiveness. It was an enlightened period that gave rise to the "Amsterdam school" (Casciato, 1996), which designed and provided low-cost housing to the city's underprivileged. Indeed, the city was often referred to as *Mokum*, a Hebrew word meaning safe-haven, such was the tolerance and openness of its inhabitants (Jewish Historical Museum, 2014).

A rather brutal curtain was brought down on this era with the onset of another economic crash in the 1930s, ultimately resulting in global warfare and the occupation of the city by foreign forces. Although physically unscathed (for the most part) by the conflict, the resulting starvation and persecution of its Jewish population left deep scars. It is a matter of record that Amsterdam lost almost its entire Jewish community during this period accounting for ten percent of the population (Jewish Historical museum, 2014).

The post-war period saw the transformation of Amsterdam from a purely Dutch city into a multi-cultural melting pot. With colonies strewn across the globe, the Netherlands, as experienced by the other great colonial powers, became a destination of choice for many of its colonial subjects hailing from as far away as Indonesia in Asia, to Suriname in South America and the many Caribbean islands where Dutch hegemony prevailed. Increasing economic prosperity and the presence of internationally renowned companies such as Philips led to workers from North Africa and Turkey being invited to take positions within the manufacturing industry and agriculture. This influx of migrants changed the nature of the city to the point that today some 45% of all Amsterdam residents are the offspring of people born outside the Netherlands (I amsterdam, 2014).

The 1960s and 70s also heralded an era of significant cultural change that greatly affected Amsterdam, the results of which are still visible. The traditional tolerance for others coupled with lax drug laws made the city a Mecca for hippies and other alternative lifestyles. John Lennon and Yoko Ono famously held one of their “sleep-

ins” for world peace at the Amsterdam Hilton in 1969 (Concannon, 2014). The sexual revolution of the age commodified the city’s long established red-light district as a cultural attraction in its own right and the political landscape was turbulent. A housing crisis and militancy led to stand-offs between the authorities, radical political groups and criminal elements that often resulted in violence. The quickly changing demographic profile of the city also made it a theatre of operations, or target, for radical separatist organisations from the former colonies.

Despite the many challenges Amsterdam has adapted and changed in an ever-oscillating environment. With the demise of manufacturing in western countries, the Netherlands, with Amsterdam as its commercial capital, has embraced the service and knowledge based economy (Bontje & Sleutjes, 2007). A liberal tax-base has attracted inward investment providing jobs and opportunities. The mantra of the city is liveability and quality of life, as reflected in its perennially high position in worldwide quality of life indices (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2007). It is a vibrant melting-point that is perhaps best encapsulated by the style and charisma of its globally renowned football team, Ajax of Amsterdam.

3.1.2 AFC Ajax

Founded in 1900, Ajax of Amsterdam is one of Europe’s most storied football clubs and is firmly woven into the fabric of city life. It is an organisation that both engenders civic pride and represents Amsterdam on the global stage that is football. The legend of the club is such that it is readily associated with a style of play and philosophy that has assumed almost mythical proportions. From the great Johan Cruyff in the 1970s to

the more recent eras of Marco van Basten and Dennis Bergkamp, Ajax has become a byword for skill, style and sophistication. In many ways the club has transformed into a symbol for the entire Netherlands rather than just the city of Amsterdam and its original concept of “total football” based on high levels of technical skill and fitness, was co-opted by the highly successful Dutch national side in the 1970s (FIFA, 2020). Ajax itself won three consecutive European cups (predecessor of the Champions League) in the same decade, which no doubt added to the esteem and prestige that it retains as one of Europe’s elite clubs.

Using the partially municipally owned Amsterdam Arena, renamed the Johan Cruyff Arena in 2018, as its stadium and base of operations, Ajax is the subject of a long and proud history. It is inextricably linked to the city and its people. In the 1930s the team moved to the *De Meer Stadion* in the east of the city, adjacent to its largest Jewish neighbourhood and thus began the club’s long and continued association with Judaism, including during the harrowing events of Nazi occupation (Kuper, 2011). Although strictly a secular organisation the links remains strong to this day however, the club, as reflected in its players and supporters, epitomises the multi-cultural character of Amsterdam.

Ajax is the most successful football club in the Netherlands, having lifted its 35th league title in 2021. It is also the country’s most successful club on the international stage with numerous trophies to its credit, including four European Champion cups. The club has particularly strong traditions in nurturing local talent and is home to a youth academy that provides a template that many clubs try to emulate (Rudd, 2019).

In expanding its operations internationally Ajax has used its youth academy model to engage with partners in the United States, Greece and South Africa, where it has also established a professional club, Ajax Cape Town, playing in South Africa's top league. The Johan Cruyff Arena not only attracts over 50,000 spectators to each of Ajax's home games, but also hosts a club museum and organises stadium tours which make it a popular tourism destination in itself. Football is a fiercely competitive business and whilst enjoying success on the pitch Ajax has also been looking at ways to develop commercially and increase its fan base, said to number approximately 7.3 million in Europe, so that it may compete with the other continental giants such as Real Madrid, Bayern Munich and Manchester United (Sport & Markt, 2010).

3.1.3 Tourism

Amsterdam is a major tourist destination. Indeed, visiting Amsterdam is almost considered a rite of passage in western society for the more youthful traveller and young adult.

What attracts visitors to the city is the diversity of its attractions ranging from the arts and culture to the ubiquitous coffee shops and its pulsating nightlife. The *Rijksmuseum* is rightly considered a world-class centre of the arts with a collection of some one million objects of which only 8,000 are on display at any given time. After an extensive refurbishment, lasting 10 years, the museum re-opened to great fanfare in April 2013 and had welcomed 2.2 million visitors by year's end. Both the Van Gogh and *Stedelijk* museums offer a contrasting image to the classicisms of the *Rijksmuseum* and attract significant visitor numbers as do their lesser known counterparts (I amsterdam,

2020b). The Anne Frank house depicts a sad era of the city's history whilst under Nazi occupation and reveals the now well documented conditions experienced by the young Anne Frank and her family up until the moment they were betrayed and dispatched to concentration camps where all but one family member died.

From dark tourism to lifestyle tourism and one of the world's largest gay pride events held in August of each year, Amsterdam manages to appeal to a broad range of visitors. Set amidst a backdrop of canals and enchanting architecture, juxtaposed against the garish red-light district and the ultra-modern facades of gleaming office buildings in the near suburbs, the city offers a wide range of possibilities to explore (Baginski, 2014). The tourism sector employs 10 percent of the city's workforce (almost 70,000 people) and contributes hugely to both the local and national economy (Statista, 2020).

Despite its apparent success as a tourism destination Amsterdam is often stigmatised for its liberal attitude towards sex tourism, as well as its well documented and pernicious association with narcotics (Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2006). Wonders and Michalowski (2001) cite the efforts made by the authorities during the last decades of the twentieth century to regulate the sex industry and stymie the influence of organised crime in a sphere that is often dominated by criminal syndicates. Almost fifteen years later it is still a work in progress and a point of contention for a city that sees itself as much more than a Mecca for sex tourism and drugs (Neuts, Devos & Dirckx, 2014).

Amsterdam&Partners (A&P, described further in section 3.1.3.2) is tasked with promoting the city and managing its tourism activities both locally and internationally.

In a wide-ranging initiative involving many stakeholders, the authorities developed what they believe to be, a coherent marketing strategy for the city going forward in an increasingly competitive environment (Kavaratzis & Ashworth 2007). This strategy is communicated via the “I amsterdam” brand which is a recurring theme throughout the city, in the virtual space and integrated into all promotional literature. It is also used in some of the promotional content of the city’s principal sports franchise, AFC Ajax.

In recent years the local government has sought to mediate the impact of tourism on residents’ quality of life. A number of measures have been implemented to ease the strain felt by a city that was perceived to be awash in party seeking hedonists disturbing the peace of local citizens (Pinkster & Botterman, 2017). These are elaborated upon in chapter five.

3.1.3.1 Amsterdam’s tourism evolution: The facts and figures

The UNWTO has tracked inbound tourism arrivals to the Netherlands over a significant period of time. Table 3.1 highlights the principal figures concerned. Although these do not directly refer to Amsterdam, the number of international visitor arrivals at Schiphol airport suggest that many international arrivals visit the city or at the very least transit through it.

Table 3.1

International Visitors to the Netherlands 2009 – 2020

Year	International Arrivals (millions)	Receipts per arrival US\$	Total international receipts US\$ (billion)
2009	9.9	1140	11.3
2010	10.9	1080	11.7
2011	11.3	1140	12.8
2012	12.2	1010	12.3
2013	12.8	1070	13.7
2014	13.9	1070	14.9
2015	15	890	13.4
2016	15.8	920	14.5
2017	17.9	900	16.1
2018	18.8	960	18.6
2019	20 (unofficial)		

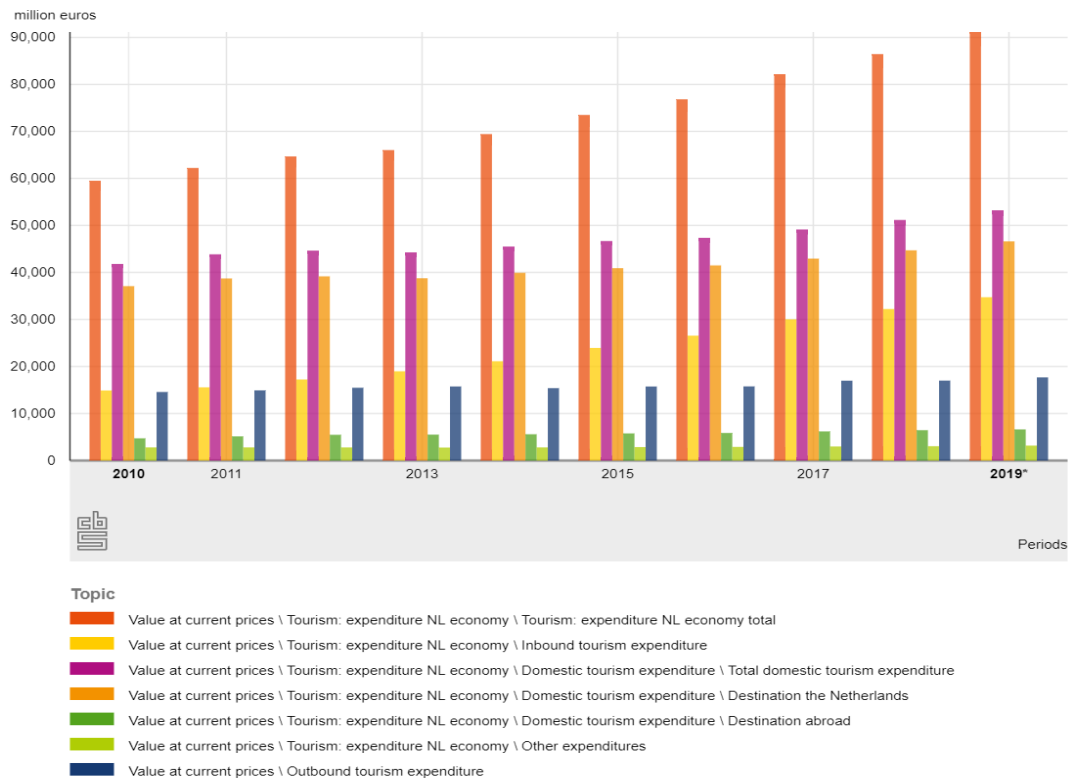
Note: Adapted from Tourism Dashboard by UNWTO (<https://www.unwto.org/country-profile-inbound-tourism>). In the public domain.

International tourism in the Netherlands has essentially doubled over a 10-year period, experiencing annual growth of approximately 6% on average. Tourism's importance to the national economy is underscored by its contribution of 4.4% to the national GDP and related employment figures of almost 800,000 according to the Dutch Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). In 2018, tourists spent 87.5 billion Euros in the country. Whilst the table tracks the number of international visitors it should be pointed out that domestic tourism accounts for the majority of all tourism activity in the Netherlands

and consequently much of the aforementioned spend. Using 2017 as a metric the CBS notes that domestic tourists outnumbered international visitors, 24.3 million to 17.9 million. It also highlights that the only Dutch province with a majority of international visitors is Noord Holland, of which Amsterdam is the main city (CBS, 2020).

Figure 3.1

Tourism Expenditure in the Netherlands



Note: From Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). (2020a). Tourism expenditure: National accounts.

Domestic tourism expenditure grew at a steady pace between 2010 and 2019 (the last year for when official figures are available), registering an increase of approximately

21%. International tourism expenditure more than doubled during the same period (see figure 3.1).

The figures are notable for Amsterdam which hosts the greatest number of foreign visitors. The success of the tourism industry, whilst beneficial to many, is not always perceived in a positive light due to issues of overcrowding, tourist behaviour and subsequent inconveniences experienced by residents. The extent to which AirBnB has spread in the city also raised concern with the authorities limiting the number of nights properties can be made available through the online platform. The shifting public perception of an industry that contributes so much to Amsterdam has led to calls for initiatives that ameliorate the quality of life of residents, whilst also delivering a more contained tourism experience that is sustainable over the long term. The local hospitality sector, described in section 3.1.3.2, is but one example of an industry that has benefited enormously from the city's popularity as a destination.

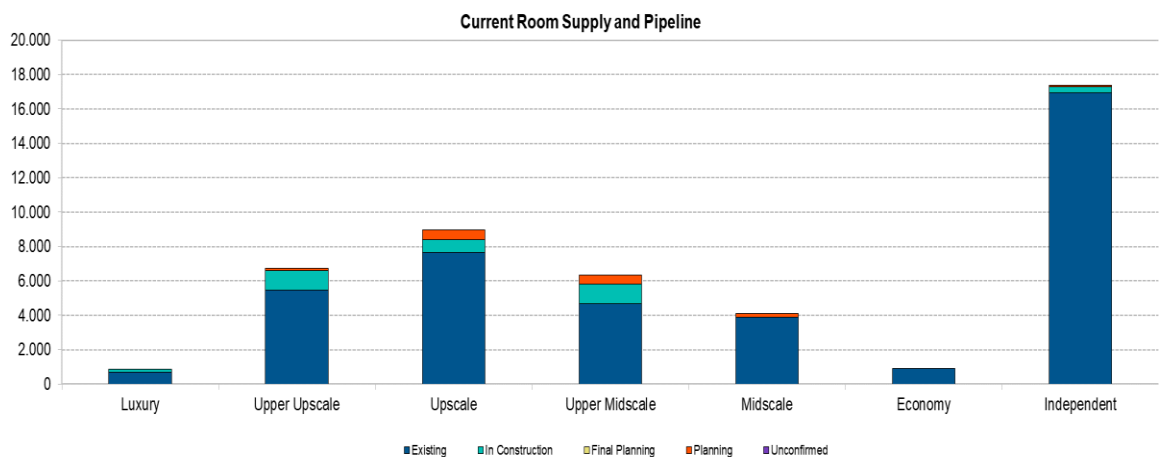
3.1.3.2 Amsterdam hospitality sector in the 21st century

Reports garnered from the well-respected STR Global group that specialises in hospitality industry market intelligence data, maps the evolution of this important sector of the visitor economy in the city of Amsterdam over time. The reports, excerpts of which are reproduced in this section, detail information related to the current supply of hotel rooms and properties in the city, whilst showing additional properties scheduled for opening by 2020 when the city's moratorium on future builds came into effect. The data also traces an important metric of the sector's performance, hotel

occupancy rates, over a period of 20 years that indicate the health of the tourism sector in Amsterdam.

Figure 3.2

Amsterdam Hotel Room Supply and Pipeline



Note: Adapted from STR Global. (2020a). *Market pipeline report: Amsterdam*. STR Global.

Figure 3.2 highlights the distribution of hotel rooms across the city of Amsterdam, including those under construction and planned. Amsterdam possesses a varied portfolio of lodging establishments to meet the requirements of visitors. There are a limited number of hotels at opposite ends of the scale, with only five high end luxury properties including the iconic Amstel hotel, the Waldorf Astoria and the W, representing the major brands of InterContinental, Hilton and Marriott International respectively. The economy or budget sector is similarly served by a small number of recognisable brands run by major hotel chains such as Accor and its Ibis brand. The

city is home to a large number of small independent operators accounting for in excess of 16,000 rooms, many of whom cater to the midscale and economy (budget) sector. The former, (midscale), and upscale sectors, represented by international and domestic hotel groups, account for 40% of all rooms in the city, a similar tally to that of the independents. Much of the hotel stock is located in areas in proximity to the canal ring so popular with visitors however, the district surrounding the Johan Cruyff Arena (home to AFC Ajax) has also witnessed the opening of three hotels in the past decade operated by international chains such as Hilton and the Accor group.

In recent times the sharing economy, most notably characterised by the presence of AirBnB, enjoyed significant growth in the Amsterdam leisure accommodation market with almost 20,000 listings on the platform in 2020.

Table 3.2

Historic Hotel Occupancy Rates Amsterdam

Year	Occupancy in %	Change in %	Year	Occupancy in %	Change in %
2000	83.3		2010	73.2	10.0
2001	76.4	-8.3	2011	74.1	1.2
2002	75.7	-0.9	2012	74.2	0.1
2003	70.5	-6.9	2013	75.1	1.1
2004	72.8	3.3	2014	75.7	0.9
2005	74.6	2.5	2015	78.1	3.1
2006	78.7	5.4	2016	78.3	0.3
2007	78.1	-0.8	2017	81.5	4.1
2008	72.7	-6.9	2018	82.0	0.6
2009	66.6	-8.4	2019	82.0	0.0
			Avg	76.1	

Note: Adapted from STR Global. (2020a). *Market pipeline report: Amsterdam*. STR Global.

According to PWC's European cities hotel forecast, Amsterdam shared the continent's highest hotel occupancy rates with London in 2018 at 82%, with similar levels reached in 2019 despite an increased supply of rooms. STR global tracks occupancy rates from 2000, as can be seen from table 3.2 representing the actual occupancy rates year on year and the corresponding increase or decrease in percentage terms. The city's hotels experienced mostly steady gains since the turn of the 21st century despite occasional setbacks such as the global recession beginning in 2008 that led to a momentary dip in overnight stays. The occupancy rates peak from March to November with measurable decreases over the winter months indicating a seasonal trend. High occupancy for its hotels feature as one of the main goals of Amsterdam's DMO.

3.1.3.3 Amsterdam & Partners (DMO)

The capital's DMO, *A&P*, sees itself very much as an organisation beholden to the city's residents and its partner stakeholders. *A&P* is acutely aware of a changing attitude towards tourism and places an emphasis on a city that is liveable, attractive and prosperous throughout its corporate literature (I amsterdam, 2020a). It describes its three target groups as residents, visitors and businesses.

Formerly known as Amsterdam Marketing, the organisation became *Amsterdam&Partners* in 2019 to reflect the evolving environment and its changing mandate from city marketing to improving Amsterdam's reputation and influencing people's behaviour. Its 150 full time staff work with a vast array of stakeholders including 32 municipalities, two Dutch provinces, and 1050 private, public and cultural partners.

A&P communicates with its publics via the “I Amsterdam” brand that it helped create. It also developed the popular “I Amsterdam” city card that grants visitors access to over 70 of the city’s main attractions as well as the use of public transport and bicycle rental schemes. The card is sold online and through many of the tourism office outlets that *A&P* has established across the city, including in the arrival halls of Schiphol airport and the central train station.

Perhaps a victim of its own success, *A&P* no longer actively promotes Amsterdam to the individual leisure traveller but continues to market the city as a destination for meetings and events, which it sees as crucially important both economically and in encouraging knowledge exchange. The Dutch national tourist board, known by its acronym NBTC (Netherlands Board of Tourism and Conventions), is equally focused on positioning the Netherlands as a major MICE destination and partners with *A&P* in promotional campaigns appealing to that market. In 2018 Amsterdam hosted 2,070 international meetings and according to the director of *A&P*, Geerte Udo, these contributed almost one third of the increase in hotel overnight stays in the city. The dual track of attracting further MICE activity and managing the increased visitor numbers are central themes of the organisation’s philosophy of adding value to the city in its entirety, a viewpoint shared by its counterpart in Manchester.

3.2 Manchester

From the remnants of an ancient Roman fort to the fine examples of classic Victorian buildings and the futuristic design of some of its most recent edifices, Manchester is a city of contrasts. Continuously inhabited since Roman times, it evolved into the

world's first industrial city (Kidd, 2006) during the 19th century when it enjoyed unbridled economic prosperity alongside deprivations and poverty that inspired Marx and Engels to write the *Communist Manifesto*. As a centre of industry Manchester was targeted extensively during the Second World War and again by a massive terrorist bomb in 1996 that laid waste to much of the central business district. It has spawned great thinkers, artists, sportspeople and musicians. The city takes pride in its thriving gay and lesbian community and is a sophisticated metropolis of different cultures. It is the hometown of L.S. Lowry who captured the quotidian existence of its inhabitants in a series of paintings displayed at the museum bearing his name. It is the setting for Britain's best loved TV soap drama, *Coronation Street*, and has given birth to a music scene only matched by its closest neighbour, Liverpool. On the city's outskirts can be found one of the great cathedrals of football, Old Trafford, where perhaps, the world's most famous football club, regularly plays in front of 75,000 spectators and to countless millions worldwide via TV and satellite. In the space of a few short years Manchester is now positioned as England's most visited city outside of London, which has transformed it into a must-see destination for tourists, both domestic and international.

3.2.1 Past to present

A Roman fort, parts of which are still standing, was established at *Mamucium* in or around 79 AD heralding almost two thousand years of human presence on the site of what is present day central Manchester. The fort's initial purpose was to protect the interests of the empire against the Scots, Welsh and local Celtic tribes known as the Brigantes. Although abandoned in the late 3rd or early 4th century, the area was

sufficiently developed to support a diverse population of Saxons, Danes and Normans who vied for supremacy during one of the most turbulent periods of the city's past (Hylton, 2003).

Manchester became an important centre for the region's textile trade during the 1300s following the arrival of Flemish weavers, who unwittingly set in motion a series of events that would result in the city ultimately becoming the world's textile capital a few centuries later. It was a hotbed of activity during the English civil war and indeed strife and violence appear interwoven into the fabric of the area during much of its early history, but commerce in the form of the textile industry protected the settlement from obliteration. Cotton was to prove a lifesaver for the city and made its first appearance in accounts from the 1600s resulting in the opening of many mills and a commodities exchange by 1729. With the onset of the industrial revolution, Manchester was transformed into the world's largest marketplace for textile manufacturing and was often referred to as "Cottonopolis". Such was the city's importance that the population expanded at an astonishing rate with migrants arriving in great numbers from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and other parts of England (Kidd, 2006). In a political sense Manchester became a renowned centre of capitalism but also played a notable role in the history of communism and the labour movement. Friedrich Engels spent much of his life in the city and hosted Karl Marx when he visited (Kautsky, 2011). The British labour party and the Suffragette movement were founded in the city. The latter part of the 19th century represented somewhat of a golden age for Manchester which saw capitalist innovation co-exist alongside progressive political movements seeking to better the human condition. The opening of the Manchester ship canal in 1894 provided this inland metropolis with direct access to

the sea, and a large port, which only enhanced its stature and economic importance (Hylton, 2003).

Despite facing increasing competition, both domestically and from other emerging centres of industry abroad, Manchester consolidated its industrial base in the early part of the 20th century. By the outset of the Second World War it was such a powerhouse that it became a prized target for the German *Luftwaffe*. The city and its industrial hinterland suffered in the extreme with over 37,000 bombs dropped over the Christmas period of 1940 alone. Much of the old city was destroyed and even the famous football ground (Old Trafford), on the city's fringes, was levelled. It took up to twenty years for restoration works to be completed on some of the area's most prominent buildings such as Manchester Cathedral. This period coincided with a gradual decline in the region's industrial base. Cotton processing decreased in importance and the once bustling port eventually closed in 1982 since it was unable to handle the ever larger container ships of the era.

The British economy changed dramatically in the post war period up until the end of the 20th century. Heavy industry and manufacturing were replaced by a streamlined service sector, entirely at odds with the profile of Manchester. The city lost over 150,000 jobs in a 20 year period from 1960 to 1980 (Kidd, 2006) and the economic policies of the government of Margaret Thatcher further impacted the area. There was widespread social disaffection, a flight from the city centre, and a stagnation reflected in newspaper cuttings of the times depicting the city as a depressing post-industrial backwater (Kidd, 2006).

The first attempt at city regeneration began in the late 1980s, however, it was not until a massive Irish Republican Army bomb decimated the city centre in 1996, that regeneration and re-imaging of the city seriously took hold (Medway & Warnaby, 2013). Buildings were refurbished and many old industrial premises were transformed into shopping malls, restaurants, hotels and entertainment venues. The investment has been so extensive that even the beleaguered port was rebranded as Salford Quays, becoming one of the most sought after residential and commercial districts in the region. Manchester made a number of bids to host the summer Olympics and was eventually chosen as the site for the Commonwealth Games in 2002. The city continues to re-invent itself in the 21st century and is now widely considered to be the second city of England, acting as both a cultural and economic capital for the northern tier of the country (Kidd, 2006). It is also often labelled as England's premier footballing city playing host to two of the country's most successful teams.

3.2.2 Manchester and its football clubs

From humble beginnings when founded in 1878, Manchester United (MUFC) has become England's most storied and legendary football club. The team's colours (red, white and black), along with the image of the red devil emblazoned across the club's crest, are globally recognisable symbols of a sporting organisation that has mutated into an iconic brand. MUFC divides opinion like no other football club in the United Kingdom; on the one hand the most loved and best supported team, whilst on the other, the most loathed (Wilson, 2018). This phenomenon is replicated globally with the club making the outlandish claim to have 659 million fans dotted around the globe, or a staggering almost one in ten of the world's population (McMahon, 2018). No matter

the perspective, there can be little doubt that the club is immensely popular, to the extent that it has outgrown its home city in terms of global recognition. For many, United has become the *de facto* symbol of Manchester.

Subject of a long and colourful history MUFC has experienced many fluctuations in fortunes over the years. From lifting the European Champions Cup in May 1999, thus completing a clean sweep of all major competitions entered that season, to the afternoon of February 6th 1958 when 23 of its players and staff perished in an air crash in Munich, the club has continually fascinated supporters and onlookers alike (White, 2009). The attacking style of play, with which the team is associated, coupled with the fame of its star players, imbues United with a sense of style and glamour that few sporting franchises can match.

Old Trafford stadium on the west side of Manchester, and officially outside the city limits, has been the club's headquarters since 1910. Although virtually destroyed during the Second World War, it is now the largest club football stadium in the United Kingdom with a capacity of 75,811 and is often referred to as the "Theatre of Dreams." MUFC is a sporting and economic giant said to be the most valuable sports club on the planet, valued at almost \$4 billion (Forbes, 2018). Even on non-match days the ground is a hive of activity with visitors from across the globe taking the opportunity to complete a tour of the facilities and the club museum, which is one of Manchester's principal tourism attractions (Bourne, 2013).

Across the city Manchester City (MCFC), once referred to as the noisy neighbour of United, has undergone a metamorphosis of dramatic proportions over the past 10 years, which has seen it claw its way out of the lower tiers of English football to becoming Premiership champion in five of the last 10 seasons. Based at the city of Manchester stadium, the club was purchased by a conglomerate closely linked to the Emirati state of Abu Dhabi and its ruling family. Despite a rich history spanning three centuries (City were founded as Ardwick F.C in 1880), the recent upturn in the club's fortunes has propelled it to the forefront of world football and the accompanying media hype that surrounds the sport. In 2018 Forbes magazine valued the club at almost \$3 billion, making it the fifth most valuable football franchise on the planet. The "Citizens" routinely fill their 55,000 all seater stadium on matchdays which, not unlike their neighbours at Old Trafford, offers tours and hosts a museum celebrating the club's history.

The Greater Manchester region is home to a total of eight professional football clubs that includes teams such as Bolton Wanderers and Wigan Athletic, both of whom have spent a number of years in England's top flight competition (Mitten, 2015). It is hard to avoid the presence of football in a city that appears so obsessed with it. It is also home to the National Football Museum based in the iconic Urbis building designed by award winning architect Ian Simpson.

3.2.3 Tourism

Up until the recent past the notion of equating Manchester with tourism would have been a source of mirth in some quarters. Indeed, even today many people are unaware

of the city and region's varied attractions yet Manchester has thrived as a tourist destination. The city's visitor economy has stimulated entrepreneurship and the creation of countless new jobs (Marketing Manchester, 2018b).

Manchester caters to a wide variety of tastes as illustrated by its eclectic range of attractions. The Lowry, at Salford Quays, is an architectural wonder hosting not only the works of L.S. Lowry, but other art exhibitions, concert halls and studios for the performing arts. Completed in 2000 it has quickly become integrated into the city's cultural landscape and has earned a worldwide reputation for excellence (The Lowry, 2014). Other cultural highlights include the Bridgewater Hall, the Imperial War Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, Chetham Public Library (the oldest public library in the world) and The Whitworth Art Gallery, amongst others (Schofield, 2005).

In terms of popular culture Manchester is the setting for the United Kingdom's longest running TV soap opera, *Coronation Street*, the set of which can be visited at Granada studios. It also gave birth to the thriving "Madchester" music scene producing bands such as Oasis, The Stone Roses, The Happy Mondays and many more (Wilson 2002). The city's nightlife is legendary with the former Hacienda Club providing the backdrop for the movie, *24 Hour Party People*, that has gone on to enjoy cult-like status. Such was the impact of the music and nightlife scene that it became a must-visit destination for a more youthful demographic in the latter part of the last century. Manchester nightlife continues to flourish and is undoubtedly buoyed by the presence of one of Europe's largest student populations estimated at 100,000.

The city is keen to promote itself as a cultural melting pot and has a record of welcoming migrants over a long period. Chinatown, in the city centre, is a major tourist attraction and also entices locals with a vast array of restaurants, karaoke bars and markets. Rusholme, located on the southern periphery, is famed for its “Currymile” of Indian and Pakistani restaurants co-existing harmoniously side-by-side. The city is awash with such a wide selection of restaurants and different cuisines that it is almost rare to stumble upon the once ubiquitous symbol of England, the fish and ship shop (Schofield, 2005).

Visitor surveys (Marketing Manchester, 2018b) identify shopping as a major draw for tourists. The city is endowed with a plethora of retail options ranging from Europe’s largest city centre shopping mall, the Arndale centre, to the more fashionable boutiques of the Deansgate corridor and the sprawling Trafford centre on the outskirts of the city.

Having hosted the Commonwealth games in 2002, Manchester can also boast an impressive sporting infrastructure. Sportcity, the site of the games, is home to the largest concentration of sports venues in the United Kingdom (Sportcity, 2014). These include the Manchester City football stadium, their extensive training facilities, and the velodrome of the National Cycling Centre. The city is also the base for Lancashire County Cricket club and is regularly selected as the venue to stage international test cricket matches. On the city’s outskirts, in the borough of Trafford, can be found the home of perhaps Manchester’s most visible export to the world; Old Trafford and Manchester United.

Located inland in a rather inclement region, Manchester is often mistakenly referred to as the wettest city in England (Hylton, 2003). It is hardly a traditional tourism hotspot but still suffers from the erstwhile complaints of inflated prices and other negative social impacts associated with tourism the world over (Archer, Cooper & Ruhanen, 2005). *MM*, with over 500 members (all tourism stakeholders), has sought to mitigate such perceptions through a series of initiatives that are elaborated upon in chapter five.

3.2.3.1 Manchester's tourism evolution: The facts and figures

Visitor numbers to Manchester have climbed steadily over the past decade. Official statistics from the UK's national tourism body, VisitBritain, place Manchester third behind London and Edinburgh as the country's destination of choice for international visitors. Domestic tourism has also flourished during this period as manifested in the number of day visitors to the city from elsewhere in Great Britain of over 60 million. Overnight stays of domestic visitors in Greater Manchester are estimated at 3.4 million, based on averages calculated between 2016 and 2018, according to *MM*. The international leisure market is particularly important from an economic perspective to the DMO since the average spend of the international visitor, especially those from Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council states, far exceeds that of domestic or other leisure visitors from the European Union.

Table 3.3

International Visitors to Manchester: Numbers and overnight stays per 000s

Country of Residence	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Germany	63	73	83	75	61	72	78	90	88	131
Ireland	127	123	114	112	106	139	129	156	146	128
USA	70	77	66	68	73	94	92	109	140	118
Spain & Andorra	46	70	56	61	73	67	69	60	67	102
Poland	44	54	58	50	69	80	54	77	74	83
China	15	16	24	35	30	53	79	107	105	80
Netherlands	20	30	49	40	38	55	57	65	49	69
France & Monaco	41	60	52	42	48	55	67	57	77	59
Italy & San Morino	21	35	28	42	38	26	59	35	61	59
All other E.Europe	31	26	21	22	24	31	27	41	32	50
Norway	34	34	42	37	52	53	46	44	60	49
Australia	29	23	28	30	36	30	44	44	45	45
Romania	5	8	19	13	20	40	31	37	44	44
India	13	10	7	12	9	11	5	14	15	37
Belgium	14	27	21	23	28	21	24	18	22	36
Switzerland	17	30	22	36	22	21	24	24	33	35
United Arab Emirates	8	7	10	15	13	13	19	15	17	31
Portugal	12	7	7	4	13	11	13	23	22	31
Sweden	18	29	23	25	19	23	28	39	31	27
Czech Republic	7	11	9	12	12	11	9	8	14	25
Canada	14	21	24	27	17	20	22	30	25	25
Denmark	13	20	18	22	14	21	20	29	14	25
Hong Kong	6	4	7	10	10	20	28	28	17	24
Gibraltar/Malta/Cyprus	17	15	21	14	15	5	26	24	14	23
Bulgaria	2	2	6	3	7	17	7	8	10	22
Saudi Arabia	7	3	9	13	15	11	15	11	12	22
Hungary	8	12	8	10	11	8	20	12	16	19
Thailand	5	7	4	5	8	11	3	15	5	17
Malaysia	5	9	11	13	7	11	11	15	11	16
Austria	6	5	7	5	7	13	6	13	12	15
Japan	7	4	4	15	17	10	4	14	11	15
Turkey	10	7	12	18	10	10	18	11	11	14
South Africa	7	3	5	4	4	6	3	3	10	13
Israel	6	9	7	10	4	9	16	15	20	12
Russia	2	3	6	8	16	7	5	3	15	12
Singapore	5	9	6	9	10	14	15	18	12	12
Grand Total	827	967	972	1,035	1,059	1,207	1,281	1,432	1,548	1,661

Note: Adapted from VisitBritain. (2019a). *Inbound town data.*

Table 3.3 depicts a selected cross section of Manchester's principal international visitor arrivals registering an overnight stay in the city over a 10 year period. Overseas visitor numbers topped almost 1.7 million in 2019 with further yearly increases expected beyond 2019. From a base of 827,000 foreign tourists in 2010, the growth rate in the ten year period ending 2019 creeps over 100% and is testament to the increasing popularity of the city as a tourism destination. The top visitor markets are European with Germany, the Irish Republic, Spain, France, Italy, Norway, Poland and the Netherlands featuring prominently. The USA is another important market, as are China and other countries of south and east Asia such as Singapore, Malaysia, India and Japan. In more recent years Saudi Arabia and the gulf states have become an increasingly important source of visitors.

MM reports that the economic impact of tourism in the Greater Manchester area rose to GBP 9 billion in 2018 up from GBP 4.6 billion in 2005. Tourism and hospitality accounted for in excess of 100,000 full-time employment positions in 2018, a 30% increase compared to the start of the decade.

VisitBritain contends that football and the prospect of attending a live game is an important factor in the intention to visit decision making process of the international tourist. A study carried out in six important foreign markets indicated that 80% of respondents, with even a passing interest in football, followed the English Premier League (EPL) in preference to other competitions. In four of the six markets studied MUFC were the biggest draw with only the Brazilian market favouring MCFC, perhaps due to the preponderance of Brazilian players featuring on the club's roster.

Figure 3.3

Top International Football Tourism Markets



Note: From VisitBritain. (2020). Inbound football tourism research.

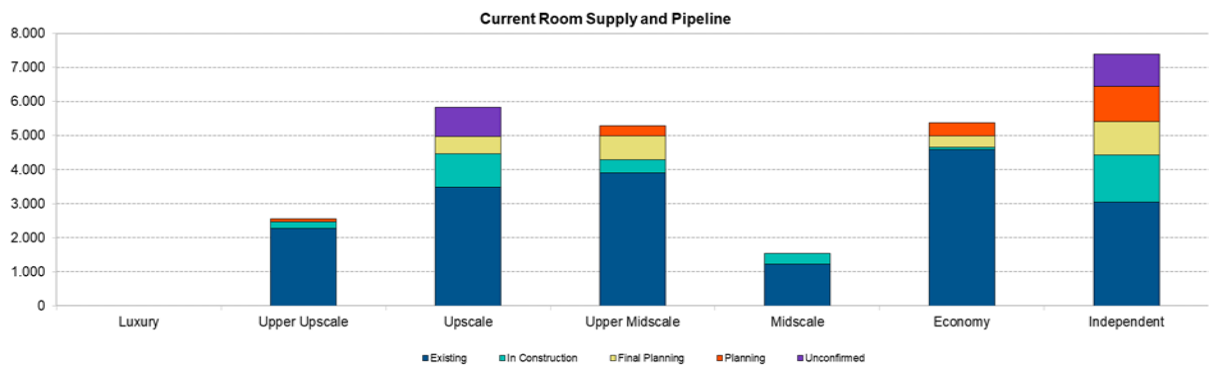
Figure 3.3 shows the most prominent foreign markets interested in attending a game in the EPL. VisitBritain discovered that whilst the impact of football on intention to visit varied, these same tourists engaged in other activities besides football including shopping, visiting other iconic attractions and sampling the atmosphere of the ubiquitous British pub. They contend that football actually encouraged international visitors to explore different parts of the country, outside of London, with the Northwest region including Manchester and Liverpool benefitting the most. Some 11% of all visitors to the region engaged in an activity related to EPL teams with the Old Trafford stadium of MUFC featuring as the most popular attraction. The knock on-effect of football related tourism has resulted in benefits across multiple sectors none more so than the city's hotel industry.

3.2.3.2 Manchester hospitality industry in the 21st century

Reports supplied by STR Global tracked the evolution of the hospitality sector in Manchester over a period of five years, detailing the supply of hotels and rooms in the city with an eye to the future consisting of projects planned or under construction. Occupancy rates being an important indicator of the sector's performance, are traced back to the year 2000 thus by extension gauging the health of the wider tourism sector in the city over two decades.

Figure 3.4

Manchester Hotel Room Supply and Pipeline



Note: Adapted from STR Global. (2020b). *Market pipeline report: Manchester*. STR Global.

Figure 3.4 shows the distribution of hotel rooms across the city of Manchester, including those currently being built or in the planning phase. Manchester is endowed with a wide selection of accommodation choices. Most major international hotel chains are well represented with Hilton, Marriott International, Accor, Radisson and InterContinental operating under a number of brands in the area meeting the

requirements of visitors. Domestic chains such as Travelodge and Premier Hotels are also widely present. According to STR Global descriptors there is a healthy balance suiting most segments of the market with a large number of upscale properties matched by a similar quotient of economy establishments. There is a notable absence of full luxury hotels although one of the city's independent operators, The Lowry, named in honour of the famous Manchester artist, might consider itself fitting this category. Independent hotels represent a large proportion of the Manchester lodging environment accounting for 45% of all properties. Overall, the accommodation sector in the city includes 181 properties, a number of which are apartment/long stay hotels.

Manchester's hotel industry, a *de facto* barometer for the health of the visitor economy, is set to increase with the proposed opening of 66 new properties introducing another 9472 rooms into the supply chain over the next few years. In sheer volume this accounts for additional carrying capacity of over 51% based on current projections and when considered from a short historical perspective, dating back to 2013, the city's hotel stock will have practically doubled in size within a 10 year period. Independent hotel operators account for much of the proposed growth although due to a lack of precise details it is not possible to clearly identify the market segments these will serve.

Whilst many of Manchester's newest accommodation facilities are found in the city centre or close to the airport, the district surrounding the Old Trafford football stadium has experienced noteworthy growth with major brands represented. Hilton, InterContinental, Marriott International and the UK's Premier hotel group operate a

variety of properties in the vicinity. A number of hotels have also been developed or are slated for development in Sportcity, adjacent to MCFC's stadium.

STR Global's figures fail to take into account the large number of guest houses and traditional Bed and Breakfast accommodation choices available in the region, an important segment of the market according to the local DMO. As with other large conglomerations, Manchester has also witnessed exponential growth of AirBnB listings. In 2020 the figure stood at 3585 for the Greater Manchester region with a large preponderance of those in the city centre.

Table 3.4

Historical Hotel Occupancy Rates and Changes Manchester

Year	Occupancy in %	Change in %	Year	Occupancy in %	Change in %
2000	73.2		2010	71.9	5.0
2001	72.0	-1.6	2011	74.4	3.5
2002	72.0	0.1	2012	73.1	-1.8
2003	71.2	-1.1	2013	76.0	4.1
2004	73.2	2.8	2014	78.6	3.4
2005	73.7	0.7	2015	79.8	1.5
2006	74.8	1.5	2016	79.6	-0.2
2007	74.0	-1.1	2017	79.1	-0.6
2008	70.3	-5.0	2018	80.0	0.9
2009	68.5	-2.6	2019	79.0*	
			Avg	74.7	

**estimated*

Note: Adapted from STR Global. (2020b). *Market pipeline report: Manchester*. STR Global.

Table 3.4 illustrates that hotel occupancy rates remain consistently healthy despite the growth in hotel stock and the ubiquity of Airbnb alternatives. In only one instance do levels drop below 70%, in 2009, where the hospitality sector suffered universally as a result of global recession. In terms of seasonality, there are minor discrepancies on a monthly basis except for January, traditionally the slowest month. Historically, hotels in Manchester are also seen to be busiest at weekends. High hotel occupancy rates are a priority for the local DMO whose strategy is focused on growth across the visitor economy.

3.2.3.3 Marketing Manchester (DMO)

Marketing Manchester (MM) is the agency or DMO responsible for promoting the city on a national and international stage. It is an organisation consisting of over 500 stakeholders, across the public and private sphere, ranging from businesses to city governance, sport and culture. *MM* operates a number of visitor information centres across the city. It engages with the public under its trading name, VisitManchester, that is particularly visible across its online platforms. In a similar vein to the strategies of DMOs everywhere, and not unlike Amsterdam, Manchester has chosen to convey a message that it feels encapsulates the essence of the city. “Original Modern” has been designated as the branding device that seeks to position the city in a manner rendering it unique in relation to its peers and capturing the spirit of its people (Marketing Manchester, 2018a). Manchester lacks a clearly distinguishable iconic building or symbol with which it can be immediately identified, although some might argue the case for MUFC being emblematic of Manchester on a global scale. It is out of such

concerns that the “Original Modern” concept was born; imagined and developed by Peter Saville, a famed art director and graphic designer with roots in the city.

MM functions as a not-for-profit unit within the Growth Company, a social enterprise, whose mission is to enable growth resulting in a more prosperous city defined by inclusiveness and respect for the environment. *MM* is funded through a combination of public and private sources. It shares the vision of the city’s local authorities who wish to establish Manchester as a top 20 global city by 2035. From a tourism perspective, the DMO has developed a destination management plan to facilitate achieving the aforementioned vision. It considers the visitor economy as a key driver in enhancing the international profile of the city. The plan envisaged four objectives; the positioning of Manchester as an international destination, development of the city as a leading events location, improving the quality of the tourism product and finally, to maximise the city’s capacity for growth. The strategic tourism plan was due to run until the end of 2020 with many of its objectives achieved. A new tourism strategy, based on a challenging and evolving situation, has been developed in tandem with public and private stakeholders. The strategy covers an additional ten years divided in distinct five-year phases consisting of specific destination management plans (DMP). The objective over the initial five-year period of the DMP is to continue to grow the city as a destination of choice for international conferences, focusing on the business tourism sector, not unlike its Dutch counterpart in Amsterdam.

3.3 Summary

Evidence obtained in the public domain highlight the successes and some of the issues faced by the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester when considered through the prism of tourism. Spearheaded by DMOs with firm plans for the future, both locations have enjoyed considerable success in tourism terms yet are also faced with challenges going forward. Brexit, in the case of Manchester, constitutes an unknown variable, the impact of which is yet to be ascertained. Over-tourism in Amsterdam informs and shapes DMO policies with future iterations of the practice being the subject of an ongoing polemic.

The potential for tourism leverage in both cities, afforded by the presence of globally recognised sports franchises, form the basis for this study. Chapter four describes the research design outlining the type of research conducted and the rationale behind the methods employed. This in turn dictates the structure of the latter chapters of this work where the findings are presented and ultimately interpreted in relation to the literature before recommendations are made.

Chapter Four: Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

Research is undertaken to better understand and make sense of the universe inhabited by man (Veal, 2006). It is guided by the researcher's views on that world, his pursuit of understanding, and his ability to translate such understanding into evidence that stands up to the scrutiny of others. The manner by which the researcher goes about this quest for insight should be transparent and clearly illustrate how and why knowledge has been gathered and generated.

Hathaway (1995) criticised scholars and others engaged in research as often choosing methods of inquiry based on the subjective strengths of the individual researcher. He describes how data are obtained in an almost automatous way without providing any theoretical, epistemological or methodological underpinnings. This "method level" researcher, contends Hathaway (1995, p. 535), is not to be confused with the "purist" whose basis for inquiry is frequently anchored in strict adherence to the precepts and conventions of well-established paradigms. The purpose of this chapter is not to make claims for the superiority of one over another, but to assert that the researcher clearly grasps the options available and makes appropriate methodological choices based on this understanding. Such clarity can only enhance the robustness of this study enabling the research to reach sound theoretical conclusions whilst identifying the limitations of the work.

The focus of this research is on places and organisations clearly associated with places. Cities that are home to globally recognised sports franchises find themselves in the unusual yet enviable position of potentially exploiting the associations between place and said sports franchises to enhance, promote and develop tourism to and within their regions. DMOs are charged with such a challenge. The ultimate rationale behind this study is to investigate and discover ways in which the attractiveness and international notoriety of a successful sports franchise can be harnessed for optimal effect by organisations responsible for tourism development, in clearly identifying elements of best practice to be emulated.

In deference to the principles of validity and reliability, the research, with a focus on place and organisations, privileges a case based approach; in this instance a multiple case study of two destinations. Yin (2009) reasons that this methodological strategy permits a research design that is holistic, flexible and sufficiently rigorous to incorporate both quantitative and qualitative evidence.

4.1 Research philosophy

The nature of the research being conducted, its target audience and ultimate objectives should dictate the logistical effort required including all research methods utilised. That reliable research is undertaken objectively without bias is a pre-requisite but also a great challenge (Onwuegbuzie, & Leech, 2005). Based on the belief that researchers should eliminate biases, remain emotionally detached and test or empirically justify their hypotheses, a positivist or post-positivist approach would appear to meet all criteria relating to obtaining objective and unambiguous conclusions. According to

Bryman and Bell (2011) positivists advocate the use of methods from the natural sciences to be applied to studies within the social sciences. They argue that all conclusions concerning reality can only be based on empirical observations that can be freely verified and that knowledge is gained through the assembling of facts. These facts provide the basis for laws and are thus value free. Phillips and Burbules (2000) further stipulate that positivism puts great emphasis on the generalisations deduced from findings that are consequently applicable to the larger population. Critics of positivism cite it as being a crude and superficial method of gathering data that lacks epistemological depth. The rejection of the natural science model as applying to the study of social reality further compounds divisions that continually simmer within the research community (Stall, 2007).

Interpretivism is the epistemological opposite of positivism. Whereas positivists seek explanations of human behavior, interpretivists seek understanding of such. Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2003) describe interpretivism as the attempt to understand the subjective meanings motivating people's actions. German sociologist, Max Weber (1864–1920) is historically associated with the rise of interpretivism as a philosophy. His *Verstehen* approach is best explained through the use of the simple metaphor of placing oneself in the shoes of others. As a research paradigm it relies on a primarily inductive approach, based on relativist ontology (reality is constructed via understanding developed socially and experientially) and subjectivist epistemology (humans cannot separate themselves from what they know). Knowledge therefore emerges through dialogue and interpretations, cognisant of moral concerns, that are constantly refined (Feilzer, 2010).

Quantitative research is nominally associated with the natural sciences and positivism in particular. In simplistic terms it can be characterised as a series of linear steps ranging from theory to conclusions that relies almost exclusively on deduction to glean meaning from numerical data. Reflecting the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of positivist philosophy, quantitative research is held to be objective and value free. There is but one external reality that lies beyond the researcher's bias or subjectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Elements of reliability, validity and generalisability are essential components of quantitative methods, however, even these preoccupations faced hostility and are questioned by qualitative researchers. The "Paradigm Wars" of the 1980s highlighted such deep seated differences (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005, p. 376), that although still present, have been nuanced over time.

Qualitative research, particularly in the domain of the social sciences, has come into its own since the apparent truce in hostilities following the aforementioned conflict. Essentially emphasising words rather than measurement as a tool for the collection of evidence, qualitative methods require inductivist, constructivist and interpretivist strategies to elucidate meaning from data. To the displeasure of some, qualitative research is often discussed in the ways in which it differs from quantitative research. In homage to its ontological roots, qualitative research seeks to interpret and understand human behaviour and to purely associate it with text and discourse, would be incorrect according to Maxwell (2010). Critics of qualitative research cite it as being too subjective, difficult if not impossible to replicate and lacking transparency. It is of little surprise that much of this criticism stems from those (positivists) who found themselves on the other side of the lines during the paradigm wars (Feilzer, 2010).

From an ideological perspective positivism and its constructivist alternative (interpretivism) appear to be mutually exclusive, but in a world where the pursuit of knowledge is essentially based on the research question posed such dogmatic adherence to ideals is less clear cut. Stahl (2007) uses the term “syncretism” described as “a combination of different beliefs, the attempted combination of different systems of philosophical or religious belief or practice” (p. 121). He (Stahl) questions whether these paradigms can indeed coexist due to their underlying ontologies being diametric opposites and if “syncretism” is indeed desirable. Researchers are urged to carefully consider the ontological and epistemological implications resulting from the combined use of paradigms and methods pertaining to studies where such permutations are deemed suitable.

Pragmatism as espoused by Denscombe (2008) would appear to offer this researcher a third option in the form of the mixed methods paradigm (Bryman & Bell, 2011) that is best suited to decipher subject matter deemed complex, extensive and varied. Pragmatism seeks to alleviate the need for blind allegiance to one specific paradigm and affords the researcher the option of using the most appropriate tools at hand based on the requirements of the particular study and the available resources (Feilzer, 2010). She (Feilzer, 2010) also contends that pragmatism allows for the emergence of socially useful knowledge through a cycle of abductive reasoning that is rooted in the rational. This method of investigation, comprised of different tools that embrace differing viewpoints bereft of dogmatic convention, appeals to this researcher’s own pragmatic worldview.

Whilst encompassing a number of disciplines, this work could be said to fall broadly under the category of sports tourism research although it is also very much associated with destination marketing. As a field the methodology employed by sports tourism researchers lacked diversity until relatively recently. In a meta-analysis of academic journal articles Weed (2006a), commented on the fact that almost three quarters of all articles had employed a positivist approach. A subsequent study published in 2009 witnessed a shift in tack with scholars adopting a variety of different methods reflecting a maturity in the field (Weed, 2009). There appears to be an increasing conceptualisation of the topic, transparency and rigour in the application of methods, coupled with the support of empirical work underpinned by the usage of appropriate theory.

4.2 Mixed methods

The previous section alluded to a preference for the pragmatist paradigm in conducting the research. Given the nature of the study at hand such a choice necessitates adapting the use of a mixed methods design that not only corroborates findings but expands the researcher's knowledge of the cases being scrutinised (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). In ontological terms the goal of this project is to understand phenomena and is thus inductive, requiring a primarily qualitative framework. Bryman (2013) makes the case, however, that understanding and meaning can also be gleaned through the use of surveys, content analysis, and semi-structured interviews, amongst others. These demand the use of reductive quantitative techniques and are all critical components of this particular mixed methods approach.

That there are differences between qualitative and quantitative research is clear. Quantitative research is so closely associated with the natural sciences model that it becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the extent that it is potentially limiting. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, often claim with some assurance that they somehow exercise a monopoly on the study of meaning. Both are deeply rooted in distinct ontological and epistemological traditions. Proponents within both camps, the purists, focus on the differences between them rather than on areas of overlap or similarities (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Howe (1988) in his seminal work, *Against the quantitative-qualitative incompatibility thesis: Or dogmas die hard*, makes a clear case for researchers to call a truce in the then raging paradigm wars and advocated a pragmatic use of whichever methods worked best for any given situation. He boldly claimed that there were no issues of incompatibility between qualitative and quantitative inquiry, whether from a practical or epistemological viewpoint, and that those who espoused such differences had foisted a tyranny upon the research community.

Bryman (2006) further hints that the connections both qualitative and quantitative research share with their supposed epistemological and ontological commitments are overly exaggerated and are not wholly deterministic. Bryman and Bell (2011) cite many examples of highly regarded work completed in the natural sciences employing qualitative techniques and quantitative research looked at through an interpretivist prism. Walle (1997) highlighted the positive and negative attributes relating to both methods yet saw them as being part of the one continuum where compromises and tradeoffs are made. An eclectic approach of choosing research methods is encouraged since tourism, in particular, is a dynamic arena involving complex phenomena. Table

4.1, reproduced and modified from Walle's paper, acts as a useful tool in identifying the important elements of research and can be employed as a framework or starting point in choosing the appropriate method for each research question posed.

Table 4.1

Qualitative and Quantitative Methods Compared

Research Term	Quantitative method	Qualitative method
Anthropological Term	Etic	Emic
Characteristics	Formality Rigour emphasised Mathematical tools prominent	Insight/intuition employed Qualitative data employed
Especially Useful When:	Appropriate data gathered Quantifiable questions Many informants available Adequate time available	Formal methods will not produce results sought Few informants available Time pressures
Net Results of Tradeoffs:	A sacrifice of possible important data and/or abandoning certain topics so that results are based on a scientific foundation	Rigour sacrificed for the sake of attacking questions which formal studies cannot easily pursue Insights/Intuition of skilled researchers permitted

Note: Adapted from Walle, A.H. (1997). Quantitative versus qualitative tourism research. *Annals of Tourism Research*, 24 (3), 524-36.

A mixed methods design is not a panacea to the challenges facing researchers, nor should it be construed as inherently superior to a purely quantitative or qualitative strategy. Critics of mixed methods often subscribe to the belief that research methods convey a clear commitment to a particular epistemology. To mix methods is therefore undesirable and quite possibly illogical since the epistemological positions of the two methods are diametrically opposed. Other critics argue that since the methods are incompatible the resulting work is superficial at best as one paradigm inevitably wins out over the other and effective integration is rarely achieved (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) extol the virtues of using a mixed methods research strategy in that it draws on the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative research, providing a more complete and richer picture of phenomena being studied through the combining and corroborating of evidence. Bryman (2013) cautions that it is not as straightforward as it may seem to the prospective researcher who finds themselves trying to make sense of the philosophical divide in research. Choosing a mixed methods approach is not an easy option and requires a level of expertise and conceptualisation that is rare. He particularly urges the researcher not to think of mixed methods purely in terms of triangulation. O’Cathain, Murphy and Nicholl (2008) established their own quality criteria for conducting high quality mixed methods research that clearly justifies why the method was chosen, is completely transparent, provides appropriate sampling, data collection and analysis of all components, plus clearly explains the process of integration.

The cases being investigated by means of this research are characterised by their complexity. With such a large number of variables to consider, it is felt that a mixed methods strategy, within the context of a multiple case study design, offered the most pragmatic manner in which to proceed. Exploratory lines of enquiry were framed to elicit information that is both statistical, thus leading to deductive analysis, and qualitative in nature, lending itself to inductive reasoning. A certain amount of overlap is to be expected with data analysed from a number of different perspectives to confirm, corroborate or refute particular arguments.

4.3 Research methods in tourism

Tourism is a relative latecomer to the field of formalised academic research. Despite its long history, it has only been recognised as a sector of critical importance in more recent times and is so multi-faceted in its configuration that it does not lend itself easily to a neat and orderly investigative process. Its diverse nature sees it encompassing and indeed encroaching on a wide variety of disciplines, often simultaneously. This transdisciplinary field, depending on the object of scrutiny, may trespass into domains as wide-ranging as economics, geography, culture, sociology, psychology, politics, technology and history. In many instances some of the aforementioned elements are combined in a tourism context as frequently highlighted by Urry (2002).

Notwithstanding its relatively recent emergence, tourism research reflects the conventions of its more traditional counterparts in that it can seek to describe, explore, explain and evaluate phenomena of interest. It also bore witness to the battles pitting one research philosophy against another resulting in much divergence of opinion and

partisanship. As a social science, where people and their behaviour is a dominant theme, tourism research grapples with issues that are often complex due to the unpredictable nature of its subjects. Whilst providing valuable insights, the findings of tourism studies are frequently criticised by scholars from more traditional disciplines (particularly those from the physical and natural sciences) due to difficulties arising in replicating results across time and space, in essence questioning whether conclusions are reliable (Holden, 2005).

In its earliest manifestations tourism research was characterised by a notable positivist epistemology, where researchers adopted a distanced objective approach mimicking that of other disciplines (Butler, 2015). Such an approach, although scientifically sound was perhaps partly employed to curry favour within the research community at large which was at best indifferent to or at worst dismissive of this new field of enquiry. Tourism was not considered a necessity but as a luxury confined to an elite few (Singh, 2015). As the discipline matured so research methods evolved, as identified by Henderson (2006), who noted a trend towards more interpretative studies. These divergent methodologies employing both quantitative and qualitative components continue to inspire adherents, yet they can also be complementary, as indicated previously by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004). In reality, quantitative research is often preceded by qualitative work that provides the initial context and lays out a path to follow. This also works in the reverse and throughout tourism research the lines are further blurred by the increasing quantification of data due to digitalisation (Veal, 2011).

Tourism is not a homogenous construct and has given rise to multiple variants with research into one major offshoot, that of sports tourism, being of specific relevance of to this study.

4.3.1 Sports tourism research and methodology

4.3.1.1 Origins

The first evidence of a publication covering the topic of sports tourism surfaced in 1966 when an article penned by Don Anthony on the role that sport plays during holidays was published by the Central Council for Physical Recreation in the United Kingdom. In the ensuing years a whole host of commentaries, articles and books have been added to the vault of sports tourism knowledge, but more often than not many of these works initially found themselves classified within the broader body of knowledge based on their respective disciplinary approaches (Weed, 2009). The subject can be considered from many different perspectives, with research falling under the domains of psychology, economics, sociology, geography and others. Up until relatively recently it was a challenge to delineate sports tourism as a serious field of academic study but with the establishment of the *Journal of Sport and Tourism* in 2003 this disparate topic has matured into an area of interest. It is replete with its own conventions, a robust application of methodologies, mirroring the inherently diverse nature of the subject and a clear community of scholars with a sustained interest in the area (Weed, 2006a).

Babbie (1995) states that there are three fundamental goals of research: to explore, describe and explain. Much of the early forays into sports tourism research,

particularly throughout the 1980s, focused on defining or explaining what the phenomenon actually consisted of and setting out in almost linear fashion the cause and effect motif of the practice, often resulting in findings related to the economic impacts of events (Kolsun, 1988, Livesey, 1990). During the following decade the pattern continued with much of the literature continuing to describe the nature of the relationship between sports and tourism rather than pursuing an in-depth rationale behind the relationship and the motivation of participants. Gibson (2004) laments the trend and practically called for a moratorium on such research stating that the field had reached a point of critical mass where the “why” needed to be urgently addressed and that it was time to move beyond the case study approach and “debate definition” (p. 247). Weed (2009) makes similar claims and is scathing in his criticism of an introductory report commissioned by the UNWTO and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) examining the relationship between sport and tourism for a 2001 conference. The report ignored or failed to take into consideration previous research into the topic and virtually implied that there was no research base from which to start.

4.3.1.2 Early focus

Despite this, Weed (2009) recognises a firm knowledge base established by researchers who had taken “divergent and contrasting journeys” and categorises sports tourism research from the perspectives of core concepts considered, purpose and related disciplines (p. 617). Amongst the core concepts is the divisive yet seemingly pedantic debate over how the field is described i.e. sport tourism, sport-tourism, sports tourism or sports-tourism. For expediency purposes this research assumes the nomenclature of sports tourism. The manner in which the tourism or sporting aspects

of a particular trip are experienced are also recurring themes and are significant in themselves since they set the context that have shaped the research. Some ignored the importance of day trips as part of this tourist phenomenon (Glyptis, 1982), whilst others fought for their inclusion (Collins & Jackson, 1999). The question of whether one actively participates in a given sport, and at what level, is also addressed whilst attempts are made to pigeonhole the tourist as actively participating, spectating or visiting and paying homage (Gibson, 1998). Weed and Bull (2004) in turn looked at demand categories noting five types elaborating on the previous classification of Gibson. Other authors have questioned the primary purpose of a trip as the most effective way in which to categorise participants. Sofield (2003) talks of “sports tourists” and “tourism sportists” (p. 147), with the latter’s focus primarily on the tourism aspect of the phenomenon. Weed (2005), suggests that such distinctions are flawed since they indicate a subordinate role for either sport or tourism and lead to epistemological confusion.

Impact studies have been at the core of much sports tourism research. Mega-events such as the Olympics, or tournaments similar to the FIFA World Cup, have borne the brunt of this interest (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2004; Preuss, 2005). There is considerable debate as to the legitimacy of the end-findings and the methodological approaches taken in such studies, as noted by Kasimati (2003). Many of these studies measure economic outcomes thus ignoring the cultural, environmental and social effects associated with them. It is suggested that potential conflict of interests and advocacy play a role in determining findings and at worst that these studies are political window-dressing. O’Brien and Chalip (2007b) advocate the study and use of leverage as a strategic tool in order to generate outcomes defined in advance. They suggest that

leverage is a multi-dimensional approach, as opposed to impact studies that often assume a one-dimensional focus. Chalip, in particular, has made the study of leverage (in a sporting context) his life's work since 2001. Complementing Chalip's research and using it as a benchmark, Karadakis, Kaplanidou and Karlis (2010) along with Knott, Fyall and Jones (2016), have made some progress in setting out a convincing case for the use of this tool in relation to mega-events.

4.3.1.3 Evolution

The second most researched area in the field, according to Weed (2009), covers the sub-sector of outdoor/adventure tourism from a behavioural perspective. In the development of typologies for sports tourism it appears that adventure tourism leads the way with a distinct and identifiable research community producing work of extremely high quality and academic rigour. Weed (2009) singles out Beedie, Sung, Weber, Kane and Zink as being at the forefront of this movement. As a topic of interest it lends itself to demarcating the field of research from event based sports tourism (the usual association) to that of participant. By definition adventure tourism requires active participation otherwise one is merely spectating and thus witnessing an event. Indeed, Weed (2004), suggests that researchers in other sub-sectors within the sports tourism arena have much to emulate from their peers in adventure tourism.

From a logistical standpoint sports tourism research lacked methodological diversity with Weed (2004) highlighting in his meta-evaluation of methods that 71% of primary and secondary research articles had employed a positivist approach. His (Weed's) subsequent study conducted in 2009 indicated a change of tack with scholars adopting

a variety of methodologies, reflecting the diversity within an increasingly mature field. Gibson (2004) had called on researchers to move away from identifying types of behaviours associated with sports tourists to the rationale informing behaviour, providing ontic depth in the process. Weed (2008) provides further evidence of this maturity by identifying markers; notably an increasingly strong conceptualisation of the topic; the support of empirical work through the use of appropriate theory and the transparent application of methods suitable for the issues being addressed. With an increasing volume of work highlighting the diversity of the subject area Weed (2009) posits that a “unified” view of sports tourism is probably unattainable and unnecessary (p. 625). Competing and contested ideas are emerging resulting in a dynamic and healthy state of affairs thus avoiding a situation of stasis and irrelevance in an ever-changing world. In contrast, Gammon, Ramshaw and Wright (2017) suggest that the continued lack of an accepted theoretical platform remains an obstacle that confines the field to an ever expanding realm of niche interests.

Depending on its objectives and focus, tourism research, including its sports related derivative, inhabits a territory that can be difficult to define yet one that lends itself to a multitude of investigative strategies. This particular study follows the well-trodden but often maligned path in the use of the case study as its chosen instrument of enquiry.

4.4 Case study research

Case study research is the intensive investigation of an example (Veal, 2006). It can focus on a person, event, process, experience, relationship or organisation. The objective of case study research is to develop understandings of one or more instances

of a phenomenon (Punch, 2005). Case studies are most often utilised when “how” and “why” questions are asked about present-day events over which the researcher has very little or no control (Yin, 2009). Case studies differ from other methods in that they are in-depth and specific methods of inquiry. Consequently, this does not constitute a broad statistical survey or cross-sectional analysis. They are used to narrow analysis and result in rich contextual framing in order for the study to provide a unique insight into the phenomenon under scrutiny, namely in this study, the leverage potential of globally recognised sports franchises in a tourism context. Once the phenomenon is defined appropriate cases are then selected. For the purposes of this study a multiple-case approach i.e. the study of more than one case, is employed.

The rationale for using the case study approach in this investigation reflect the assertions of Yin (2009) in that there are “how” and “why” questions to be addressed within a field of contemporary curiosity. There is also limited knowledge within said field, as demonstrated in the review of the literature (chapter two). This approach additionally allows for the use of multiple methods and varied sources of evidence. Case studies can be descriptive, explanatory and evaluative thus allowing for richer findings and more profound levels of understanding (Meyer, 2001). This study requires the investigation of real-life phenomena that are intertwined with other issues in a ‘broader context’, which are accommodated by the case study approach (Yin, 2009).

Cases are selected for differing reasons. They may involve the testing of critical theories, deal with a unique circumstance or phenomenon, be typical of their genre,

have revelatory overtones or encompass a longitudinal focus. Stake (2005) proposes that fundamentally three types of cases exist; intrinsic, instrumental and collective. By intrinsic it is understood that the study is conducted solely for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of a particular set of circumstances. Instrumental studies are undertaken to illuminate issues beyond the case itself where the case plays a secondary, supportive role. Stake describes collective cases as being an extension of the instrumental where a number of cases are used to provide greater understanding of particular circumstances without necessarily being generalisable.

In considering historical criticism of case study research Yin (2009) advocates that quality should be maximised through paying particular attention to construct validity, internal validity, external validity and reliability. Referring to case study design he (Yin) acknowledges that whilst a single-case may be a valuable tool under certain conditions, it is preferable to choose a multiple case format. This comparative approach may incorporate a holistic or embedded design and should be sufficiently flexible to permit the use of a variety of methods in data collection and analysis. Multiple-case research potentially allows for findings to have applicability in other settings (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2007). Given the focus of this particular scholastic endeavour such applicability is a highly desirable outcome but is also dependent on the purposive selection of appropriate cases. Yin (2009) describes how multiple-cases can be considered akin to multiple-experiments where the same protocols are respected in order to determine whether findings can be duplicated. Eisenhardt (2002) encourages dealing with each case individually as a “within-case” (p. 539) and then cross-referencing for patterns once all cases are completed. Such a practice is undertaken in order to manage the data more effectively.

It is not unusual for case studies to yield volumes of extremely rich and detailed information. The material is obtained through documentary evidence, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation and physical artefacts. The challenge of the researcher is to stay focused and filter or prioritise the importance of the information gathered. Yin (2009) emphasises that a proficient case study researcher should not only be well organised but flexible enough to be able to adapt to changing circumstances, have a firm grasp of the issues being investigated and be devoid of preconceived notions of bias. In addition, they should be sensitive to the role that contradictory evidence may play during the course of the research.

In order to maintain focus and in deference to the tenets of academic rigour, Yin (2009) suggests that a case study protocol should be developed as a prerequisite to enhance the reliability of the case. The protocol includes an overview of the project, the field procedures to be followed, the case study questions that the researcher must continuously reflect on when undertaking the research and a guide for the actual report. Case studies often result in accessing multiple sources of evidence that allow for not only broader investigation, but converging lines of inquiry that can add to the reliability of the project. Transparency in how these data are handled through the creation of a study database helps maintain the chain of evidence and further augments a case's robustness.

Although vigorously defended by Yin (2009), Gall et al. (2007), Punch (2005) and others, the case study/multiple-case approach has been criticised for lacking rigour and producing results that are not generalisable but specific to particular settings or

contexts. Yin (2009) counters such arguments by espousing literal replication, thus choosing cases with an expectation of achieving similar results and theoretical replication (contrasting results), with the ultimate objective of developing a valid theoretical framework that can be applied in comparable milieus. The case study approach is also known for producing much data that can be challenging to deal with in a logistical sense, thus assiduous data management is required on the part of the researcher.

On a closing note Yin (2009) encourages researchers using the case study method to be conscious of the criticisms, many of them justified, and to produce exemplary work that is significant, has attended to all the data, including addressing alternative perspectives or rival claims. It must also display sufficient evidence within the body of the case (not simply in appendices) and be written in an engaging manner.

4.4.1 Case study research in tourism

Tourism appears singularly suited to case study methodology and indeed the discipline has seen a significant increase in its use over time (Henderson, 2006). Much of the work undertaken has been commissioned by public bodies such as DMOs and involves single location specific cases, thus resulting in outcomes that may not be readily applicable in other milieus, a point of contention for some. According to Xiao and Smith (2006), who conducted a state-of the-art analysis of case studies in tourism research over a five year period, the erstwhile arguments that tourism case studies are conceptually and analytically weak does not hold true. In fact, they found that researchers had made great strides in producing work that is both methodologically

sound and transparent in terms of the procedures employed in gathering, analysing and storing of data. The method's chief protagonists such as Yin, Gall and Punch would no doubt be delighted by the findings of the aforementioned piece of work. A systematic review of the hospitality and tourism case study literature conducted by Kadir and Sehmus (2021), covering the period 1974 – 2020, reveals some concerns specifically the early predisposition by researchers in applying a positivist approach to case study research. This imbalance has only recently been redressed with qualitative methods becoming more common. Their employ is frequently supported by the use of analytic software to improve the credibility and reliability of findings.

The flexibility inherent to the case study method has resulted in a wide variety of studies within the tourism domain. From a UNESCO sponsored study on the impact of tourism on culture and the environment in Nepal (Pandey, Chettri, Kunwar & Ghimire, 1995), to Dunne, Buckley and Flanagan's (2007) case focusing on Dublin and city break motivation, the adaptability of the method is what makes it so attractive to researchers. Of particular interest and inspiration to this researcher was the case of Allan et al. (2007), measuring the economic impact of two major football clubs on the city of Glasgow. In a first of a kind, the aforementioned study investigated sports franchises involved in season long competition in an attempt to gauge their importance to the host city and its visitor economy in particular. Although the research parameters were narrow, the work nonetheless provided this researcher with a starting point from which to consider the options available in the destinations covered by this thesis described in section 4.5.

4.5 The case(s)

Destination marketing provides the umbrella under which this research is positioned. The potential for leveraging the positive elements of image associated with globally recognised sports franchises, (soccer clubs), by destinations, provide the rationale for the study. Ultimately, the goal of the research is to identify best practices within the tourism sphere and pinpoint opportunities where DMOs and sporting organisations may collaborate in order to enhance a destination's tourism appeal. Ideally this would culminate in the development of a model or prototypical framework that might be replicated in other comparable settings. In this particular study a multiple case based strategy has been chosen. This comparative approach looks at the cities of Amsterdam (Netherlands) and Manchester (United Kingdom), thus purposive sampling is employed. They are contrasting cities but both are tourism destinations in their own right and are home to globally recognised football clubs; Ajax of Amsterdam, Manchester United and Manchester City.

A number of critical themes emerged from the literature review that warranted further investigation for this would provide the necessary data to aid in understanding the phenomena at play and facilitate the study's objectives. These encompass the following areas:

1. An examination of the reasons behind the emergence of sports franchises as tourism products
2. Research into the long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal

3. Identifying the impact of the sports franchise on the perception of place and destination image
4. An examination of the relationship between Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and the sports franchises in each city
5. Insights on DMO interactions and engagement with stakeholders in its respective environment
6. An investigation of tourism leverage initiatives in both locations, including the current state of play between the DMO and the sports franchises, with the stated objective of identifying best practice

These research pathways moderate the manner in which the data are treated and are complimentary in nature. They scrutinise the behaviour and actions of the study's principal protagonists i.e. the sports franchises and DMOs, that are fundamental in determining whether a legitimate case for leverage can be argued.

4.5.1 Data collection

When applying a mixed methods approach to multi-case study research a variety of techniques are used to both accumulate and analyse the data. Yin (2009) prescribes the use of multiple sources of evidence that may corroborate findings and lead to an accurate depiction of phenomena. He (Yin) identifies six primary categories of evidence:

- Documentary sources including reports, newspaper cuttings, brochures, strategic plans, scholarly articles, annual reports, websites, blogs and others.

- Archival material that can include evidence such as census data, company reports, budgets, personnel records, maps, charts and survey data from previous studies.
- Interviews (structured and semi-structured), focus groups, conversations or questionnaires.
- Direct observation, ranging from formal to casual observations e.g. working conditions, meetings, location etc.
- Participant observation where the researcher inserts him or herself into the research setting as an actual participant.
- Physical artefacts that include physical or cultural elements such as technological devices or works of art that lend themselves primarily to anthropological studies.

In this study the data collected are used to develop a chain of evidence that is clearly linked to the topics being investigated (listed in section 4.5). Data analysis is conducted using approaches that ensure the rigour and integrity of the work undertaken. The following section outlines the techniques utilised to gather data that help in creating the aforementioned “chain of evidence.”

4.5.1.1 Archival research

Rich contextual data are derived from a diverse number of sources. Documentary and archival evidence was gathered from reports, newspaper/media cuttings, press statements, tour brochures, websites, strategic plans and academic papers that

highlight the emergence of these global sporting brands and their association with tourism over time. Whilst some of the information was anecdotal in nature, it nonetheless provided a deeper and more varied description of the milieu being studied. The role and evolution of each DMO was also explored. The selection of data, either digitally or in hard copy, was a time consuming process and the salience of information varied in relation to the factors being investigated. Where the evidence did not directly aid in answering questions the researcher subscribed to Gillham's (2000) axiom that nothing is turned away, once it provided context and a broader understanding of the phenomena under scrutiny. Archival research took place throughout the research period specifically to unearth contemporary sources of information when they became available.

4.5.1.2 Interviews

In-depth semi structured and unstructured interviews were conducted with participants from the respective DMOs, football clubs and other stakeholders from organisations closely linked to the football clubs such as supporter trusts. Individuals directly engaged in the provision of tourism and hospitality services; namely hotel executives and tour operators were also consulted. This formed a broad sample of people that also included respected academics who have conducted much research in the field. A total of 17 interviews were held with the majority of them in person and at locations chosen by the respective interviewees. Due to time constraints and/or travel issues four informants choose to be interviewed online via a video conferencing platform. The interview protocol was informed by the tenets of van der Heijden's (1996) work on strategic conversations allowing the interviewer to take on a more active and creative

role in order to capture a range of perspectives (Ratcliffe, 2002). The study's literature review, and the accumulation of archival material, formed the backdrop for many of the themes touched upon in each individual conversation. Punch (2005) extolls the virtues of interviewing as a collection tool of unending flexibility. A dual semi-structured and unstructured approach to interviewing was chosen based on the principal attributes of allowing for a great breadth and complexity of information to be gathered, consequently enabling unanticipated information to emerge as respondents emphasised issues that were important to them.

The interviews were critically important in providing a high level of contextual understanding in both locations, described by Gibson (2004) as ontic depth. A relaxed semi-structured format was respected in conducting the discussions with key informants in Amsterdam and Manchester. The protocol for engaging with academics was more open given their expertise and knowledge of the field, particularly in relation to some of the theoretical concepts addressed.

4.5.1.3 Surveys

A pilot study was designed in the form of self-administered questionnaire that could be accessed online. It focused on people living outside of the two case study cities and featured questions that evaluated respondents' knowledge and perceptions of the destinations of Amsterdam and Manchester. It specifically explored whether the football clubs of Ajax and Manchester United/City, or football generally, influenced the image that the respondents held of these cities. The survey consisted of closed ended questions and one open question to allow for additional information to emerge.

The survey was subject to pre-testing by the researcher's academic peers and its principal role was in identifying items to be included in the study's visitor intercept surveys.

The study's survey (a separate survey for each city) was designed to measure the influence that football, and the football clubs included in this work, had on tourist visitation to their respective cities, plus the associations made between football and the cities generally. Based on the experience garnered from the pilot study, it was an instrument designed with efficiency and brevity in mind so as to minimise respondent inconvenience. As such it featured a limited number of primarily closed questions. It was administered in person to tourists visiting the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester. The survey was central to this research since it provided answers from a demand perspective as to whether DMOs had sufficient justification in leveraging football and, by extension, each city's major football club(s) for their tourism potential.

4.5.1.4 Study of online platforms

A content analysis study was undertaken that examined the proprietary websites and social media platforms operated by the DMOs in both locations so as gauge the efforts the latter made in leveraging their location's respective sports franchises (football clubs), or football generally, in the online space. For comparison purposes, it extended to include the cities of Barcelona and Munich, home to two of Europe's elite football clubs in FC Barcelona and Bayern Munich. The study formed the basis for an article that appeared in the *Journal of Sports and Tourism*, co-authored with the researcher's supervisory team. The study provided valuable evidence as to the choices made by

DMOs in the online arena that continues to grow in importance and proved crucial in gaining a broader understanding of the DMO operational environment.

4.5.1.5 Participant observation

Observation is a fundamental tenet of all good research. Participant observation, based on experiential knowing, played an important but relatively peripheral role given the researcher's familiarity with both case study locations as a past and current (sports) tourist (Heron & Reason, 1997). Observations made permitted the researcher to corroborate and at times question the material gleaned from multiple sources. It also mediated the process of triangulation, where inference quality was enhanced based on the researcher's experience of the phenomena observed and the evidence emanating from varied sources. This proved critical in helping to develop appropriate survey items and establishing an informal protocol for the conducting of semi-structured interviews. As an observer the researcher recognised the potential for erroneous reporting of events and inherent biases that may taint the information obtained from such methods. Overall, the technique was employed sparingly and the data collated has been critiqued externally in order to limit the possibility for error.

4.5.2 Sampling and recruitment

The nature of the study conducted suggested that purposefully selecting sources, sites and individuals should assuage research concerns pertaining to the overall validity of the research design, provided that there was a coherent logic across all components of the project (Creswell, 2003). It is believed that the sampling plan met such criteria in that it was aligned with the research objectives.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting information rich participants from the tourism and sport sectors in both Amsterdam and Manchester, who along with a limited number of academic researchers, made for a diversity of knowledge and experience justifying their inclusion. Although there are no hard rules as to the size of the sample required for interviewing purposes, the researcher attempted to cover as wide and as diverse an audience as possible in order to address all areas of enquiry in a rigorous manner. The interviews were conducted at a location and time chosen by the participant, with the consent of each interviewee obtained beforehand. Interviews were recorded only with the permission of participants and a written summary and/or transcript was made available to all interviewees that provided an opportunity for the participant to review and reaffirm (or withdraw) consent for inclusion in the study at any time during the entire process.

The rationale for conducting a survey is to obtain useful, reliable and valid information in a way that makes it possible to analyse and draw conclusions about a larger target population (Fowler, 2002). The pilot questionnaire, focusing on the associations made between each city and football and/or the sports franchises, was administered to a purposive but anonymous sample of respondents consisting of staff and adult students at five English speaking universities located in the Netherlands, Indonesia, South Africa, Thailand and Qatar. Given its level of education and standard of living, this sample was deemed representative of the wider population that has access to travel and the experience of tourism as a phenomenon (but who are not necessarily sports tourists). It was felt that the responses and experience gained in administering this instrument would facilitate the development of more precise survey items for inclusion in the study's intercept surveys, conducted in situ at locations across Amsterdam and

Manchester. This instrument included comparable survey items and targeted tourists visiting the aforementioned cities. It was a concise tool that measured the influence (if any) that the presence of football and the sports franchises had on visitation to each city. It also, in a similar vein to the pilot questionnaire, investigated the level to which visitors associated the respective cities with football and/or the sports franchises. In both locations the opportunity of taking part in the survey was offered to tourists (as defined by the UNWTO) who were found in and around the respective city centres close to tourist attractions or transport hubs. The survey was conducted in person and data collected using intercept practices.

By necessity, the content analysis study of DMO websites and social media platforms employed purposive sampling techniques. The study extended beyond Amsterdam and Manchester and looked at a limited population of European cities with similar characteristics in terms of attracting significant numbers of visitors and which are readily identifiable with globally renowned football clubs. All four candidate cities and their virtual domains were examined using the same content analysis tool.

4.5.3 Data analysis

The mixed methods design, within the larger comparative case study framework, gives rise to data emerging in multiple formats e.g. numerical, textual or audio-visual. As a consequence the information gathered during the course of this work was subject to either quantitative or qualitative analysis depending on its inherent characteristics. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2005) suggest that research questions, when correctly formulated, are embedded with qualitative or quantitative elements that allow for data

analysis to occur “logically and sequentially” (pp. 376-377). The purpose of this analysis is to accurately reflect the raw data in an organised manner. Case studies are prone to provide the researcher with a surfeit of data (Yin, 2009), and in this instance, particularly of a qualitative nature. Huberman (1994) advises that the researcher use data reduction techniques when faced with large volumes of evidence. This facilitates in transforming the information in a way that allows for subsequent conclusions to be drawn.

Qualitative data analysis consists of a process that attempts to reduce and transform sometimes vast amounts of information into a comprehensible format that sheds light on a particular issue or issues. As a method it is often subject to the impressions and interpretations of the researcher and as such should be carried out in a systematic, transparent way that aids in filtering out researcher bias.

In conducting qualitative analysis the researcher becomes the instrument of said analysis and is responsible for making decisions to ensure the rigour and trustworthiness of the process (Starks & Trinidad, 2007). Interviews undertaken as part of this study were subjected to thematic analysis techniques. This involved a well structured approach that necessitated the development of a thematic coding framework to aid in understanding the large data set gleaned from the informant interviews. All interviews were initially transcribed with patterns in the data identified leading to the development of codes that were assigned and constantly reviewed. This iterative process allowed for the development of a master coding framework. In deference to the credibility of the process, the framework proffers evidence of the decisions made

by the researcher in interpreting the data and the rationale behind such decisions (Nowell et al., 2017).

The guiding principles of hermeneutics direct the content analysis used to dissect much of the qualitative information collated throughout this research. Content analysis can be described as the approach taken to the analysis of texts, documents and audio-visual messages that quantifies such content in terms of predetermined categories in a systematic and replicable manner (Krippendorff, 2004). It is flexible, in that it can be applied to a wide variety of media, and aims at providing objective descriptions of these categories (Vitouladiti, 2014). When conducted correctly content analysis is a reliable and straightforward technique that is unobtrusive, inexpensive and scores high in regard to ease of replication. In this thesis content analysis fulfils an important role in analysing the documentary and archival evidence retrieved. It also is central to the analysis of the data obtained from numerous online platforms administered by DMOs in various locations that form part of a virtual study of leverage. Depending on the characteristics of the information examined, the researcher carefully coded all data and developed tailor-made content analysis tools, taking great precautions to ensure that they were consistently applied since the principal reason in conducting a content analysis is to obtain objective information (Texas State Auditor's Office, 1995; Neuendorf, 2002).

Quantitative data gleaned from documentary evidence and carefully constructed surveys are initially examined using simple descriptive summaries and relevant data tabulations. On occasion this is all that is required to highlight themes and make sense

of the data. Although often exploratory in nature the study employs a number of statistical testing protocols in order to discern and compare differences in dependent variables linked to different groups of survey respondents. T-tests, and Welch's ANOVA tests are used to make sense of data, where deemed necessary (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) is the software called on to facilitate the analysis of the quantitative information. It is a flexible and efficient program that provides for a wide range of options and effective information management.

As a multiple case study much evidence of a differing nature has been gathered. As a first step the data are examined through the use of the most appropriate method i.e. a quantitative or qualitative tool. A mixed methods approach has been adopted for this study that allows for triangulation of findings. Within the context of case study research triangulation can enhance the validity and reliability of findings (Yin, 2009). In this study, supported by participant observation, it assists in comparing and contrasting evidence originating from different sources, ultimately lending strength to conclusions and identifying areas for further investigation.

The illustration depicted in Table 4.2 highlights how data were collected and analysed at each stage of the research process:

Table 4.2

Data Collection and Methods of Analysis

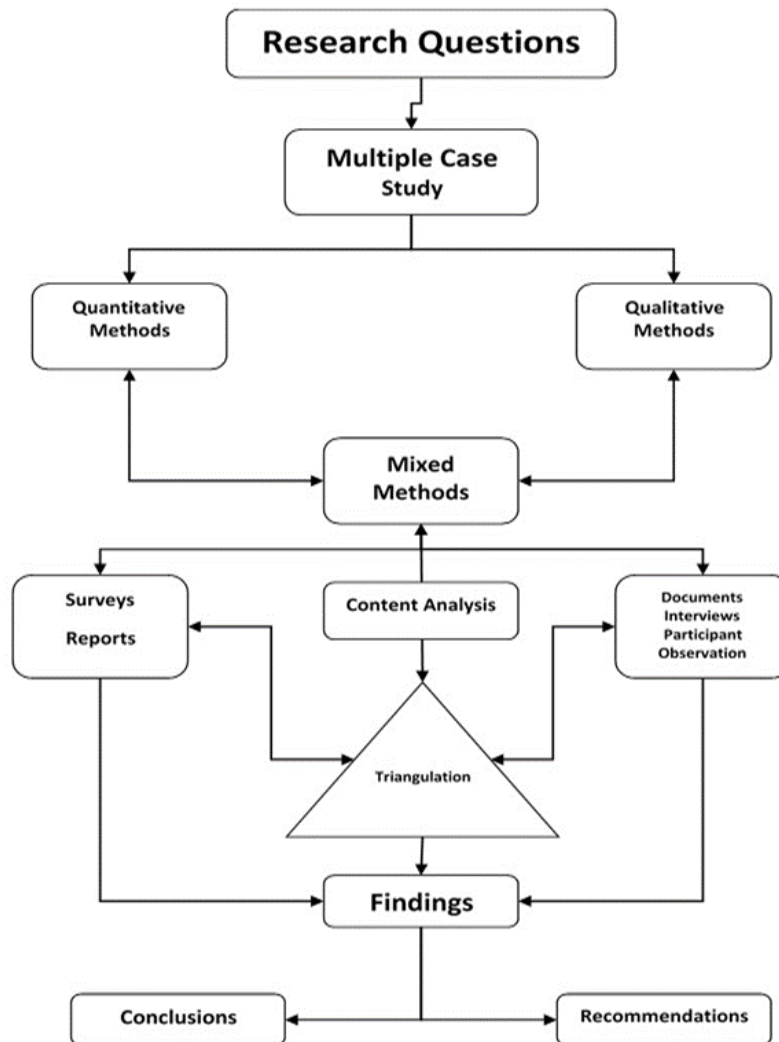
Research question/objective	Data collection	Analysis
1. An examination of the emergence of sports franchises as tourism products	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews,	Content analysis, Hermeneutics, Thematic analysis Historical analysis, Quantitative analysis through use of SPSS
2. Research into the long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews, Surveys	Content analysis/Hermeneutics, Thematic analysis Quantitative analysis through use of SPSS
3. Identifying the impact of the sports franchise on the perception of place and destination image	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews, Attitudinal surveys, participant observation	Content analysis/hermeneutics Thematic analysis Quantitative analysis through use of SPSS
4. Examination of the relationship DMO & sports franchise	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews	Content analysis/hermeneutics Thematic analysis
5. Insights on DMO interactions and engagement with stakeholders in its respective environment	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews	Content analysis/hermeneutics Thematic analysis
6. Investigation of leverage, the DMO and the sports franchises, the current state of play and identifying best practice	Documentary evidence & in-depth interviews	Content analysis/hermeneutics Thematic analysis

4.5.4 Research process and reporting of results

Figure 4.1, the research framework, describes the manner by which a well conceived process guided the research through its many stages. This did not involve a linear sequential path since multiple activities took place simultaneously and “within case” field research often overlapped due to time constraints of participants. The study was conducted over a lengthy time period due to the researcher’s work circumstances that required him to register as a part-time student whilst being fully committed to his full time position and organisation. Both desk and field research were carried out over a period of almost seven years, with the collating of all data and the writing up of the project consuming the bulk of time in the final two years of the process.

Figure 4.1

Research Process



The research journey began with the initial hypothesis for the study being formulated i.e. to ascertain whether sports franchises, and sport generally (in this case football), could be leveraged for their tourism potential by destinations, specifically by DMOs or similar bodies. A literature review was then assembled over time and added to as more contemporary literature of relevance was published. The literature review paved the way for a more focused interpretation of the study's overarching research question

or objectives, identified gaps in the field of knowledge, and pinpointed areas to be investigated. These in turn informed the manner in which the research would be conducted, as set out in this methodology chapter. As a multiple case study the findings were reported separately with a synthesis provided before a cross case comparison was made. They were subsequently interpreted, where critical themes were linked and compared with the literature in the discussion chapter before conclusions were finally drawn and recommendations proffered that contain both practical and theoretical implications.

4.6 Research ethics

A commitment to fundamental ethical principles and transparency are at the core of any exemplary piece of academic research. In an age of transgressions, where the integrity of individuals and organisations are routinely questioned, it is essential for the scholar to clearly adhere to the essential tenets of ethical research; namely to do no harm to participants, obtain informed consent, protect anonymity and confidentiality when requested, avoid deceptive practices and provide participants with the right to withdraw (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In conducting this research, the author strictly follows these guidelines and provides transparent records of having done so. Research clearance was sought and granted by the research ethics committee of the author's host institution, Technological University Dublin.

The use of case study research featuring a largely qualitative framework containing elements of embedded quantitative inquiry should enhance the interpretative rigour of the work at hand (Vukovic-Juros, 2011). Such mixing of research methods lessens the

risk of misinterpretation of data and the inclusion of a study database to maintain a chain of evidence, as suggested by Yin (2009), lends to the work's overall transparency.

4.7 Conclusion

This chapter has addressed the manner in which the research was conducted. This researcher has considered ontological and epistemological options that would necessitate adopting alternative approaches, but believed that the methods proposed presented a clear and viable route to be followed in order to successfully complete the task at hand. Distinct challenges were inherent to the process, none more so than the surfeit of data requiring assiduous management. There were also questions as to the precise quantitative methods of analysis to be deployed based on the surveys administered.

Choosing a comparative case study methodology presented the best opportunity for a thorough understanding of the phenomena examined. The use of mixed methods, underpinned by a pragmatist philosophy, allowed for the investigation to proceed using the most suitable tools available. The variety in the method and the diversity of the sources used supports corroboration of the evidence thus resulting in robust findings that stand up to scrutiny.

This concludes the first half of the thesis that included the rationale for the research, a review of relevant literature, an introduction to the cities that are the focus of the

multiple case study approach and an explanation of the research methods employed in gathering and analyzing the data. Chapters five, six and seven present the research findings that are subsequently discussed with conclusions and recommendations proffered.

Chapter Five: Within Case Results

5.0 Introduction

Whilst the previous chapters illustrate the tourism context relevant to both cities and outline the manner in which the study was conducted, including justification of the methods chosen, this section sets out the findings in a systematic way relative to the data collected. The multiple case study approach generally allows for the results to be revealed pertaining to the individual cases before an attempt is made to compare or contrast the findings (Yin, 2009). The latter is covered in chapter six. The only exception made here is in presenting the research into online platforms conjointly since it formed part of a broader study that included other notable tourism destinations. Although featured towards the end of this chapter (section 5.3), the content analysis study into the virtual worlds of the DMOs, seeking to identify evidence of tourism leverage linked to sports franchises in each city, is critical in providing a longitudinal perspective that forms a reference point for discussion in chapter six.

The chapter, beginning with this introduction (5.0), is therefore structured in a way that deals with each case individually. Sections 5.1 to 5.1.6 cover Amsterdam with sections 5.2 to 5.2.5 observing similar protocols relating to Manchester. The broader content analysis study is examined in section 5.3 with an overall chapter summary provided in section 5.4.

The case studies focus on the cities of Amsterdam (NL) and Manchester (UK). The research produced a breadth of data gathered in a variety of formats, with each format necessitating a specific approach. The findings are thus categorised initially according to the instrument employed in gathering the information and presented with minimum inferences being made.

The interviews conducted were subjected to thematic analysis that reveal much about the health of the tourism sector in each city, the level of stakeholder engagement, strategies used in development and promotion of each destination, plus the association or impact of the city's major football clubs on the destination's image. Combined, these factors provide evidence of best practice related to the leveraging of these assets (football clubs) in a tourism context, future possibilities for such, or caution against incorporating them into a destination's value proposition. Based on the findings the themes that emerged fall under the following headings and are applicable to both cases:

1. Tourism sector performance in respective city.
2. Stakeholder engagement in the tourism/hospitality sector.
3. The role of the destination marketing organisation (DMO) in each location.
4. The sports franchises, destination image, association with city and tourism potential (including leverage).
5. Leverage; what and how? Best practice.

The above are closely linked to concepts discussed in the literature review. Amongst others, these cover the topics of destination marketing, place marketing, cooperative

marketing, stakeholder theory, branding and sports tourism. They also underpin the study's objectives in helping discern whether a legitimate case exists for the leverage of the sports franchises in a tourism context.

The surveys administered, whilst unearthing valuable information that add to the depth of the research, are subjected to statistical analysis where the fundamental objective is to identify the extent to which visitors associate each city with their respective football clubs. The resulting data provide evidence upon which informed decisions can be made by the DMO or other authorities in each location pertaining to the opportunities (or lack thereof) for leverage of these globally recognised sporting brands.

Finally, the pertinent documentary evidence gathered, subject to content analysis, reveals the actual state of play, in each city, in relation to policies linked to the leverage of sports franchises in the virtual space by the DMOs. It is a broader study undertaken as part of this research that benchmarks the efforts of the respective agencies against other major European cities home to renowned football clubs. It identifies current and past actions of DMOs in leveraging the sports franchises, and football generally, via the increasing use of digital marketing platforms. The study resulted in the publication of an article in the *Journal of Sports and Tourism* and was co-authored with the researcher's doctoral supervision team.

5.1 Respondent interviews Amsterdam

Interviews: The individuals interviewed in this section exercise roles in the Dutch tourism sector, are residents of Amsterdam, with some having responsibility for football administration or tourism activities related to the sport. The interviewees also include academics with knowledge of Amsterdam's tourism environment, but who are not based in the city and are best positioned to provide an objective non-practitioner assessment of the issues covered by the research:

Amsterdam Interviewees

Subject A – Convention Centre

Subject B – Tourist Office

Subject C – DMO Executive

Subject D – Ajax Stadium Tour & Museum

Subject E – Luxury Hotel

Subject F – Ajax Board Member

Subject G – Tour Operator

Subject H – ECOC Marketing Advisor

Subject P – Destination Marketing Academic

Subject Q – Sports Tourism Academic

5.1.1 The performance of the tourism sector in Amsterdam

One of Europe's most visited cities and travel hubs, Amsterdam's Schiphol airport served almost 72 million passengers in 2019 (Royal Schiphol Group, 2020), with over 17 million hotel bed nights registered by the municipal authorities (CBS, 2020). The city has become one of Europe's top short stay destinations. Chapter three clearly depicts a city whose popularity has grown exponentially with both domestic and foreign visitors. Its hospitality industry mirrors the health of the visitor economy generally with Amsterdam's hotels registering some of the highest occupancy rates in Europe. It was considered important to solicit insights on how this growth has been perceived by those closest to it amongst those interviewed, many of whom actively work in the sector.

The success of Amsterdam's main convention centre (RAI) has coincided with the success of tourism to the area. Local government authorities have called for a freeze on the building of new hotels within the city limits with the RAI convention centre hosting one of the last few hotel builds, consisting of a 670 room property said to be the largest hotel in the Benelux. Although focusing on a different market than the individual leisure traveller, the RAI stages upwards of 500 events each year welcoming up to 2 million attendees. The centre's convention space enjoys an occupancy rate of over 90%. Amsterdam benefits from being a large international hub, thanks to Schiphol airport, is a relatively small city, easy to navigate, offers many different accommodation options and is still relatively *"affordable when compared with some other European destinations. It is this unique combination that gives us success"*

(Subject B, Tourist Office). The convention centre executive is equally unequivocal in how vital tourism has become:

“I think that the Netherlands should be aware that tourism is very important to the general income of the country. We are a trading country and tourism is so important especially for cities such as Amsterdam. I started here in 2000. I’ve seen huge increases in visitor numbers since then. Tourism and city marketing has boomed for Amsterdam.” (Subject A, Convention Centre)

The RAI is just one of the many operators commenting on how the visitor economy has flourished, however tourism’s evolution has presented its own unique set of challenges. The city centre is hugely busy and the tourism office, opposite the main train station, is a focal point for visitors, local and foreign, seeking information and looking to purchase visitor products such as the popular “I Amsterdam” city card. The multi-tasking employees in the tourism office struggle to keep track of the number of people passing through their doors on a daily basis, but suggest that it is a relentless throng irrespective of the season or time of the year, according to Subject B (Tourist Office). Subject C, occupying a position in the upper echelons of management at the city’s DMO, suggests that the ever increasing visitor numbers were initially welcomed but also somewhat unexpected. They ushered in a golden age of prosperity for the tourism industry with investment pouring into the sector catering to both domestic and international visitors. Such phenomenal growth has outpaced the city’s infrastructure leading to perceptions of there being an issue. Official policy, since 2015, effectively

declared a moratorium on promoting Amsterdam under the guise of attracting more tourists since it was felt that tourism numbers had reached a point of critical mass.

“Tourism is booming to the extent that it has become a problem!” (Subject C, DMO Executive)

The accommodation sector has also expanded exponentially over the years in an attempt to keep pace with the growth of tourism. The five star Amstel hotel along with the hotel L’Europe, exercised a virtual monopoly over the luxury segment up until recent times but other major luxury brands quickly established themselves in the city to fill the demand. The three star, four star and budget sectors have also blossomed during the past 10 years, meeting the increasing demand of the large influx of travellers. *“There is a huge diversity of hotel products”* (Subject E, Luxury Hotel Manager). Due to the aforementioned suspension on new hotel builds, the accommodation sector is effectively ring-fenced against traditional competition, but this has provided the alternative lodging sector, most notably under the guise of AirBnB, the opportunity to establish itself very rapidly in the city with implications that go beyond tourism. Growth in accommodation is mirrored by the expansion in other sectors with tourism operators on the city’s periphery hoping that it will result in investment in areas that previously did not feature on the traditional tourism circuit (Subject D, Stadium Tour & Museum).

“At this stage it’s quite booming (tourism). If you look especially at the three, four star segment and the luxury segment it is enjoying tremendous growth.” (Subject E, Luxury Hotel)

The buoyant mood surrounding the success of tourism in Amsterdam is reflected in the comments of all subjects, coupled with frequent instances emphasising its importance to the economy, employment and in providing business opportunities. However, its visibility and ubiquity, particularly in the city centre, has nonetheless led to calls for more regulation of the practice and resulted in what can only be described as a backlash. Prices of daily goods, but most importantly in rental accommodation, outstrip other conurbations in the Netherlands and the centre is crowded with tourists on a daily basis. Locals wishing to enjoy Amsterdam’s attractions are subject to the same constraints as visitors. These range from paying high prices in restaurants to sharing the long lines outside institutions such as the *Rijksmuseum* or the Anne Frank House. The public transport infrastructure, although efficient, struggles to cope at certain moments due to visitor numbers, leading to a diminishing quality of life for local residents. Perhaps most importantly and echoed by practically all respondents, are the social concerns raised by the spectre of AirBnB in neighbourhoods in and around the traditional tourism circuit. A significant number of property owners seeking to profit from the increasing tourist demand for accommodation quickly aligned themselves with AirBnB in offering alternatives to the conventional lodging sector; a sector that due to socio-political concerns has reached its mandated capacity. Whilst most consumers adhere to acceptable standards of behaviour, the tolerant reputation of Amsterdam, and some of its more hedonistic attractions, also attracts many pleasure-seeking revellers whose behaviour is far less constrained. The subsequent

incidents in neighbourhoods have resulted in social tensions, weakened community cohesion and ultimately incited calls for more regulation.

“Stressful place to live due to number of visitors. Prices have increased.” (Subject B, Tourist Office)

Amsterdam authorities clamped down on AirBnB, restricting accommodation owners to a maximum of 35 overnight stays per calendar year for each property ,or part thereof, they wish to let. According to Subject A (Convention Centre), in a sinister development, some houses and apartments were daubed in paint identifying them as AirBnB properties. AirBnB is just one component of a generalised backlash against tourism. Subject G, a tour operator, states that it is the biggest visible “issue” but cautions against marginalising AirBnB as the sole protagonist. He suggests that hotel development was unfettered in recent times and that essentially many of those calling for regulation fanned social concerns to protect their own interests. There are many social issues related to over tourism but Subject G (Tour Operator) argues that some of these are unavoidable and are a result of the goods and services on offer. He goes on to say that *“there is a fine balance we need to find...drunk tourists will always go to Amsterdam and you can’t shut down the city because of that....there are a lot of places, people and businesses making a living from this.”*

“Imposing restrictions on AirBnB shows the necessity of a city trying to protect itself from its own success.” (Subject A, Convention Centre)

Congestion, caused by over tourism is also a recurring theme but is specific to areas in and around the tourism track or the inner canal ring. It is also a *cause celebre* amongst politicians who are wont to highlight the issue when elections take place. Subject C from the city's DMO, comments on how *"this creates a negative image of tourism from the perspective of many local residents.....tourism has grown too fast.....and the growth has contributed to the perception of there being a problem."* Overcrowding, due to tourism numbers, is an issue and influenced the choice of where to live of Subject D (Stadium Tour and Museum) stating, *"personally tourism is why I don't want to live in Amsterdam."* Notably a number of respondents proffer solutions to congestion by means of making other neighbourhoods more attractive to visitors or even encouraging them to go elsewhere in the Netherlands. This, however, is a contentious issue and subject to fierce criticism in certain quarters.

"For me it is difficult to understand that the city of Amsterdam try to fight that all these visitors are coming and at a certain stage they want to prevent this. This is not helpful for us. The marketing budget of the city is decreasing which is demotivating for us." (Subject E, Luxury Hotel)

Clearly, the tourism sector, according to those familiar with it, is facing some challenges due to its own success. It plays an important economic role yet is allegedly responsible for a loss of social capital that the authorities are consciously attempting to mitigate in order to strike a balance for the benefit of all stakeholders.

5.1.2 Stakeholder engagement in the tourism/hospitality sector

Amsterdam is one of Europe's "great" cities (Maak, 2001). The tourism industry employs almost 70,000 people (Statista, 2020) and the city's tourism offer is delivered by a business community that is both vast and varied. In such a complex environment positive interaction and engagement with and amongst stakeholders is a prerequisite for success. The city's DMO occupies a central role in this ecosystem and its ability to smoothly liaise with its 1000 plus stakeholders sets the tone for actors in the wider tourism sector. This section looks at how this stakeholder environment is perceived.

"We generate a lot of income for the city and this is understood by stakeholders."

(Subject A, Convention centre)

The RAI convention centre works with a whole host of stakeholders in ensuring that the events taking place within its facilities meet client and visitor expectations. The emphasis at the RAI is to use local suppliers when providing catering or other services. The RAI also established its own hotel booking network with access to 60,000 rooms in the city and beyond. Its high profile has permitted it to negotiate a fixed bridge pricing system with properties and the number of clients it attracts account for a significant portion of hotel occupancy, especially when major international conventions are staged. The finance department of the centre estimates that on average each event attendee spends 7 Euros in the city for every Euro spent within its facilities. This is an important factor in how the centre is perceived by other tourism stakeholders and its economic influence is recognised in its relationship both with the Dutch national tourism board (NBTC) and the DMO for Amsterdam (A&P). The RAI's

involvement with both is not purely cooperative but also financial since it actively contributes to these bodies (as a partner/member). It collaborates with the NBTC in international trade fairs geared at attracting meetings and events to the Netherlands and holds frequent discussions with *A&P*. Its operations see it interacting with various parties within and outside the tourism sector. The exigencies surrounding many of the large conventions it hosts require the RAI to liaise with the local authorities, transport providers and policing bodies. Event planners and their clients benefit from free public transport and the RAI has used its influence for its clients to use bicycles free of charge for short local journeys, apt for a city renowned for this mode of transport. For its part, in upholding the city's reputation for tolerance, the RAI has also agreed with the municipal government to only stage events that are inclusive and respect diversity.

The Johan Cruyff Arena, formerly the Amsterdam Arena, sees the future success of its stadium tour & museum department dependent on stakeholder interaction.

“We hope to be working with the Heineken Experience as of next season. We expect this to result in an additional 25,000 visitors to the arena.” (Subject D, Stadium Tour & Museum)

The initiative referred to in the previous quotation is but one of many undertaken by the organisation in order to bolster its profile. The department successfully cooperates with Tourism Tickets, a local tourism consolidator, using the Amsterdam pass offering access to the stadium tour and museum along with up to fifty other attractions dotted around the city. Tickets are also provided via resellers and up to 70 hotels in the city.

There is an arrangement with the *A&P* to include stadium and museum entry with the popular “I Amsterdam” city card. Given the Johan Cruyff Arena’s location, Subject D (Stadium Tour and Museum) suggests that cooperative efforts are key to the continued success of his department that is aiming for 200,000 visitors annually by 2022. Although many of these initiatives are commercially oriented, the stadium tour department also works with schools and foundations for underprivileged children allowing them to witness the inner workings of the carbon-neutral venue and gain an appreciation for Amsterdam’s footballing heritage, an example of edutainment in action (Addis, 2005).

Subject E (Luxury Hotel) describes the hospitality and tourism sector as being so vast as necessitating companies to focus on who or what is important to them. He emphasises that the relationships his company enjoys with other stakeholders in the city are largely positive.

“In Amsterdam we have contact with all the 5 star properties; we are part of the luxury collection.” (Subject E, Luxury Hotel)

The high-end hospitality sector seeks to provide a service and experience comparable to that in any of the world’s major cities. To this end, the manager of the iconic Amstel Hotel in Amsterdam considers it crucial to be involved with partners whose services are complementary to their own. His organisation is closely involved with others in the sector but draws the line at cooperative marketing practices. The hotel does occasionally attend trade fairs with similar properties, but not necessarily those from

the Netherlands and Amsterdam. It plays a leading role, which it values, in the city's hospitality, catering and restaurant associations. It is also a paid up member of "I Amsterdam", the public face of A&P (DMO). The relationship with the DMO is close but Subject E (Luxury Hotel) laments the lack of funding in promoting the city as a destination for the independent leisure traveler.

Interestingly, AFC Ajax for its part does not experience much interaction with the region's tourism operators. It collaborates with the municipal and security authorities due to the nature of its core business involving large numbers of people attending football matches at its stadium. Logistically, and given the often tribal nature of football, the engagement is ongoing and based on supporter safety concerns as well as alleviating inconvenience caused to the city's residents.

"I am not aware of a relationship between us and the tourist board." (Subject F, Ajax Board Member)

In the past there was some evidence of collaboration in the broader destination marketing sphere with Ajax forming part of the Metropolitan Amsterdam Club. This is described by Subject C (DMO Executive) as an "inner circle" of prominent stakeholders such as the *Rijkmuseum*, KLM, major banks and others who, together with the DMO, discussed marketing strategies and opportunities for the city. It appears that Ajax no longer figures as a significant partner despite its high profile but is involved with the stadium's owner (AFC Ajax is a shareholder of the organisation) in facilitating stadium tours and contributing to its museum. They are also heavily

engaged with the local community in providing football coaching expertise and the use of training facilities for many of the area's amateur teams.

As a point of interest the DMO of a smaller Dutch city, Leeuwarden, which often describes itself as “little” Amsterdam in targeting foreign visitors, very much stresses the importance of stakeholder cooperation. The city was named European Capital of Culture in 2018 and successfully fulfilled its remit in hosting numerous well received activities resulting in extensive publicity and increased visitor numbers.

“Although we are the principal actor in this we incorporate and collaborate with as many stakeholders as possible..... We try to encourage collaboration and cooperation amongst all stakeholders.” (Subject H, Marketing Advisor, European Capital of Culture, ECOC)

Taking cues from other tourism bodies, Leeuwarden's DMO transformed a relative tourism backwater into a destination of choice both domestically and internationally, leading to it being featured as Europe's third best city destination by the Lonely Planet guide. Subject H (Marketing Advisor) is adamant that this could not have been achieved without collaboration on all fronts but most importantly with the principal stakeholder, the city's residents. The DMO's interaction with the town's inhabitants converted what initially was a large base of detractors, fearful of public money being squandered, into the initiative's *“most loyal ambassadors.”* He states that this was down to grassroots discussions leading to *“empowerment”* of people and that everything was *“community based.”* Surprisingly, and despite the success of the

ECOC campaign, Leeuwarden's tourism administrators dismiss any knock-on effect from the booming tourism sector in Amsterdam as having played a part in an increase in visitor numbers to the region. There had been calls for Amsterdam to encourage tourists to visit other parts of the Netherlands. They do not register any involvement with *A&P* during or after this period, suggesting that their cooperative marketing efforts with the national air carrier, KLM and the airports of Schiphol and Groningen, proved much more significant in successfully targeting foreign visitors in particular.

The examples in this section demonstrate the diverse forms stakeholder engagement may take but a constant theme emerging speaks to its importance and that at its most effective it is often associated with cooperative marketing initiatives.

5.1.3 The role of Amsterdam's destination marketing organisation

A&P is the organisation behind the "I Amsterdam" brand, which is the public face of the city's DMO. City hall or *Gemeente Amsterdam* is the organisation's most influential partner since it accounts for up to one third of the entity's funding. The aforementioned brand, although developed in part by Subject C, who plays a prominent role in the DMO, is the property of the municipal government and is used under license by tourism stakeholders in the city.

"Our motto is empower the city." (Subject C, DMO Executive)

In almost everything that the DMO aspires to accomplish the empowerment motif plays a central role. Marketing of the city is considered from numerous perspectives, not least of which is internally to residents whose lives are touched on a daily basis by the pervasive impact of tourism. Although actively promoting the city as a tourism destination to the leisure market has ceased, with no further funding of such endeavours, the organisation is still involved in shaping the visitor experience and influencing individual choices. Its responsibility lies not only within the official boundaries of the city of Amsterdam, since its mandate extends to 32 municipalities in the surrounding area for whom *A&P* is the marketing agent. One of its principal concerns is in ensuring that the city remains a hub for the MICE sector. The organisation is quite complex and its tasks transcend the domain of tourism into liaising with businesses and attracting new ventures to the city. Amsterdam has quickly become home to a number of high profile digital start-ups in recent times. The complexity of the organisation is mirrored by its organizational structure. Subject C (DMO Executive) explains; *“we are a public – private partnership with over 1,000 members. One third of our operational budget is provided by the city government, one third by our private partners and one third by consumers.”* Despite this seemingly healthy financial, base Subject B, working in the city’s busiest tourist office, argues that the operational pressure is so great that the organisation does not have sufficient resources, a point also made by Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) in reference to DMOs generally being under resourced. Nonetheless, the DMO’s role is appreciated by many stakeholders in the tourism sector as highlighted by the business manager at the RAI;

“They are extremely important to us. We support them, also financially.” (Subject A, Convention Centre)

He goes on to mention the fact that despite its relatively small size Amsterdam punches well above its weight saying; *“go into any hotel lobby in the world where you see world clocks and there is always one for Amsterdam hanging there.”* He suggests that this is just one small example of recognition on a global scale and much of that is not simply down to history but to the *“good job”* of A&P via the use of the *“I Amsterdam”* brand.

The hospitality sector is also largely enthusiastic about the proactive role of the DMO, particularly in attracting events to the city. When major conventions take place the *“whole city is full for a week”*, according to the manager of a large hotel. The luxury sector is less impacted by event goers but appreciates the efforts of the DMO in supporting the hotel industry, feeling that it provides a vital service for the budget operators up to the four star category. There is some disquiet, however (see sub-section 5.1.1 above), in relation to budgetary constraints on promotional efforts. The city has become a victim of its own success and Subject E (Luxury Hotel) feels that the lack of promotion is directly related to the political class in city hall (a major stakeholder) pandering to voter concerns with municipal elections in mind.

The representative of the Johan Cruyff Arena holding company, responsible for the football stadium museum and the provision of tours, Subject D, is complimentary of the DMO’s role in the city but also understands the challenges it faces in relation to

the public perceptions of over-tourism. The district surrounding the stadium finds itself off the well-trodden tourist track but it works in collaboration with the DMO, amongst others, in making the area more accessible and more interesting for visitors. There is a long-term plan in place, to transform what was a former industrial park, into a more vibrant residential area, with the stadium at its core, surrounded by a variety of leisure options. Subject D (Stadium Tour & Museum) believes that it provides an alternative, *“even for tourists.”*

A&P is conscious of the important role it plays in the region. It is far from a conventional DMO and portrays itself, according to Subject C (DMO Executive), as an *“organisation that is sustainable over the long term because ultimately it wants to empower the city by promoting good quality employment opportunities.”* It maintains strong links with local businesses, describing itself as an *“integrated marketing organisation”* and believes that creating meaningful jobs associated with the tourism sector is beneficial to society as a whole. It also goes some way towards mitigating many of the negative impacts related to over-tourism. Unlike the DMO of Barcelona, A&P does not see itself as primarily commercially driven and is more concerned with contributing to a *“prosperous and happy city where people enjoy a good quality of life.”* It faces numerous challenges in its day-to-day operations. The unexpected increase in visitor numbers is a visible discernible reality on the streets of the city centre. This has contributed to a climate where the success of the tourism sector has morphed into a problem, with some politicians even calling for the dissolution of the DMO, feeling that it had fulfilled its remit and outlived its purpose. Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) refers to instances, depending on circumstances, whereby DMOs find themselves subject to the vagaries of politicians with little or no

formal experience in tourism and/or marketing. In democratic countries, he argues, where elections invariably follow a four yearly cycle, the efforts of some DMOs are inextricably linked to policy adjustments or changes that can undermine one of the main objectives of the well-functioning DMO, that of long-term sustainability. He makes the case for DMOs to be granted the necessary autonomy in informed decision making so as to be able to “*develop a coherent long-term strategy.*” A&P is a public-private partnership that is acutely aware of such issues, however, the Dutch proclivity for consensus building allows it to plan for the long-term.

The DMO has reacted to the situation on the ground and public perception by developing programmes to relieve the pressure on the city centre that is focal to most concerns. Its “Great Neighborhood” initiative encourages tourists to visit lesser-known but interesting parts of Amsterdam that do not readily figure on the tourist agenda. The Amsterdam Area Campaign goes a step further in promoting surrounding areas and towns. To the consternation of some, the DMO has gone as far in placating the most virulent anti-tourism concerns by promoting other cities of the Netherlands, such as The Hague, Utrecht and Rotterdam as alternatives to Amsterdam; ostensibly competitors until relatively recent times. All of these initiatives, leveraging plausible options, face one crucial challenge according to Subject C (DMO Executive). She refers to studies undertaken by her organisation measuring the average visitor stay as 2.7 days or less. These visitors have little inclination to travel beyond the city centre but adds that the “*process is on-going and a long term project.*”

5.1.4 Flying the flag for Amsterdam? AFC Ajax

Subject F has been director of AFC Ajax (football club) since 2012. This individual's relationship with the club has been a life-long affair on many levels culminating in his appointment to the board of directors overseeing the management of the organisation. He believes that Ajax is very much the club of Amsterdam and engenders much civic pride.

“We are aware of and proud of our Amsterdam identity.” (Subject F, Ajax Board Member)

The club is not simply a successful sporting body but also a dynamic commercial entity operating in a very competitive environment that seeks to monetise opportunities at every turn. Subject F (Ajax Director), a keen football fan, accepts that the commercial thrust of Ajax may not sit well in some quarters but argues that a *“symbiotic”* relationship exists between continued on-field success and the club's commercial activities. It is the only Dutch club traded on the country's stock exchange. Mindful of its corporate image the Ajax Foundation, the club's philanthropic arm, is active in sponsoring and aiding social initiatives in the local community.

Whilst Ajax is cognisant of its civic duty and maintains strong links with both the security and municipal authorities, it does not actively seek out engagement with tourism stakeholders in the area. Its former status as a member of the highly influential *“inner circle”* connected to the DMO does not figure prominently on its radar. Subject

F (Ajax Director), was not even aware of such a relationship. From the DMO perspective, interested in mutually beneficial arrangements, Subject C (DMO Executive) comments on how they are prevented from using certain symbols associated with the club due to image rights issues. This commercial bent is further highlighted by Subject D, responsible for the museum and stadium tour at the Johan Cruyff Arena:

“They think we exploit them (Ajax).....there are strange things such as not being allowed to promote the stadium tour/museum on the official Ajax website.....Ajax is an extremely commercial organisation.” (Subject D, Stadium tours and Museum)

The comment of Subject D (Stadium Tour/Museum) reveals insights into the stadium-club relationship. Ajax is the tenant of the Johan Cruyff Arena but displays an attitude that is not well received by one of its principal partners, without whom it would struggle to operate. It was also pointed out that Ajax benefits financially from stadium tours by means of a commission paid on every ticket and the tour circuit is designed in a way that it exits into the Ajax fan store, where official club merchandise is sold. It is felt, however, that the opportunities afforded by this tourism endeavour rank particularly low on the priority list for Ajax who see other business and sponsorship opportunities as more lucrative. These also involve minimal resources and are normally simple transactional arrangements. Subject D (Stadium Tour and Museum) does note, however, that the situation is improving with newer members of the Ajax board being more open to engaging positively with them and others.

“It’s our local pride. For some it is our national pride. I think Ajax plays an important role in how people perceive this city.” (Subject A, Convention Centre)

Ajax recently added “of Amsterdam” to its name in all official communications. The club itself, according to Subject F (Ajax Board Member), considers itself as being representative of the straight talking character of the city’s inhabitants. It is proud of its origins and has added to the story of Amsterdam through its nurturing of iconic footballing stars such as Johan Cruyff. A&P’s representative (Subject C) readily accepts that it is a globally recognised brand that “sells” the city when playing abroad or participating in major international competitions. It effectively has become a part of the city’s image for some. The Amsterdam coat of arms containing the ‘x x x’ symbol is closely associated with fans of the club, featuring on flags and other regalia eliciting the curiosity of spectators when displayed in stadiums abroad. In its own way the symbol, actually three crosses of St. Andrew, is an image that has become better known, largely due to its association with the football club according to Subject G (Tour Operator).

Figure 5.1

Flag of Amsterdam’s coat of arms



He goes on to state that whilst Ajax might not have the profile of Real Madrid, Barcelona or Manchester United, it still forms part of the city's wider image that is subjectively diverse. Some negative connotations related to Ajax and football in general remain that partially tarnish the image of both, but are not necessarily seen as being unique to Amsterdam. Hooliganism is an occasional phenomenon that is particularly resented by residents of the city centre when it occurs on their streets. Subjects D (Stadium Tour and Museum) and E (Luxury Hotel), suggest that it has decreased in recent years and the only way that Ajax could negatively impact on the perceptions people have of Amsterdam would be related to the anti-social behavior of some fans supporting the club when they play abroad. On the rare occasions when this has happened it is usually met with firm recriminations from both city hall and Ajax itself mitigating the negative publicity.

“Ajax is a symbol of the city but not in the same way as the canals, museums and even windmills are symbols.” (Subject B, Tourist Office)

In a tourism context Ajax is not a major attraction according to Subject F of the club's board of directors, although he acknowledges that the stadium tour and museum do hold some appeal for domestic visitors. He adds that tourists are not very visible on match days around the stadium and refutes a claim made by Subject G (Tour Operator) that a special area is reserved in the stadium for visiting tourists to attend games, outside of a pen specifically cordoned off for fans or visitors of the club against whom Ajax is playing. Although it has an international profile, Ajax is buried so deep in Amsterdam as to be practically irrelevant when it comes to tourism, a situation Subject

F (Ajax Director) would like to see change, not least because it could provide additional commercial opportunities for the club. Working on the tourism frontline Subject B (Tourist office) rarely comes into contact with visitors seeking information about the club, stadium or its tours despite displaying some promotional material for the latter. The only time people request information is generally not out of an interest in Ajax but practical guidance for foreign football fans whose club happens to be playing against Ajax. She feels that the city has many other attractions that visitors prioritise. Subject C of the DMO, who has decades of experience in marketing Amsterdam is more blunt stating that “*in reality Ajax could be located anywhere and (from a tourism perspective) is not that representative of the city.*” Almost all respondents mention that the city is awash in iconic visitor attractions such as the *Rijkmuseum*, Anne Frank house, the red-light district and coffee shops. With the canals and distinctive architecture as a backdrop, these are prioritised over everything else. If a tourist happens to attend an Ajax game it would be as a peripheral activity rather than the focus of a visit, unlike if a visitor attended a game in a city such as Manchester where attending a match is more likely to be the principal reason to visit (Subject G, Tour operator).

A question put to most interviewees, all of whom were well travelled, looked at the elements people associated with Amsterdam once they became aware of the respondent’s origins on visits abroad. Almost uniformly and despite years of campaigning to change the perception, the city’s image was linked to drugs, cannabis in particular; the red-light district and canals.

“They mention drugs, the red-light district, the canals.....” (Subject F, Ajax board member)

Even seemingly more sophisticated people apparently made similar associations but included culture, art and the history of Amsterdam in describing their impressions of the destination. Developing and communicating a definitive standard image for a destination is difficult since there are so many variables to be taken into consideration and even then image of place is a subjective construct, according to Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic). This is problematic for the DMO, he contends, since in the case of Amsterdam and despite the efforts of the *A&P* in formulating a very effective tourism strategy, the city’s symbols remain the red-light district and cannabis in the eyes of many people. He doubts that these elements correspond with the image that residents or indeed the DMO has of its city although he notes that as a frequent visitor the city is welcoming and construed as a well ordered *“great city of Europe”* where *“high culture cohabits with pop counter culture and is almost a throwback to the 1960s.”* This is perhaps the image that many hold of the city, he argues. When quizzed on Amsterdam, its image and football Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic), who has also visited the city many times, believes that the city is so imbued with the iconic imagery of its canals, architecture and history that it would be difficult to associate it with football, its football club Ajax or sport in any meaningful way. Interestingly, from a local tourism marketing and practical standpoint none of the interviewees felt that incorporating Ajax in campaigns to promote the city would be effective (although none were outwardly against such a strategy) since few outsiders associated Amsterdam with the club, a sentiment echoed by Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic). *“I would ask them to use something different since the*

return on investment would be just too low. Use the Rijkmuseum and pretty much everyone will know it.....with our visitors soccer does not have that high a profile” (Subject A, Convention Centre). Even the Ajax board member was reticent and, given the commercial nature of the club, suggested that they would only cooperate in such an exchange if it were financially beneficial to the organisation.

The fickle nature of football and clubs’ fortunes based on success or lack thereof is frequently mentioned as a factor against embedding Ajax into the city’s promotional mix. There was a strong sense among the interviewees that using a football club in promoting tourism would be counterproductive since it was felt that on-field success plays a big role in its popularity and that this could not be guaranteed. Subject C (DMO executive) suggests that based on its relative lack of success internationally Ajax is not a “*stable partner*” in the same vein as the likes of a museum or art gallery that does not have a “*good or bad season.*” This sentiment is reflected by many, including representatives of the stadium holding company which would stand to benefit greatly from a sustained period of success for the club. The club continues to be successful in domestic competitions but this does not translate into enhanced international recognition. There is consensus, however, that sport can be “*a great marketing tool*” (Subject A, Convention Centre) and that a period of international success for Ajax could provide legitimate grounds for leverage from a tourism perspective.

In a twist on the concept of leverage *A&P* through its “Great Neighborhoods” initiative, is attempting to entice tourists, clogging the city centre, to visit lesser known areas, one of which is the district surrounding the Johan Cruyff Arena (home of Ajax).

The initiative was welcomed by Subjects P and Q (Academics) as representing an unorthodox application of leverage. Ajax occupies a big role in this and the campaign is both encouraged and facilitated by the Arena holding company itself. Subject D (Stadium Tour and Museum) notes that the stadium and its surrounds do not presently figure in the list of the top 20 things to do in Amsterdam but has great tourism potential, including excellent links to public transport, that could see it propelled to the forefront of the strategy to ease tourism related congestion in the city centre.

5.1.5 Leverage

Leveraging positive elements that people connect to destinations is standard practice for all DMOs, suggests Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic). He adds, based on experience working in Colombia, that even the unsavory connotations associated with certain locations may lend themselves to leverage for tourism gains, citing the example of Medellin and the life of the infamous drug lord Pablo Escobar where the latter's legacy has been exploited for tourism purposes. The city of Amsterdam has leveraged its location for centuries. From trading with the Hanseatic league, to surpassing it as a centre of commerce following its collapse, Amsterdam possesses a distinctive set of attributes that have enabled it not only to survive but thrive in modern times, according to Subject C (DMO Executive). Its tourism success has effectively been rooted in the capacity of its residents for reinvention, flexibility and open-mindedness, states Subject B (Tourist office) who argues that the great attractions of the city were all created by the human mind. She further adds that her understanding of leverage, even in a tourism context, when applied to her city relates to knowledge

and the ethereal ambiance of the city rather than the “*magnificent architecture*” or “*pretty canals.*”

“Success breeds success and that is what should be exploited here in the city.”

(Subject A, Convention Centre)

Subject A (Convention Centre) suggests that Amsterdam has been successful in so many fields that even this intangible concept, “*success*”, lends itself to leverage and is just one of many varying opinions as to what leverage actually entails. When quizzed on the subject of tourism leverage interviewees expressed a range of views as to what it represents for the city and how it can be applied. The DMO concept of leverage has been heavily influenced by the political and social agenda related to over-tourism. As previously alluded to, the initiatives to relieve congestion in the well-trodden tourist areas towards the lesser known districts of the city are well regarded by all. Less appreciated, however, are steps to extend the geographic reach of such programmes so as to incorporate different cities and regions of the country as expressed by Subject A (Convention Centre); “*we are very much against encouraging the dispersal of visitors outside of Amsterdam.*” He argues that the city authorities should restrict themselves to focusing on initiatives that are of benefit to businesses and the local economy in general. Effective leverage of a tourism asset or a series of assets can only occur if all stakeholders, most importantly the local residents, feel a sense of “*ownership*”, according to Subject H (Marketing Advisor). It should be a long-term well-researched strategy based on a stable foundation. This marketing advisor to a Dutch city that featured as the European Capital of Culture in 2018 suggests that the concept is both

complex and subjective. He goes on to argue that leverage must include a variety of elements so as not to be solely dependent on one variable. The actual combination should be varied so as to transmit a consistent message to potential visitors, but also sufficiently nimble to appeal to individual tastes. To be successful the message should also be a reflection of local character that residents and businesses are keen to buy in to. Subject H (Marketing Advisor) posits that the latter can only happen if the tourism context for leverage benefits or highlights issues that are important within the destination; “*we have used ECOC to highlight and address some very important social and environmental challenges.*”

“Our motto is *empower the city. That is leverage at work.*” (Subject C, DMO Executive)

Empowerment from the perspective of *A&P* focuses on promoting good quality employment opportunities for residents and a favourable climate for businesses to operate within. It is frequently referred to across *A&P*'s literature, and by Subject C (DMO Executive), as the embodiment of leverage. The hierarchy of the DMO is very attentive to the tourist experience and residents' attitudes towards tourism. Leverage in this context takes on different overtones. Amsterdam has already developed a well-established brand in “I amsterdam” that differentiates the city from its competitors and is not actively seeking to encourage more tourists to visit the city. Subject C (DMO Executive) contends that leverage involves framing the experiencing of both tourists and residents in a positive manner that is delivered through the concept of empowerment. The Great Neighborhood campaign is a long-term effort designed to

feed into this but faces considerable challenges due to the current visitor profile, notably related to the average duration of stay (2.7 days).

For attempts at leverage to be successful the DMO must undertake all efforts to thoroughly understand its audiences;

“When it comes to leverage the potential pitfall with all of this for DMOs is to avoid a ‘one size fits all’ strategy to this. They need to know and understand their target markets.” (Subject P, Destination Marketing Academic)

In order to uncover grounds to leverage elements associated with destinations thorough market research is essential, according to Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic). What is compelling for one audience may not necessarily resonate with another, states Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic), who interprets leverage in the sphere of tourism as a tactic in initially eliciting interest in the location. This can subsequently be transformed into a platform for the destination to highlight other attractions.

In Amsterdam, AFC Ajax is considered as a tool to be exploited from a tourism perspective by some. Subjects A (Convention Centre) and G (Tour Operator) are enthusiastic proponents of the club’s tourism potential, acknowledging that whilst it cannot compete with the iconic attractions it represents an added value for the city and visitors. The club, according to Subject E (Luxury Hotel Manager), may lack the

cachet of an FC Barcelona whose playing style almost encapsulates the essence of that city and ranks high on the tourist's agenda despite the presence of other highly prominent visitor attractions. He opines that the Johan Cruyff Arena's location, on the city's periphery, prevents the team fully exploiting its tourism potential but that the club's rich history is as of yet an untapped reservoir. This untapped potential resonates with Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) stating; *"I think the DMO might be better served in looking at something such as a Johan Cruyff museum rather than using Ajax directly."* His academic counterpart, Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) is supportive in this respect noting that great football stars such as Cruyff, Pele or Maradona have inspired their own legends that can make for more interesting and meaningful human stories.

"The intangible is sometimes more important than the tangible. In focusing or celebrating individuals certain target markets may receive the message more enthusiastically." (Subject P, Destination Marketing Academic)

A&P takes a different view on leverage in relation to AFC Ajax. Subject C (DMO Executive) explained how Ajax has attempted in the past to exploit its history when opening the Ajax Experience in the centre of Amsterdam. This interactive museum and Ajax exhibition space closed at a considerable loss just two years after opening in 2011. She, along with subject D (Ajax Board Member), believes that Ajax can become a more prominent tourism attraction over time provided that the district surrounding the Johan Cruyff Arena is considered worthy of visitor attention. This, they claim, will only materialise when the area is fully transformed from a former industrial park into

an even more vibrant residential and commercial area. It is a work in progress and forms part of the city's Great Neighborhood plan. In a noticeably multi-cultural district many new residential units have been built, concert halls and other entertainment venues opened, along with a number of restaurants and bars. It forms part of *A&P*'s long-term strategy, according to subject C (DMO Executive), with Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) adding that the district's elevation as a tourism attraction should act as a catalyst for the development of additional facilities within it.

The interviews paint a picture of Amsterdam, its DMO, principal sports franchise and various stakeholders who operate in an environment that leads them to experience tourism in different ways. Tourism has added to the city's economic prosperity and enhanced its international profile, both positively and negatively, depending on the perspective of the individual. The growth in the visitor economy is welcome but the consequences of this success have essentially made Amsterdam so popular that tourism as a practice is experiencing something of a backlash, with calls for regulation and containment. Despite its status as one of Europe's elite football clubs, AFC Ajax is a peripheral pull factor for visitors to a city that is imbued with an extensive array of cultural attractions, yet there are plans afoot to leverage this sporting asset for its tourism potential as a component within a wider strategy.

Having reported the findings gathered through the use of interviews section 5.1.6 presents the results of the Amsterdam visitor survey. A comparable survey was also conducted in Manchester, the details of which can be found in section 5.2.6.

5.1.6 Amsterdam visitor survey

An intercept survey of visitors to Amsterdam was conducted from December 2016 through to May 2017. The survey was administered at various points in and around the main tourist circuit found within the “canal ring” district during daylight hours over the course of both weekdays and weekends to ensure that a reliable cross-section of the population was represented. The protocol for administering the survey is explained in further detail elsewhere (see chapter four), however it should be noted that candidates were only deemed suitable for inclusion upon clearly identifying themselves as visitors to the city of Amsterdam for the purposes of leisure or business. Respondents were approached randomly by interviewers who verbally posed the questions and recorded answers on paper for each individual intercepted. The data were then collated in an Excel database that was subsequently transferred to SPSS for analysis.

The survey instrument consisted of a number of core questions plus an additional request for basic demographic information. Survey items were developed subsequent to the online pilot study that is described in chapter four (sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2), and in reviewing the relevant literature of chapter two. The principal objective in administering the survey was to investigate the extent to which visitors associated AFC Ajax, or the sport of football in general, with Amsterdam. In order to address this issue questions were formulated to identify the main elements that influenced the individual’s decision to visit Amsterdam, including an open question to determine subjective independent associations that visitors made with the city.

5.1.6.1 Visitor characteristics and information referral sources

This section considers the demographic characteristics of survey participants, including visitor provenance and the sources of information consulted prior to travel. It contains data of relevance to both DMOs and football clubs that may shape initiatives related to leverage.

Table 5.1 breaks down respondent characteristics relating to gender, age and their place of origin. Ultimately these are considered useful markers in identifying attitudes towards football and the location's association with the sport.

Table 5.1

Amsterdam Respondent Characteristics

Item	Percentage (%)	Item	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender (N=492)</i>		<i>Visitor Origin (N=508)</i>	
Female	44.5	Great Britain	14.9
Male	55.5	Europe (excluding NL)	40.6
		Asia and Middle East	17.9
		North America	8.9
<i>Age (N=492)</i>		Netherlands	8.7
Up to 24 years old	34.6	Others	9.0
25 to 50 years old	55.8		
More than 50 years old	9.6		

A total of 512 people took part in the survey with a preponderance of males 55.5% to females 44.5%. A small number of respondents (20) declined to be categorised according to gender. The mean age recorded was 30.56 years, however the sample featured a wide range of respondent ages spread over different generations. A cohort of 20 from the sample failed or refused to indicate age in responding. Whilst specific ages were registered the table clusters them into three distinct categories for expediency purposes based on perceived levels of disposable income and life stage i.e. teens to young adults (up to 24 years), adults (25 – 50 years) and older adults above the age of 50.

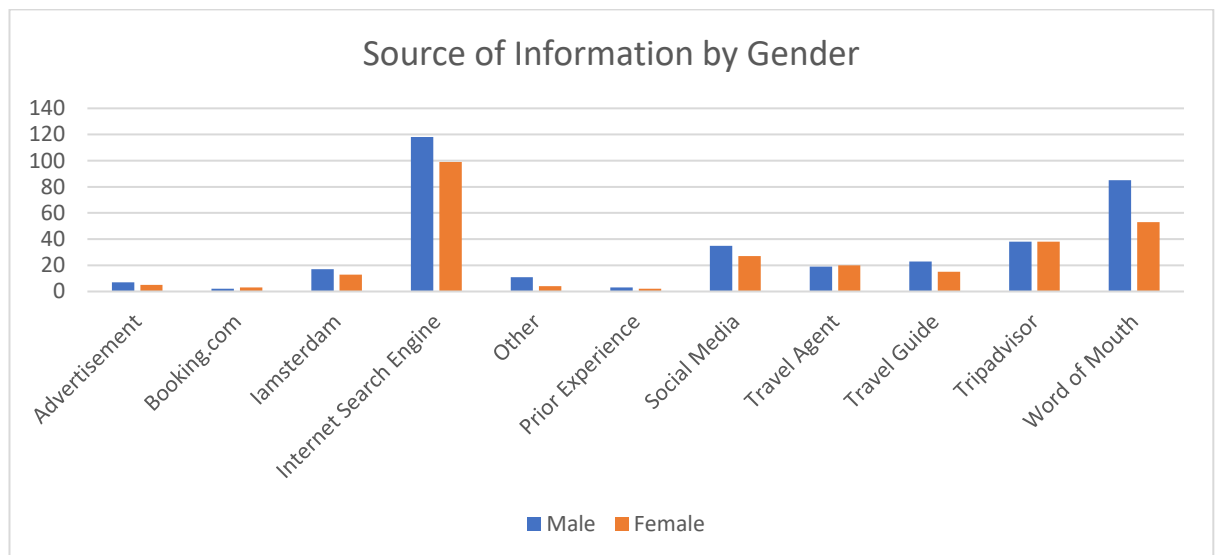
Amsterdam is a cosmopolitan city and attracts visitors from across the globe, plus a substantial number of domestic tourists. With so many respondent nationalities documented it was considered practical to categorise them geographically or by region, thus six separate categories are illustrated in table 5.1.

People from within the Netherlands, but residing elsewhere in the country, accounted for 8.7% of those surveyed. Countries bordering on the Netherlands or close to it such as Germany, Belgium and France represented over 16% of all respondents, whilst Great Britain, with 76 individuals (almost 15%), stands out as the country with the highest number of visitor totals identified in the survey. Overall Europe, including some non-EU member countries but excluding the Netherlands (Iceland, Switzerland, Norway, Serbia, Albania, North Macedonia and the Ukraine were included in this cohort) accounted for the largest group of respondents or over 40% of the total. Respondents originating from Asia and the Middle East made up the next largest

grouping in the survey representing almost 18% of the total. China and Israel account for half of this number. North America, principally in terms of US visitors, also represents a significant segment of those surveyed with close to 9% of all participants. The final category, listed as “others” included respondents from South and Central America, the continent of Africa, Australia/New Zealand and elsewhere.

Figure 5.2

Information Sources Consulted Prior to Visit According to Gender (Amsterdam)



The survey’s initial point of interest focused on the information sources that visitors consulted prior to visiting Amsterdam. The rationale behind the question was ultimately to observe the extent to which the website, other digital platforms or commercial literature related to Amsterdam’s DMO (*A&P*), acted as relevant repositories of information for the prospective tourist. Figure 5.2 looks at the principal avenues called upon by visitors when seeking information prior to visiting the city. It

dissects the answers categorised by gender and finds few discernible variations between males and females. It is a very eclectic mix, however, a clear and understandable trend is identified in that most tourism related information is currently accessed online. In drilling down into respondent answers, search engines such as Google are seen to play a vital role in the provision of information. The website of *A&P*, *Iamsterdam.com*, garners few mentions as having acted as an information source for the prospective visitor, with just 6% of the total whilst social media, particularly manifested by the review site *TripAdvisor*, figures strongly as a crucial resource having being cited by almost a sixth of all respondents. Word-of-mouth also features as a relevant source of information for over one quarter of respondents, although the question did not identify whether this was electronic word-of-mouth via social media platforms or from personal sources such as friends and family. Finally, previous experiences in having visited the city before already provided some travelers with the necessary information and as such, the prevalence for this particular segment to consult information sources was limited.

Figure 5.3

Information Sources Consulted Prior to Visit According to Age (Amsterdam)

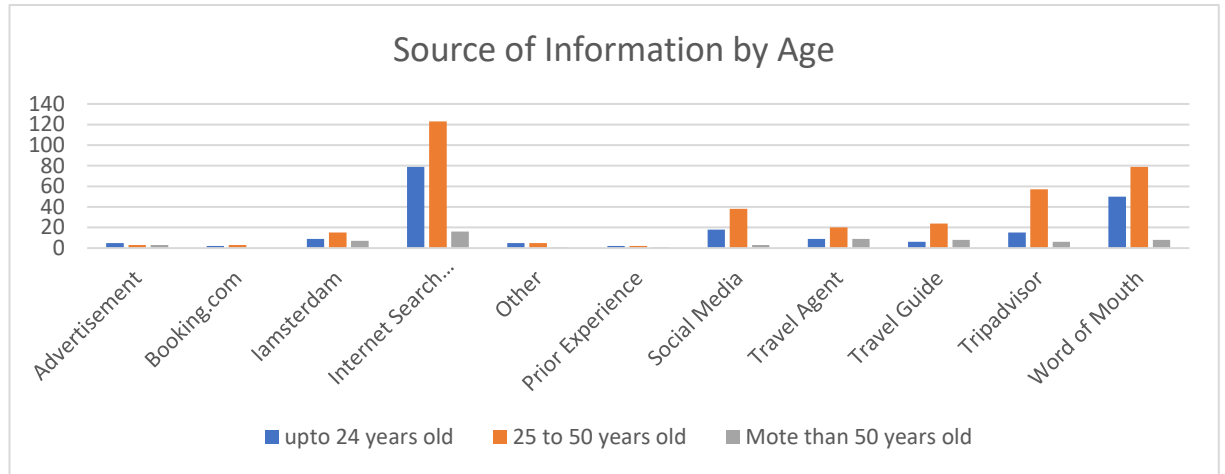


Figure 5.3 yet again considers information sources consulted by visitors prior to arrival but categorised by respondent age. In a similar vein to figure 5.2, it reveals that most respondents display a marked preference in searching for information online via the use of popular search engines such as Google, although this diminishes slightly in the older age category. It also pointedly shows that A&P's online portal, lamsterdam.com, does not figure highly as an information source for visitors. Ultimately, neither age nor gender appear to alter the principal ways in which tourism related information is accessed prior to visiting the city. It is an important point of consideration for the DMO when evaluating how it communicates to potential visitors in advance of their arrival and also questions the effectiveness of its own online platforms in terms of advertising and promotion.

5.1.6.2 Destination association and influences on visitation

The next question put to those surveyed required them to mention the first three words that came to mind when thinking of Amsterdam. As an open question this was designed to solicit the subject's immediate untainted response indicating the associations made with the city. It was also crucially included to ascertain whether tourists saw AFC Ajax, or football, as occupying an important role in how Amsterdam is perceived as a destination. All but two subjects responded to this question (510) eliciting a total combination of 1526 associations pertaining to destination image. The word cloud (figure 5.4) displays the most pertinent results.

Figure 5.4

Visitor Word Associations with Amsterdam



The findings indicate quite clearly that Amsterdam is recognised by tourists as being synonymous with a combination of elements that showcase the diverse nature of the city. They are also indicative of why the city has been so successful in attracting huge numbers of visitors. The city's architecture and landscape, including the famous canals, figure as the primary associations made. The mixture of 17th century buildings, stemming from the Dutch "golden era" and the addition of the "canal ring", a UNESCO world heritage listed site, constitute a significant evocative combination that appears to be universal in its appeal. Looked at on an individual basis Amsterdam's canals stand out as the singular most iconic element of association. When combined with aspects relating to the arts, museums and historical culture this image is reinforced. Many respondents citing one of these aspects invariably mentioned others, highlighting a strong relationship between the city's aesthetic spatial environment and culture.

As alluded to in other sections of this study Amsterdam caters to visitors whose interests are as varied as the city's attractions. Known the world over for its tolerant attitude towards drugs, notably cannabis, a substantial proportion of visitors across all age groups associate the city with "weed, coffee shops and drugs." The vibrant hedonistic culture, characterised by frequent references to "nightlife, bars, clubs, drinking, fun and beer", plays an important role in the image of the city from the perspective of younger people, as per the survey's results (teens and young adults across all sexes), with the prevalence towards such associations less pronounced in older adults. In the same vein, younger visitors mentioning these aspects also display a tendency to link Amsterdam with the wide availability and consumption of soft drugs. Amsterdam's renowned red-light district falls within the city's canal ring and

is another factor frequently cited as one of the principal elements associated with the city. Ostensibly part of the destination’s nightlife it appears less important for those under 24 and takes on greater levels of significance in the category of adults from 25 – 50 years of age. Males are also considerably more likely to mention the red-light district than females.

Table 5.2

Top 15 Terms Used to Describe Amsterdam

Rank	Weight	Word	Rank	Weight	Word
1	170	Canals	8	32	Coffeeshops
2	125	Weed	9	32	Museums
3	82	Bicycles	10	32	Smoking
4	77	Redlight	11	31	Drinking
5	52	Tulips	12	28	Windmills
6	45	Cheese	13	25	Drugs
7	41	Architecture	14	24	People
			15	21	Shopping

Table 5.2 lists the top cited terms used to describe the city. Other images that are noteworthy include tulips along with the ubiquitous bicycle in a city where cycling is one of the most popular forms of transportation. As a capital city Amsterdam is also a major shopping hub and this is cited on a number of occasions by a predominance of females in all age groups. The study sought to discover how readily football, and specifically AFC Ajax, sprang to mind from the visitor perspective. Interestingly, Ajax was mentioned in 14 instances, football on four occasions and the Netherlands’ most famous football player, Johan Cruyff, was named just once. Football related words

accounted thus for a very small percentage (1.2%) of reactions from visitors when asked to list the first three words that came to mind when thinking of Amsterdam. In fact, sport generally, with an additional two mentions, appears to feature sparingly in what triggers the imagery for people when considering the components most easily identifiable with the city.

The free associations emerging from the previous question find some resonance in the next survey item requesting visitors to rate how certain attributes influenced their decision to visit Amsterdam. The categories selected reflect the principal outstanding characteristics attributed to the city, as per the official promotional literature provided by *A&P*, and are broadly included as attractions featured in the “I Amsterdam” city card. Given the rationale behind the survey, respondents were also queried as to how the presence of AFC Ajax influenced the decision to visit Amsterdam.

Table 5.3

Elements Influencing Decision to Visit Amsterdam

Elements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	p value (sex)	F value	p value (Age Category)
Canals	512	5.24 ⁺⁺	3.006	0.616	6.576	0.001
Architecture	512	5.01	1.850	0.052	1.918	0.185
Art Galleries and Museums	512	4.71 ⁺⁺	1.919	0.063	6.550	0.003
History of the City	512	4.67 ⁺	2.025	0.356	3.590	0.039
The Local People	506	4.52	1.865	0.465	0.932	0.420
Nightlife	511	4.28 ⁺⁺⁺	2.185	0.079	36.732	0.000
Shopping	512	3.91 ^{***,+++}	2.030	0.000	7.775	0.000
Red Light District	511	3.89 ^{***,+++}	2.153	0.000	10.059	0.000
Ajax Football Club	512	2.22 ^{***,+++}	2.012	0.000	5.557	0.005

Statistical significance difference of Mean of groups based on Sex: * p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Statistical significance difference of Mean of groups based on Age category: + p < 0.05, ++ p < 0.01, +++ p < 0.001

Note: Likert scale 1-7 used where 1- low – 7- high

Subjects provided answers based on a seven point Likert rating scale indicating the levels to which specific elements played a role influencing the individual decision to travel to Amsterdam. Table 5.3 identifies the salience of each category across the entire population sampled irrespective of demographic variables and then notes the statistical significance of results across the different categories with relevance to age and gender.

The city's famous canals and architecture rate highly in the decision making process, as do the area's history coupled with the ubiquity of museums and art galleries. According to the data these are the standout elements of attraction that inspire visitation. Overall, the iconic canals rank as the number one reason to visit Amsterdam although with a significant standard deviation the attraction is not universal. Females appear to appreciate the beauty of the waterways slightly more than males, as indicated by the conducting of T-tests measuring the influence of each element based on gender as the independent variable, however respondent age is a more significant indication in appreciation of the city's canals. Welch's ANOVA tests were performed across the sample, due to inequalities in sample category sizes, to ascertain the significance of each element across different age groups. Older visitors clearly consider Amsterdam's waterways as a determining influence on the decision to visit. Canals, architecture plus the influence of art, culture and history figure as highly salient characteristics for females of all ages but also become more marked in terms of importance for older age groups with these elements carrying less weight for those under 25 years of age.

Amsterdam's nightlife, the influence of local people and attitudes, are also much regarded as influencing the decision to visit. These categories are generally linked to the prevailing sentiment of local tolerance and the vibrancy of Amsterdam as a location with numerous entertainment options. These range from the city's dining scene to its coffee shops, nightclubs, and many drinking venues situated in neighbourhoods known for their bohemian like hedonism. The under 25 age group of older teens and young adults display particular appreciation for these attributes with this tapering off significantly amongst older adults (see table 5.3). Amsterdam's famous red-light district exerts a certain influence on the visitor decision making process with males

under 25 much more likely to cite it as a factor although yet again this tapers off significantly for older generations. The district's allure is actually surpassed as an influence by the city's shopping options, although social conformity bias might play a role in people not wishing to appear overly interested in the red-light district.

Shopping proves to be an important draw for females up to 50 years of age, thus spanning the generational divide, but appears less of a factor for older adults and perhaps predictably for males generally. The district within the canal ring features a multitude of shopping options.

5.1.6.3 Ajax, football and Amsterdam

The survey's principal objective was to ascertain if the presence of AFC Ajax, and football generally, exerted any influence over the decision to visit Amsterdam. The previous two questions quite clearly indicate that Ajax plays a peripheral role, at best, in the mind-set of visitors. Of all categories or elements offered in terms of influence, Ajax scores significantly lower than any other, with a mean of 2.22 across the board on a scale where 7 indicates the highest score possible. Males ranked the club higher than females but even here Ajax rated much lower compared to other attributes, including shopping. The under 25 age category displayed marginally more interest in Ajax but this dwindled to practically insignificant levels for those over 50. When visitors were quizzed on whether they had or intended to partake in the stadium tour/museum experience at the Johan Cruyff Arena the numbers were more positive. Slightly over 17% of those polled had been on the stadium tour or intended going during the course of their visit. Of these the overwhelming proportion consisted of

males (table 5.4, figure 5.5). The preponderance for males to be more interested in Ajax is corroborated by the results of the previous survey question where the difference in attitude between genders towards Ajax is found to be statistically significant. A smaller percentage of respondents (13% approximately) had actually seen promotional material for the tour/museum experience, mainly through flyers displayed at the tourist offices/information centres or via the website linked to the “I Amsterdam” visitor card. This is clearly a point of interest for Ajax, and the business unit managing the stadium tour and museum, specifically related to how their visitor attraction is actually marketed to tourists on the ground. Some of the aforementioned sample anecdotally identified themselves as football fans and either knew of the stadium tour/museum or sought information online.

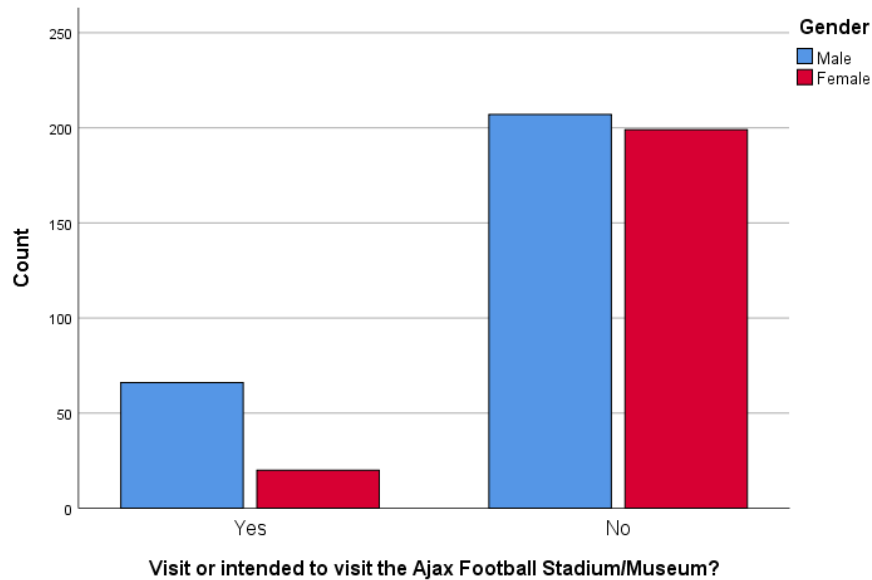
Table 5.4

Visit or Intended to Visit the Ajax Football Stadium/Museum: Gender Cross Tabulation

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Visit or intended to visit the Ajax Football Stadium/Museum? Yes	24	9	17
No	76	91	83
Total	100	100	100

Figure 5.5

Visit or Intended to Visit the Ajax Football Stadium/Museum by Gender



The survey results appear to support the DMO's contention of how the city is perceived by visitors. Culture, both contemporary and historical, in tandem with the city's waterways and architecture, are very important. Counter-culture and the associations with a tolerance towards soft drugs, a vibrant nightlife scene and the world famous red-light district act as significant draws for certain types of tourists. Together these elements far outweigh the more obscure and lesser known attractions present in the city. Significantly, despite the high profile, in football terms, enjoyed by AFC Ajax as one of Europe's elite clubs, it figures sparingly in the imaginations of people either when looking to visit Amsterdam or of things to do once there.

5.2 Respondent interviews Manchester

Interviews: Subjected to thematic analysis, the data gathered from interviews related to Manchester highlighted a number of key areas of relevance to this study. The individuals consulted during this process occupy a variety of roles that allowed for a comprehensive overview of tourism in the city and the role of football and Manchester's renowned sports franchises. Two highly respected academics, with expertise in the field, were also approached for their views. This provided for an objective outsider assessment of the situation in Manchester since neither are currently involved with tourism in the city. The participant roles are listed hereunder:

Manchester Interviewees

Subject I – DMO Executive

Subject J – National Football Museum

Subject K – Tour Operator

Subject L – Football Tour Guide

Subject M – Marketing Consultant

Subject N – Football Supporters Trust CEO

Subject O – MUFC Museum and Tour Director

Subject P – Destination Marketing Academic

Subject Q – Sports Tourism Academic

The observations, experience and indeed opinions gleaned from the interview participants result in findings that are presented below. They are arranged according to the subject areas applied to the case in Amsterdam namely;

1. Tourism sector performance in Manchester.
2. Stakeholder engagement in the tourism/hospitality sector, including interaction with DMO.
3. The role and performance of the destination marketing organisation, *Marketing Manchester*.
4. Football, destination image, association with city and tourism.
5. Leverage; what and how? Best practice.

All interviewees proved forthright and pragmatic in discussing topics that lay the foundation for the above themes, which are also conceptually linked to some of the most prominent theories dealt with in the study's literature review such as destination marketing, destination image, cooperative marketing, place marketing, leverage and stakeholder theory.

5.2.1 The performance of the tourism sector in Manchester

Chapter three paints Manchester as a city that has experienced phenomenal growth in tourism over the past few decades. It attracts a large number of domestic and foreign visitors, becoming the second most visited city in England after London. Its hospitality industry could be considered a barometer of its success and has expanded considerably

with hotels enjoying consistently high occupancy rates. It was considered important to understand how this growth is perceived by tourism practitioners and residents of Manchester alike amongst the pool of those interviewed during the course of this research. Broadly speaking all interviewees shared the perception, based on observable facts on the ground, that Manchester has experienced a tourism metamorphosis over the past three decades.

“Manchester is seen as a trendy place to go. It’s even been written up in the travel section of the New York Times, Yes, tourism has definitely increased dramatically.”

(Subject K, Tour Operator)

Manchester has transformed itself into an attractive destination, up amongst Europe’s finest cities argues Subject I (DMO Executive) who justifies the claim by referring to the city’s ranking in the Lonely Planet guide featuring in the top 20 cities to visit worldwide in 2018. Tourism is booming to the extent that even non-tourist related organisations, such as the Manchester United Supporters Trust, have purchased and transformed properties providing accommodation to fans of the club that enjoy almost full occupancy during the football season (Subject N, Football Supporters Trust). The number of hotels has multiplied and at times, depending on what is taking place, it can be difficult to source rooms in the city centre particularly when there are large conventions, important football games or concerts, according to Subject L (Football Tour Guide). Manchester is the third most visited city in the UK, behind London and Edinburgh, but well ahead of its neighbors such as Liverpool and Birmingham. The

scale of the city is often cited as an attributable factor in making it attractive for tourists.

“We are not London but we basically have everything London has to offer but on a more human and convenient scale.” (Subject J, National Football Museum)

The city’s attractions, football aside, are mostly cultural as in museums, galleries and theatres, but can equally be linked to the area’s history from the industrial revolution onwards. As the birthplace of political ideologies and movements for great social change (e.g. the Suffragettes), the narrative of the city sometimes catches visitors unawares (Subject K, Tour Operator). To add to this *“We have the famous Madchester music scene and the lively gay village that contribute to making Manchester the UK’s most livable city”*, according to Subject L (Football Tour Guide), who points to an article in The Economist magazine describing it as such. The city’s motto, symbolized by the worker bee, pays testament to the character of Manchester as a place that has reinvented itself with a “can-do” attitude that in tourism terms has enabled it to transform its fortunes in such a relatively short period of time (Subject O, MUFC Museum and Tour Director). Despite a multitude of other attractions, MUFC remains the single biggest tourism draw according to Subjects L, N, and O (see list of interviewees for designations).

Figure 5.6

Manchester worker bee symbol



Subject J (National Football Museum) suggests that the city changed indelibly following a terrorist bombing in 1996 that laid waste to much of the central shopping district. This common theme of disaster and rebuilding is echoed by others such as Subject M (Marketing Consultant), who notes not only the atrocity but the staging of the Commonwealth games in 2002 as being milestones that acted as crucial catalysts for change in a city that had suffered badly under the policies of Margaret Thatcher's Tory government. Subject L (Football Tour Guide) describes Manchester in the 1980s as being "*grim, dangerous and depressing*", essentially a city mired in industrial decay, neglected by the national government and undermined by a flight of residents from the city centre.

"Manchester has always had a long-term plan almost like a socialist state." (Subject I, DMO Executive)

The “*socialist state*” comment, attributed to one of the most influential figures concerned with marketing the city internationally, alludes to the political stability the city has enjoyed for decades. Manchester has traditionally been a British Labour Party stronghold and city hall calls the shots when it comes to initiatives in developing long term strategies for the municipality. Some officials have been in office for over 20 years, a situation unheard of in most large UK cities. This has enabled careful planning that set the foundations for growth, including that of tourism, in a measured, well thought out manner. A stable political environment free from undue political interference and short termism is cited by Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) as a prerequisite for the efficient functioning of DMOs. Subject I (DMO Executive) adds that strategic plans were in place prior to the 1996 event but that the terrorist attack injected a sense of urgency and an onus to ensure that all areas of the city would benefit from regeneration. Subject N (Football Supporters Trust CEO) argues that the recasting of the city’s airport as an “*international gateway*” in the late 1980s played a critical role in bringing about the right circumstances for its future development. He also makes the case for the success of MUFC in a revamped English premier league broadcast and aggressively marketed internationally by SKY TV from the early 1990s for increasing the profile of Manchester around the world.

Unlike many of its main European competitors, Manchester has not reached saturation point and neither does it suffer from the perception of “*over-tourism*” as a city destination, according to Subject M (Marketing Consultant) who has been involved in tourism related marketing initiatives in Manchester for 20 years. She states that despite the “*phenomenal*” change in the city landscape, with many new hotel builds, that it is essential to continue to “*grow the audiences otherwise it (tourism) is non-sustainable*”

in the long-term.” She is confident, despite Brexit and other market challenges, that the city still has huge tourism potential, a sentiment repeated by others including the local DMO and tour operators. Manchester’s target markets are spread far and wide, facilitated by the airport’s direct long haul flights. In addition, to date, Brexit has acted as a boon to tourism due to the weakening pound sterling, argues Subject K (Tour Operator), also noting that continued growth is dependent on a harmonious relationship between tourism partners.

5.2.2 Stakeholder engagement in the tourism/hospitality sector

MM (the city’s DMO) is comprised of over 500 active member stakeholders. Tourism accounted for over 100,000 full time jobs in 2018 and is a significant contributor to the economy of Greater Manchester (Marketing Manchester, 2020). One of the key success factors, highlighted by all interviewees, is the importance of collaboration between the different stakeholders in the city’s tourism sector.

“Our business model is predicated on stakeholder engagement.” (Subject M, Marketing Consultant)

The nature of tourism practice, particularly when creating the tourist experience, by definition implies the involvement of multiple actors (Subject M, Marketing Consultant). Creative Tourist is an organisation that uses the arts and culture to curate experiences for tourists in Manchester and beyond. Its founder (Subject M) and managing director describes the origins of her own company as an example of

stakeholder collaboration; *“It stemmed from work we did with the Manchester galleries and museums consortium over 10 years ago which was a collaborative project funded through the North West regional development agency before the financial crisis and crash. It was a collaborative project that looked at how to engage with tourism markets.”* From a collective of independent operators working on different aspects of the tourist experience the interests coalesced into a single identifiable business with the pooling of resources offering greater reach in the marketplace and an operational model predicated on stakeholder cooperation.

The marketing director of the UK’s National Football Museum, based in Manchester (Subject J), emphasises that relationships with other stakeholders are critically important to organisations hosting visitors. The museum has extensive contact with other tourism stakeholders and in order for these relationships to be fruitful each actor must gain something from the exchange. She provides the simple example of interaction with online travel agents (OTA) as resellers of entry passes to the museum. Both parties gain in the exchange with the OTA incorporating a wider range of products in its tourism portfolio. The museum benefits from additional target markets and ultimately increased visitor numbers. Her organisation also engages with hotels and other tourism operators in offering familiarisation tours of their facilities. In a similar vein, the city’s football clubs regularly host hotel concierges and even taxi firms to their stadiums showcasing the stadium tours, museums, restaurants and meeting space.

Stakeholder contact appears to transcend the tourism sector with a prominent Manchester tour operator, who offers walking tours of the city, being encouraged to extend the company's tours in areas where anti-social behaviour was prevalent. The local police force encourages tours in areas where undesirable social behaviour negatively impacted on resident (and visitor) quality of life.

“The police have even contacted me to see if we can run more events and tours in the area.” (Subject K, Tour Operator).

The police intervention, according to Subject K, is not just of benefit to his company but extends to the wider community and businesses in these areas. Whilst this is a positive, Subject K also cautions against exaggerating such initiatives if they simply mask and fail to mitigate the many social problems prevalent in the city, where he feels some residents have been left behind by the apparent economic boom generated by tourism. It is nonetheless an interesting anecdote on how even relatively simple actions can be transformative and used to enhance quality of life.

Whilst most interviewees speak of wide engagement with tourism related stakeholders, contact with *MM* (DMO) was very much dependent on the activity and indeed the scope of an organisation's operation. The football clubs (MUFC and its principal counterpart, MCFC) enjoy a very close relationship with the DMO, although they draw the line at cooperating with each other even in the development of joint tourism products that could benefit the city at large. Subject O (MUFC Museum and Tour Director) has a simple response to the questions as to whether the football clubs would

collaborate in mutual promotion of their respective tours and museums; *“Promoting ourselves alongside MCFC has always been a big ‘no no’ and it’s not so much down to footballing rivalry but more about the fact that football is such a big business nowadays.”* The National Football Museum, as a member/partner of VisitManchester, the trading name of *MM*, has a vested interest in close collaboration with the DMO. *“They help take our product to market and help attract a wider audience.....they actually need us, particularly when they market Manchester internationally”*, states Subject J (National Football Museum). Local tour operators experience a very different relationship with the DMO. The business model described by Subjects K and L (tour operator/guides) is not dependent on substantial exchanges with stakeholders, although both actors make recommendations to their clients, providing examples of endorsing favourite restaurants, bars or other attractions. Their view of the DMO, dealt with in further detail in section 5.2.3, is muted to the extent of neither having significant, if any, communication with *MM*. The only visible presence of *MM*, in their opinion, are the tourist information offices dotted around the city and they feel that the agency’s actions do not add much value to their respective organisations, sensing that their role is under appreciated. By contrast, Subject M (Marketing Consultant) has experienced collaboration to the levels of having been embedded within the organisation where she managed the marketing coordination unit as a consultant for a number of years. Stakeholder experience of interactions with the city’s main football clubs (MUFC and MCFC) vary but the general consensus suggests that MCFC are more open to collaboration with tourism partners.

“If I were put on the spot I’d say it has always been easier to deal with City rather than United. I think this is something a lot of people would actually mention.”

(Subject J, National Football Museum)

Subject J paints the picture of a close but often challenging relationship between her organisation (the National Football Museum) and the sports franchises. This is in part due to occasional difficulties in gaining access to the right people, but also the scale of both brands that enjoy global name recognition. The self-importance of these entities can define how they deal with some partners deemed less salient and sees certain stakeholders prioritised over others. The clubs, as argued by Subject O (MUFC Museum and Tour Director), refute such suggestions and feel that they are open and transparent in their dealings with all tourism stakeholders even beyond those of the region, citing an even closer link to the national DMO VisitBritain than to the local agency. Tour operators (Subjects K and L) in the city contend that the clubs, but MUFC in particular, are suspicious of companies that essentially exploit their brands commercially. The fraught relationship between some stakeholders and the sports franchises is exemplified by Subject N of the supporters trust stating; *“We do have contacts with various bodies, including MUFC. At times, the contact we have with the club is quite strained since we are fundamentally opposed to the present form of ownership.”* He also alludes to periods of positive consultation with MUFC concerning supporter issues but overall describes a relationship that is quite unstable and dependent on the issues being addressed at any given time. He also suggests that MUFC seems reluctant to accept his organisation as a legitimate stakeholder.

The above examples paint a picture of a complicated stakeholder environment where interactions and engagement are predicated on what Mitchell et al. (1997) describe as power, legitimacy and urgency. Whilst there are many positive demonstrations of active collaboration, it appears that the sports franchises exercise some caution in their exchanges, an issue that is of particular relevance to this study.

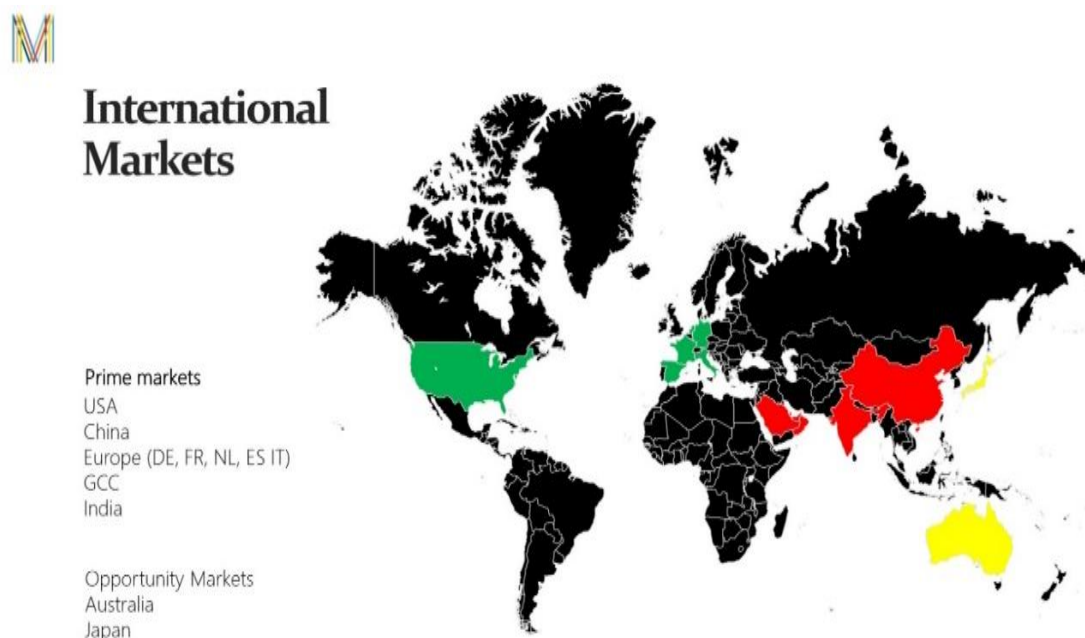
5.2.3 The role of Manchester's destination marketing organisation

VisitManchester is the public face of Marketing Manchester. *MM* in itself is a branch of the Growth Company, according to Subject I (DMO Executive), whose remit is to boost employment, skills, investment and enterprise for the benefit of all in the Greater Manchester conurbation (The Growth Company, 2020).

The marketing manager of *MM*, Subject I, describes the DMO's main task as promoting Manchester as a tourism destination plus as an attractive city for investment, conducting business and study. He notes the marketing arm has a targeted geographic focus with his responsibility covering Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council states of the Middle East. Another department is responsible for North America and Europe, with yet another concerned with the domestic market including day visits. "*VisitManchester is just a different brand. So MM (Marketing Manchester) is our internal brand or business brand in terms of dealing with consumers*", states Subject I. Figure 5.7 highlights the major target and emerging markets that *MM* is concerned with.

Figure 5.7

Principal International Markets of MM



Note: From Marketing Manchester. (2019). Strategic Priorities.

“Our role is completely focused on economic development so we don’t have a role in keeping the local population happy.” (Subject I, Marketing Manchester)

MM believes that the emphasis on economic development is critical in informing how the organisation operates. The external focus is backed by the organisation’s board, made up of 10 local authorities, its 500 paying members and the national DMO. The level of stakeholder involvement varies and with Manchester airport providing a third of the organisation’s funding it naturally exerts huge influence over *MM*’s activities. Subject I (DMO Executive) goes on to state that *“Manchester has a number of things going for it. One of which is the airport. It is the biggest airport outside of London and*

they are our biggest stakeholder, our biggest partner. We essentially operate as Manchester airport's inbound marketing agency. So the airport does its own marketing in terms of UK passengers outbound but they pay us to do their inbound marketing." Depending on the target audience *MM* adjusts its offer but does acknowledge that football is a huge draw and as explained earlier insists that it maintains a healthy relationship with both major football clubs. It is adamant, however, that *MM* should not purely focus on football in promoting the city internationally with Subject I (DMO Executive) adding; *"I think the real issue is that we try to ensure that football does not take over because we have so many other amazing things from architecture, culture and the surrounding countryside."* The city is holistically marketed as a "happening place." Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) also cautions against positioning a destination too narrowly arguing that tourists do not form a homogenous community.

"From a tourism perspective I think the club is fine with Marketing Manchester using football (including United) as a draw to entice visitors to the city." (Subject O, MUFC Museum and Tour Director)

The football clubs understand the mandate of the DMO with Subject O (of MUFC) praising the organisation's international focus which complements that of MUFC. The National Football Museum, as represented by Subject J, also has a positive perception of the role of *MM* including again a clear understanding of its international mandate. She notes that *"they provide a pretty good service and we get value for money."*

Subject M (Marketing Consultant) is similarly upbeat as to the performance of *MM* having actively worked with the organisation for many years.

For those with little actual engagement with *MM* opinions vary. Subject N (Football Supporters Trust CEO) recognises the very visible presence of international visitors to the city and how this has increased exponentially over the past few decades. He concludes that the DMO must be doing a good job, but counters this with the possibility that the average person would not recognise *MM* as responsible for the increased numbers of tourists. Subject N (Football Supporters Trust CEO) also attributes the creation of the intangible but optimistic branding of Manchester as “Original Modern” to the DMO that was developed by Peter Saville, a prominent cultural personality and artist associated with Manchester. *MM* commissioned the aforementioned individual with creating a concept around which the city could be marketed. “Original Modern” depicts Manchester as the world’s first modern city imbued with a spirit of creative innovation that exists to this day. There is also perhaps some confusion between what *MM* accomplishes in the larger environment and the role of tourist offices in the city. When asked as to the role of the DMO and any relationship with them Subject L (Football Tour Guide), although involved in the tourism sector, offered the following insight; *“Completely non-existent although I looked at being listed on their website once but it was too expensive. Only for the fact that I know they exist I would have to say that we have no communication or links to them at all. To be fair I wouldn’t even fully know what their role is here outside of the visitor centres I see in town.”* The most negative impression of the DMO, its performance and its role comes from Subject K (Tour Operator) whose business,

during its start-up phase, was perhaps ironically facilitated by a loan from *MM*'s parent organisation the *Growth Company*.

“I hate to say this but VisitManchester are pretty poor.” (Subject K, Tour Operator)

He is scathing of an organisation to whom he pays a membership fee yet he feels *“receives very little for it.”* He laments a lack of vision and a *“joined up thinking or strategy”* on how to enhance tourism in the city that speaks of *“mismanagement”* but concedes that the Mancunian attitude compensates for this; *“The motto of Manchester is about the worker bee and getting things done and I suppose that if the DMO doesn't do it then others pick up the slack to accomplish things. It also means that there is no central body, despite what they might think, to oversee, advise and regulate tourism in the city.”*

MM itself, according to Subject I (DMO Executive), serves Manchester across multiple domains but that its work, due to the external focus, is perhaps lost on much of the population, even if unbeknownst to it benefits trickle down from its efforts on the city's behalf. With 500 members and its complex organisational structure it is practically impossible to win universal approval. The organisation's mandate has been developed in tandem with the political stability inherent to Manchester, and as such, it ultimately accomplishes its role in accordance with the wishes of the city's residents according to most of those interviewed.

5.2.4 Football, destination image, association with city and tourism

Subject K (Tour Operator), who encounters people from diverse backgrounds whilst leading them on leisurely walking tours around Manchester, suggests that his task is easier compared to those doing something similar in other major European cities.

“The good thing here is that nobody really has an expectation of the city. It’s not like if we were in Rome and people wanted to see the coliseum or the other ruins.”

(Subject K, Tour Operator)

He contends that Manchester’s narrative is a strength but one that is poorly communicated. One of the principal roles he sees for his tour guides is in highlighting the area’s lesser known stories. Subject L, whose business offers tours of Manchester from the perspective of football, accepts that the city is much more than sport. *Coronation Street*, the Peterloo massacre, L.S. Lowry, Alan Turing, Amy Parkhurst, the Cottonopolis moniker from its industrial heyday, and the city’s working class credentials form part of the fabric that is Manchester, he feels. For some, continues Subject L (Football Tour Guide); *“Manchester means raves, the Stone Roses, Oasis, Canal Street or even Ariana Grande more recently. I think the coming together of people after the bombing at her concert was an occasion that really finally shone a light on the soul of this city that makes you want to visit.”* Subject I (DMO Executive) who spends a lot of time overseas actively promoting the city, advocates for shopping as being a major attraction for tourists from the Far East. *“Shopping is the second biggest selling attraction. We market the fact that we have two Selfridges whereas London has only got one. We’ve got the Trafford centre on the doorstep. We’ve got*

Cheshire Oaks which is a huge attraction as the biggest designer outlet in the country. This is a huge attraction for the Chinese market particularly”, (Subject I, DMO Executive). Culture and the arts is inextricably associated with the city and its image, according to Subject M (Marketing Consultant); an argument supported by MM (Subject I, DMO Executive) noting the *“high-end cultural offering that is very important in certain markets.”* Promoting Manchester as a lively “happening” destination enables the DMO to target different segments of the market but ultimately, in the eyes of the international marketplace Manchester is recognised for its association with football.

“Football is the biggest selling point so we promote it very heavily.” (Subject I, DMO Executive)

All interviewees, to varying degrees, contend that football is the most significant point of differentiation that Manchester enjoys compared to other UK cities and, indeed, internationally. MM’s assertion, however, that the sport and the city’s football franchises are promoted very heavily is not supported by the content of the online platforms it manages (see section 5.3). Subject N (Football Supporters Trust CEO) states; *“this town is presently almost the world capital of football with the amount of media interest in both major clubs.”* He adds; *“as home to the National Football Museum the stature and place of football in the city is also enhanced and in a certain measure institutionalised.”* *“Football is inescapable here”*, according to Subject K (Tour Operator). Having worked briefly in the past with one of Manchester’s sports

franchises as a consultant, Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) unequivocally equates the city with football;

“We can talk about Wimbledon, Monaco, Newmarket etc. i.e. towns which are immediately associated with a particular sport, the hallmark events. Again, Manchester falls into that category.” (Subject Q, Sports Tourism Academic)

All the interviewees are well travelled so it proved interesting to enquire of their experiences, particularly when travelling overseas either officially or unofficially as individuals with a Manchester based background. All respondents mention football as being practically always the first topic of conversation, once their collocutor becomes aware of the link to Manchester. Despite being home to two globally recognised football clubs in MUFC and MCFC, it is almost always MUFC mentioned as the principal point of reference.

“On a global scale and in my travels, I know that people associate the city of Manchester with MUFC more than anything else. Even if I am not travelling for football the first questions I get, once people know I’m from here, is about football and MUFC.” (Subject L, Football Tour Guide)

The scale and appeal of MUFC is generally accepted as overshadowing that of its cross city rival and internationally it has come to represent the image or associations many people make with Manchester itself. *MM* is well aware of this imbalance but is keen

not to be seen as partisan in using one club to the detriment of the other in promoting the city. In a practical sense football is already attracting huge numbers of visitors, domestic and foreign, to the city with hotels enjoying 100% occupancy on match days according to Subject O (MUFC Museum and Tour Director). He adds that the MUFC stadium tour and museum is one of the most visited attractions and has won awards for excellence. On busy days up to 55 tours are run, with the business being a year round activity irrespective of the football season itself.

“When people visit this city whether they are football fans or not or even here on business I think the biggest physical attraction is coming to the stadium to at least to be able to say to their friends and family that they have visited Old Trafford.”

(Subject O, MUFC Museum and Tour Director)

The National Football Museum forms part of the attraction for the football fan, or sports tourist, and its marketing manager (Subject J) makes reference to annual visitor numbers of close to half a million, higher than the facilities at either major club. She states; *“as an objective, non-football fan, I can safely say that the majority of these are here because of MUFC due to the legacy and world-wide fame the club enjoys.”* The stadium tour and museum at Old Trafford was unable to supply an accurate tally for the breakdown of visitor numbers by nationality, but Subject O believes they are attracting more foreign visitors than ever before and that their major overseas markets include China, India, the Middle East and the USA. The European markets of Scandinavia, France and Spain are also hugely important whilst the domestic market (including Ireland) remains buoyant.

With the city's image so closely associated with football it is naturally considered a suitable vehicle to be used for marketing purposes. Subject O (MUFC Museum and Tour Director), although favourable to such, contends that the football clubs are commercial enterprises and are consequently cautious of others exploiting their brand name recognition. As referenced to earlier both are wary of joint promotional initiatives due to commercial rivalry, club partners/sponsors and inherent legal issues that might ensue. Other respondents (Subjects L and N, with football related interests) feel that football is so paramount as a symbol of the city that it is surprising that it has not been emphasised more in Manchester's tourism campaigns. They experience it all around them as an aspect of daily life and indicate that it may be so entwined with popular culture that it is treated with elitist fuelled condescension. Both accept that it would be unpalatable to many residents if one club were to overshadow the other in future campaigns, and that a common approach would be preferable incorporating the National Football Museum, further underpinning the city's footballing heritage. Such an approach would be welcomed by the aforementioned institution with the caveat, according to Subject J (Marketing Manager), of ensuring that the city's wider footballing culture be enveloped into any eventual football oriented campaign adding that Greater Manchester is home to eight professional football clubs. These other clubs, although smaller in stature, only add to the city's footballing patrimony and are legitimate stakeholders deserving of recognition. This is also a point made by Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) who suggests that the presence of the National Football Museum in Manchester legitimises its claim to be a world "*capital of football*" and that football is an escapable fact that permeates the very fabric of life in the city.

For those charged with actually promoting Manchester internationally, Subject I (DMO Executive) suggests that extensive use has already been made of both football clubs and football generally in targeting overseas markets. He also argues that it would be *“dangerous to only use the football when we have lots more to offer”*, adding; *“we leverage football to its maximum whilst trying to avoid being seen as a one story city. Our idea is to use football and United/City as a door opener.”*

5.2.5 Leverage: What and how? Best practice

Subject Q’s (Sports Tourism Academic) research is very much focused on the areas where sports and tourism overlap with opportunities to leverage the tourism potential of such. He provides numerous examples of best practice where sport and institutions associated with it have been successfully deployed in the service of tourism. This is of obvious interest in the case of Manchester where sport, and football in particular, is omnipresent. He cites the Barcelona Olympics of 1992 and Beijing in 2008 as outstanding examples of where and when cities used leveraging strategies to optimal effect. Barcelona changed radically from being a major industrial urban centre, replete with social problems, into a must-visit destination to the extent that it experiences a present day backlash from residents opposed to over-tourism. The goal of the Chinese authorities in 2008 was in leveraging the games to open up the country to visitors and enhance its profile internationally. Both targets were met with increased visitor numbers and a profile that has seen the city awarded the rights to hold the Winter Olympics in 2022.

Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) recognises that whilst mega-events have traditionally been researched and seen as opportunities for improving cities, other elements associated with sport share similar characteristics that can be exploited. He mentions the DMO of Melbourne as an organisation that regularly uses sporting events to attract visitors and as such could act as an example to others such as *MM* in terms of best practice in the domain. The Melbourne cup (horse racing) is cited as a template for what can be achieved internationally. The event garners so much media attention that it not only attracts horse racing fans but people who consider it as representing an appealing insight into the Australian way of life. The DMO similarly utilises the Australian Open tennis tournament that takes place at the height of the Australian summer to entice visitors from the northern hemisphere experiencing the depths of winter. There is less of an emphasis on sport and more so on the lifestyle surrounding these events that act on the emotions and influence travel choices. The districts adjoining these horse racing and tennis arenas, along with the Melbourne Cricket Ground, have become focal entertainment points on the tourism circuit hosting numerous attractions of their own. Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) links the above to evidence of best practice by a DMO that works in collaboration with its respective stakeholders and partners for the benefit of the wider community. He also puts forward the notion that even the non-sports tourist can find sports attractions interesting, provided they are developed in a manner that portrays an interesting human story. Linking sport to heritage tourism he points to the home of New Zealand's All Blacks rugby team, Eden Park. The stadium officials had never considered their facility as a place that would inspire tourist visits until approached by Subject Q, with his sports tourism research profile, and the DMO of Auckland; *“firstly it took a lot of convincing to communicate to the stadium owners that theirs was an attraction that*

people would visit. Once they understood this we put them in front of the DMO to inform them that yes they were a legitimate tourist attraction.” He adds; *“there are few people who exit the stadium tour without feeling somewhat affected or influenced by what they have seen and heard.”* He argues quite convincingly that applying heritage concepts to sports tourism is a legitimate way of exposing sporting attractions to the non-sports fan; *“looking at leverage as we understand and describing it to others as nostalgia and personal heritage is much more effective than simply trying to attract tourists because of a sports brand. The sports tourist may not need the latter but certainly the non-sports fan is much more likely to consider it worthy of a visit if described in such terms.”* Where travelers seek the authentic, he states, the personnel employed in such facilities are key to communicating a strong and absorbing narrative. Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) adds that research suggests visitors to the iconic Camp Nou stadium of FC Barcelona, guided on stadium tours via a digital application, are less appreciative of the experience than those following the stadium tours of Anfield and Old Trafford in the UK where passionate, knowledgeable locals relate their personable stories.

Manchester is no stranger to leverage. The city is often referred to as the capital of the North. Its airport and transport links, including historically the Manchester ship canal, have made it a focal transit point for goods and services. Its great industries of the past attracted people from all corners of the globe with the prospect of work transforming the city into a melting pot of different cultures and ideas. In its industrial heyday, Manchester came to be known as Cottonopolis but in more recent years Madchester, reflecting the city’s hedonistic music scene and more contemporarily as the Mecca of football due to the global appeal and success of its football teams (Subject L, Football

Tour Guide). The city has leveraged and exploited all of these assets, and more, at different points in time according to Subject N (Football Supporters Trust, CEO).

“You have to lead with what you’re known for. It would be daft not to. I think United and City plus football are the door opener.” (Subject M, Marketing Consultant)

The concept of what to leverage frequently crops up in the respondent interviews in relation to tourism potential. Subject K (Tour Operator) talks of a city that, football aside, does not have a coherent narrative or symbol that clearly makes it identifiable although he also considers this an asset. Whilst referring to this lack of narrative he laments the fact that the DMO trivialises the city’s rich history that includes important events and personalities that are well known except for the fact they occurred in or were born in Manchester. Subject J (National Football Museum) says *“some people may identify the city with Coronation Street, others with art, culture, music or even nightlife and the gay village.”* She adds; *“there is also a certain attitude that you can sense in Manchester that in itself can be a pull for visitors but how do you go about exploiting that?”* Manchester airport, one of the DMO’s principal funding partners, leverages the airport as the gateway to the North. This is less an attempt to lure visitors to Manchester but to make them aware of the regional attractions on its doorstep such as the Lake District (Subject I, DMO Executive).

“We have a huge music scene, a gay scene and a very active arts community. The city is full of history and has witnessed so much but these are almost localised

interests or limited to the likes of England, UK, Ireland etc.” (Subject L, Football Tour Guide)

Subject L’s (Football Tour Guide) observation on Manchester’s diversity of attractions illustrates one of the main challenges faced by *MM* in marketing the city internationally where there is a low awareness of the city’s rich tapestry, football aside. The variety of the area and what draws visitors is well documented according to Subject N (Football Supporters Trust CEO) but the extent to which specific elements appeal to individuals is purely subjective. He accepts that the long running TV soap opera, *Coronation Street*, has huge appeal within the UK and by extension helps attract UK visitors, but it would be virtually unknown to people in mainland Europe or elsewhere. *“If you asked people the first few things they’d associate with Manchester and why they’d visit they’d reply, if they were from Britain with ‘Corrie’ as one of the first answers”* (Subject N, Football Supporters Trust CEO). Another example provided by Subject K (Tour Operator); *“Alan Turing, the father of modern computing completed most of his work here in Manchester but apart from a sad statue in Sackville Park nobody mentions him.”* Manchester clearly has a lot to offer and nobody expresses this more clearly than the representative of the DMO, Subject I, who claims that the appeal is varied but that the DMO attempts to condense it into representing the city as a dynamic, exciting *“happening place”* to visit. It is, by his account, a successful approach but one that, in international markets, is enhanced by the brand recognition of both major football clubs with MUFC at the forefront.

“MUFC is portraying an image of the city. I think for the most part this is a good image. United is known for stylish, exciting football with a touch of glamour and I think that is something Manchester can be proud of and aspire to in a way.” (Subject L, Football Tour Guide)

Subject L (Football Tour Guide) in his statement contends that his observation (previous quotation) and the present day playing style of MCFC complements the image portrayed of the city by MM, that this is positive and something to be lauded. As a tour operator he leaves little doubt for being in favour of the DMO leveraging football generally as a tool to attract visitors to Manchester. This is a view that is widely held although Subject K (Tour Operator), is not its most enthusiastic proponent stating; *“VisitManchester seems content with itself in that there are a few hop on hop off buses ferrying people about and then that we have pride and football. We don’t need to sell pride or football since the people will come anyway but the rest is what makes it such an interesting place.”* He appears very much of the opinion that Manchester should not go down the route of making football such a prominent part of its identity for promotional purposes and feels that it detracts from other aspects of the city. In contrast and perhaps surprisingly, the CEO of Creative Tourist, with a focus on the arts and culture (Subject M), recognises the value of leveraging the football clubs for their tourism potential and believes that the more recent success of MCFC has only underscored the rationale for doing so. She states; *“I think due to City gaining success we now have a proper football experience to offer that involves the two clubs rather than just United.”* Subject L (Football Tour Guide) suggests that if ever a better example of leverage were required then one need look no further than MCFC and the manner in which it used its main rival, MUFC to feed off and enhance its own profile.

Up until relatively recently MCFC's on-field form saw the team oscillate between the top flight and lower divisions of English football, whilst its neighbour became one of the most loved and loathed football clubs on the planet due to its perennial success. MCFC was acquired in 2008 by wealthy Abu Dhabi based investors who have used Manchester's links to football, primarily established by MUFC, to build its brand. It has successfully positioned itself as a serious rival to MUFC to the extent that it is now considered one of the world's most valuable sports franchises. It is also claimed that MCFC's owners are so adept at leverage that they have used their considerable influence in the city to generate investment in Sportcity, a sports themed district surrounding the MCFC stadium (see chapter three, section 3.2.3 for details), and other building projects in Manchester that is a cause of concern to some according to Subject N (Football Tour Guide).

Examples of leverage abound in the city. The very effective use of the Commonwealth games of 2002 in showcasing Manchester domestically and internationally is generally accepted as an excellent demonstration. The previously alluded to TV soap opera, *Coronation Street*, was frequently used as a promotional tool according to Subject N in the build-up to the Commonwealth games, with characters playing the role of volunteers or somehow involved in the organisation of the event. Sportcity, the area that has flourished around the MCFC or former Commonwealth games stadium, is now a popular visitor attraction, not just for football, but for people with interests in other sports. The Manchester International Festival was also a direct legacy of the Commonwealth games. This biennial event, contends Subject M (Marketing Consultant), attracts visitors, artists and performers from all corners of the world. The DMO already applies leveraging in its overall marketing strategy. Football,

incorporating the two main clubs, and at times the National Football Museum, have been used successfully in internationally focused campaigns from the Middle East to China. A clear illustration of this is provided by Subject I of *MM* who describes the staging of the Manchester “derby” at Beijing’s Olympic stadium in 2016. The game was eventually postponed due to inclement weather but garnered so much publicity for the city of Manchester via the use of football that it was considered a resounding success. It not only attracted increased numbers of Chinese visitors but promoted inward investment, business opportunities, as well as showcasing Manchester and its universities as a vibrant international student centre. Football in this case was certainly a “*door opener*” to quote Subject I (DMO Executive), who along with Subject M (Marketing Consultant), nonetheless advises against allowing football to overwhelm the “*narrative*” in a city with so much to offer. Few other examples of *MM*’s engaging the football clubs in promoting the city exist outside of the use of stadium facilities and providing match tickets in entertaining important visitors or foreign dignitaries and certainly none where they are jointly cooperating.

The case for the leverage of sports franchises in promoting Manchester reveals itself not so much as a question of whether it is an advisable path to follow, but rather one of how and to what extent it can be employed as an effective tool in the city’s arsenal. Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) argues that for a DMO to successfully leverage an asset for tourism purposes it must ensure that the associations between the proposed subject of leverage and the destination are not only clear but that they are acknowledged by local stakeholders. There was a sense among the interviewees that this was indeed already the case. However, the current DMO strategy pertaining to the leverage of football appears limited to the sport itself as a generic offering that rarely

focuses on the actual sports franchises. The effective use of leverage in the context of Manchester, and its sports franchises, is shown to be a complicated and often misunderstood endeavour that is replete with serious challenges. These are further elaborated on in chapter six.

The study's interviews describe Manchester as a city that has experienced recent but well planned growth within its tourism sector that owes much to the stability of the environment within which the city's DMO operates. *MM* is well respected by most tourism stakeholders, however, its external focus and mandate is lost on some. In a city where football is so prominent *MM* advances the notion that it leverages the global recognition of its two most important sports franchises for optimal gain whilst also incorporating other relevant attributes such as art and culture into its promotional mix. For their part, the sports franchises see themselves as significant local actors who are at the service of their home city yet balk at cooperating on initiatives that might benefit it and by extension other local stakeholders.

The interviews elicited a great deal of information of relevance and the study now proceeds in section 5.2.6 to presenting the results of the visitor survey conducted in Manchester that follows the same protocols as that undertaken in Amsterdam.

5.2.6 Manchester visitor survey

A visitor intercept survey was conducted over a four day period in February 2019, including one weekend day up to and including February 23rd. The survey was administered in and around the central business and shopping district, where many of Manchester's major attractions are located. Respondents were approached by interviewers, respecting the survey protocol, who asked questions orally, recording answers on paper for each individual respondent. To meet selection criteria candidates were only deemed suitable once they were identified as visiting the city in a leisure or business capacity.

Respondents were subjected to a total of seven main questions (see appendices), with an additional inquiry pertaining to basic demographic information. As was the case for Amsterdam, the survey items were informed by the experience and findings of the online pilot study that is described in chapter four (sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2) and the review of relevant literature in chapter two. The objective in administering the survey was to uncover the extent to which visitors associated football, and the Manchester clubs (MUFC and MCFC), with the city of Manchester and the role that this played in influencing the decision to visit.

5.2.6.1 Visitor characteristics and information referral sources

Table 5.5

Manchester Respondent Characteristics

Item	Percentage (%)	Item	Percentage (%)
<i>Gender (N=219)</i>		<i>Visitor Origin (N=219)</i>	
Female	39.7	USA and Canada	1.8
Male	60.3	China	6.4
		Europe (including Ireland)	49.8
<i>Age (N=219)</i>		GCC	0.5
Up to 24 years old	38.8	Australia and Japan	1.8
25 to 50 years old	57.1	Great Britain	30.6
More than 50 years old	4.1	Others	9.1

Table 5.5 provides data showing that some 219 people were interviewed on the streets of Manchester over the four day period. Males outnumbered females in responding, representing approximately 60% of the sample. The specific age of each respondent was recorded but it was deemed expedient to distinguish differences by clustering them into three distinct categories based on perceived levels of disposable income and stage in life. These were; young adults and older teens up to 24 years old, adults from 25 up to age 50 and those over 50 years of age. The category covering adults from 25 to 50 years of age accounted for the majority of respondents, 57% in total. Young adults and older teenagers make up 38% of those surveyed with the over 50 age group sparsely represented with slightly over 4% of the sample.

Manchester attracts travelers from across the world, a fact highlighted by the diversity of nationalities represented in the survey, however, the vast majority of visitors hail from the continent of Europe. Table 5.5 clusters respondent origins by region thus corresponding loosely to the criteria used by *MM* in describing its target markets. Europeans form the largest grouping (82%) with the second largest cluster emanating from China (6.4%). Other Asian countries, including Thailand, Malaysia and Vietnam, represent a much smaller proportion with just 3% of all participants. The primarily English speaking countries of North America (USA and Canada), along with Australia and New Zealand, account for almost 4% of respondents with countries ranging from South Africa to Peru and Iran making up the remainder of non-European citizens. Domestic visitors are important to Manchester and account for the largest single group at 30%, followed by those identifying as Irish (although no distinction is made as to whether originating in the Irish republic or Northern Ireland) with 18% of the total.

Subjects were firstly asked where they had consulted information pertaining to their visit to Manchester before embarking on their journey. Options were provided, however the main thrust of this question was to ascertain if the website or other platforms related to the local DMO had been sought out as legitimate sources of reference. Figures 5.8 and 5.9 display this information according to age and gender. Neither characteristics appear overtly significant in determining how information is obtained prior to travel. However, females display a slight preference for the use of social media channels when compared to males but all age and gender categories exhibit similar behaviour when looked at proportionally. The internet in general, dominated by search engines such as Google, proved to be the principal port of call

for most people looking to access information prior to departure with almost 41% of all respondents using internet search engines when considered by age and gender. Tripadvisor was mentioned by over 8% of respondents as being important and word-of-mouth was identified by almost 25% as being a helpful source of information. Interestingly, the portals linked to *MM* were mentioned just 13 times as a source of visitor information, with not a single respondent in the over 50 category claiming to have consulted them as a relevant source of information. This should be of concern for the city’s DMO relating to how it communicates in the online space and the reach of its current internet platforms.

Figure 5.8

Information Sources Consulted Prior to Visit According to Gender (Manchester)

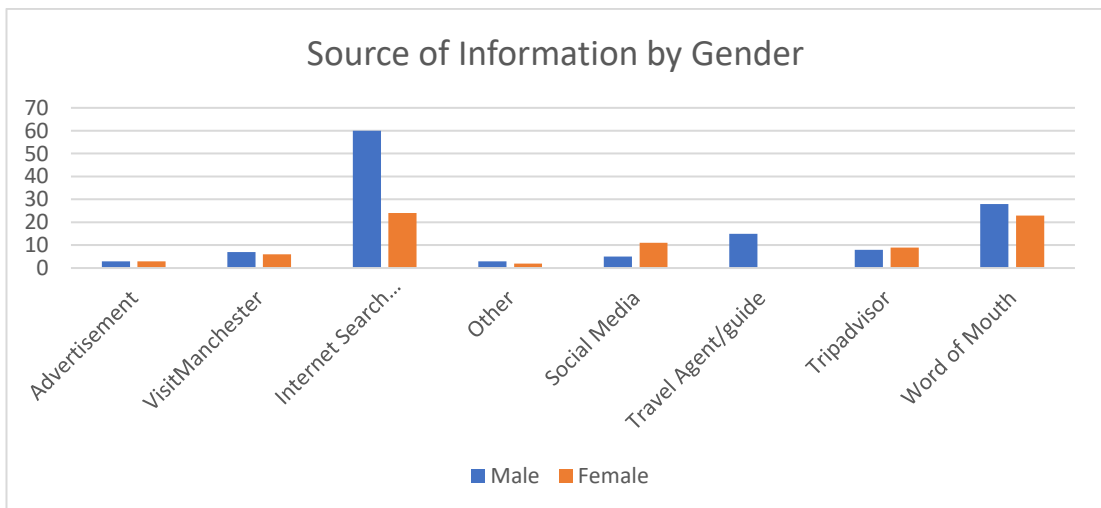
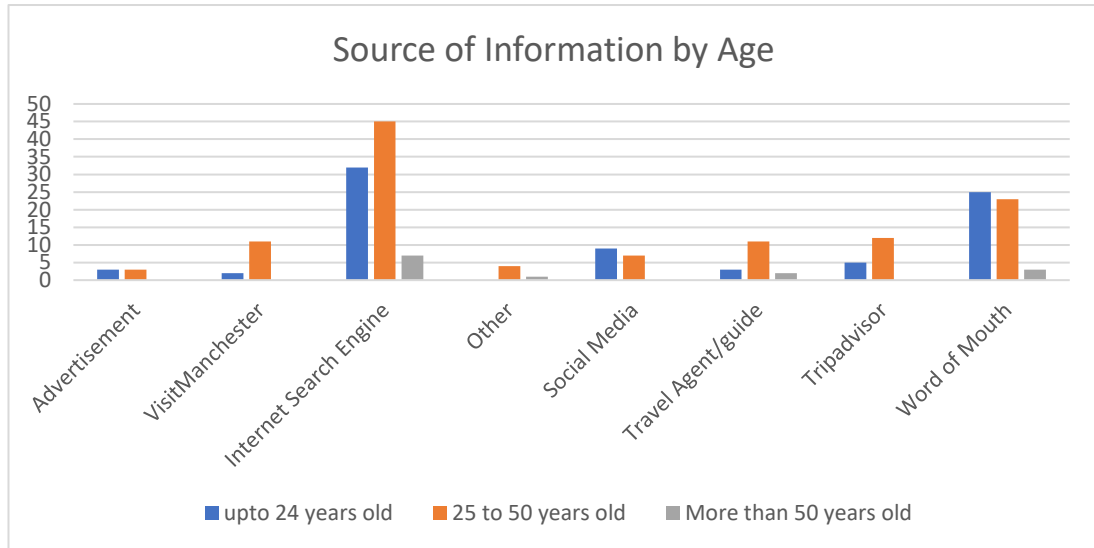


Figure 5.9

Information Sources Consulted Prior to Visit According to Age (Manchester)



5.2.6.2 Destination association and influences on visitation

Respondents were then requested to provide the first three words that sprang to mind when thinking of Manchester. The rationale behind this request was to trigger spontaneous subconscious associations visitors applied to the city. It was also included as an open question to gauge if football, and indeed MUFC/MCFC, were relevant factors in determining how visitors perceive Manchester and its wider image as a destination. Over 600 words were forthcoming and clustered according to themes. The most pertinent themes are illustrated in the word cloud (figure 5.10).

Figure 5.10

Visitor Word Associations with Manchester



The word associations (figure 5.10) point to a destination that conjures up a diversity of imagery. Manchester's famous nightlife, featuring vibrant pubs and nightclubs, is frequently cited as an element that immediately sprang to mind in the vision some people held of the city. The city's take on culture, primarily contemporary as represented by the music scene, features strongly in the minds of visitors but less so when linked with art, museums and galleries. The legacy of the industrial revolution and its historical relevance also form part of the destination's image, as does Manchester's well-established reputation for rain and poor weather. Shopping was mentioned as the third most referred to attribute and indeed the destination is well

known for its shopping options, including one of the UK’s largest shopping complexes, the Trafford Centre, on the outskirts of Manchester as well as the Arndale complex spanning a large area of the city centre. Mancunians (as residents of the city are known) are known for a certain “can-do” attitude and this is cited by a number of respondents as an important characteristic. The local people are also referred to as being warm and friendly. For a small number of those interviewed Manchester is a dirty city.

Table 5.6

Top 15 Terms Used to Describe Manchester

Rank	Weight	Word	Rank	Weight	Word
1	104	Football	8	13	Food
2	63	Manchester United	9	11	Pubs
3	30	Shopping	10	10	Old Trafford
4	17	Busy	11	9	Alcohol
5	17	Music	12	9	University
6	17	Nightlife	13	9	Culture
7	16	Beer	14	8	Industry
			15	8	Rain

By some measure the most important connotation relating to Manchester proved to be football. It was mentioned either as football, or to a lesser degree, soccer on 104 occasions. This is closely followed by inferences linked to MUFC and its stadium, Old Trafford, cited 73 times. MCFC is mentioned on just 7 occasions by visitors. Those respondents naming football also displayed a very high prevalence to also indicate either of the football clubs or the Old Trafford stadium. Males of all ages were also more likely than females to make associations with football and the city’s football

clubs. The evidence in soliciting the first three words visitors thought of in “imagining” the location identify Manchester as being first and foremost a footballing city and that the football connotation is much more closely associated with the imagery surrounding MUFC than its neighbor, and competitor, MCFC.

The following survey item provided visitors with options as to elements that had influenced their decision to visit Manchester. These represented the most well known attributes of the city, as featured in much of the promotional literature developed by *MM*. They range in scope from art galleries, architecture and museums to pop culture, represented by the UK’s longest running TV soap opera, *Coronation Street*, the famous music scene, nightlife, the city’s historical legacy, and its residents. The rationale behind the question, however, was primarily to measure the extent to which football, and both football clubs, played in the visitor decision-making process. As such, options representing both clubs separately and their role in influencing this were proffered. The strength of each attribute was measured by means of a 7-point Likert scale. Table 5.7 identifies the salience of each category across the entire population, sampled irrespective of demographic variables, and then proceeds to note the statistical significance of results across the categories based on age and gender. T-tests and Welch’s ANOVA tests were applied to the data to facilitate analysis and understanding.

Table 5.7

Elements Influencing Decision to Visit Manchester

Elements	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	p value (sex)	F value	p value (Age Category)
Manchester United	219	4.98 ^{***++}	2.436	0.000	8.637	0.002
Shopping	219	4.22 ^{***++}	2.324	0.000	7.644	0.003
Nightlife	219	4.08 ⁺	2.477	0.082	4.451	0.021
The Local People	218	3.41 ^{***}	2.248	0,000	1.699	0.213
Music	219	3.02 ^{***++}	2.159	0.000	9.536	0.002
Art Galleries and Museums	219	2.96 ^{**}	2.225	0.003	3.659	0.083
History of the City	219	2.74 ⁺	2.013	0.013	2.981	0.184
Architecture	219	2.49 ^{***+}	1.905	0.000	7.653	0.010
Manchester City	219	2.11 ^{**+}	1.758	0.006	4.079	0.037
Coronation Street	219	1.52 ^{**}	1.182	0.004	1.554	0.278

Statistical significance difference of Mean of groups based on Sex: * p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Statistical significance difference of Mean of groups based on Age category: + p < 0.05, ++ p < 0.01, +++ p < 0.001

Note: Likert scale 1-7 used where 1- low – 7- high

Shopping figures high in the decision making process of visitors. Manchester, as the region's major conglomeration, offers a wide range of shopping options and indeed the city, as mentioned in chapter three, is well known for its sprawling shopping malls. Females interviewed considered shopping as the single most important factor of influence with the youngest age category, 24 and under, registering the activity as having played an even greater role in their decision to visit Manchester. The adult category (25 – 50 years) were somewhat less enthusiastic as to shopping playing a

pivotal role in their choices with males exhibiting little inclination to having included this activity in influencing the decision to visit the city.

Manchester's nightlife, mirroring the word associations of the previous question, also ranks highly in terms of influence. Nightlife covers a wide swath of activities ranging from the city's dining scene, ubiquity of pubs and cafes, to the many nightclubs and music venues. Manchester is home to a large student population which partly underpins its reputation for being a city with vibrant nightlife. The survey's results indicate that those falling into the traditional student like demographic, the youngest category, display a much higher prevalence for mentioning this as a factor that influenced the decision to visit. Females also cite this as being of more importance. Predictably, nightlife is not a determining factor on the decision to visit for older adults.

Manchester portrays itself as a city of culture and is home to a multitude of museums and art galleries. Many of these facilities are housed in landmark buildings harking back to the city's industrial past and importance as one of the major manufacturing centres of the British Empire. This combination does not appear to have broad appeal in swaying intent to visit, although the survey results show that it is markedly more important to older adults than for the other categories. Part of the city's cultural heritage is undoubtedly down to its playing host to the UK's best-known TV soap opera, *Coronation Street*. Despite being supposedly synonymous with the city, it exerts practically no influence in the visitor decision making process although the friendly nature of Manchester's residents rank far higher in terms of influence,

particularly amongst females. Interestingly, the aforementioned soap opera centres around the residents of a fictitious working class district of Manchester with the main protagonists portrayed as kind warm-hearted people whose lives, trials and tribulations are depicted so as to resonate with the wider population.

5.2.6.3 The clubs, football and Manchester

In line with the previous question, football stands out as the single most important influence in the decision to visit ahead of shopping although the significance of such is more pronounced in the male cohort. The options relating to football specifically looked at measuring the pull of the city's main football clubs separately. Here there is quite a discrepancy between the influence of MUFC when compared to MCFC. The former is a far more important factor for visitors with the seven point Likert scale revealing a mean of 4.98 for MUFC (with 7 being maximum influence possible) versus 2.11 for MCFC. When looked at according to gender and age, MUFC exerts an even more pronounced influence on the decision making process for males measured with a mean of 5.77, the highest incidence recorded by the survey with the 25 – 50 years old cohort particularly susceptible to being motivated by this attribute. Football proved a far less salient feature for females across all age groups although females found MUFC more of an influencing factor than MCFC.

Following the influence of football in relation to intent to visit Manchester, respondents were then quizzed on whether they had or intended, during the course of their stay, to visit either of the football stadiums and their respective museums. A clear majority of those surveyed (60%) had or intended to visit the stadium of MUFC

compared to 11% for MCFC. Males (see table 5.8) displayed a more marked preference for visiting both football stadiums.

Table 5.8

Visit or Intended to Visit the MUFC and/or MCFC Football Stadium/Museum: Gender Cross Tabulation

	Male %	Female %	Total %
Intent to visit or already visited MCFC or MUFC Stadium or Museum?			
Yes	77	41	63
No	23	59	37
Total	100	100	100

Figure 5.11

Visit or Intent to Visit the MUFC and/or MCFC Football Stadium/Museum by Gender



Despite the high numbers, less than a third of subjects had noticed any material during the course of their visit to Manchester promoting either stadium or their respective museums and tours. Those that had been exposed to promotional material cited a variety of sources, ranging from the local tourist offices, to advertisements at the airport and on vehicles belonging to the city's transport system. Others simply mentioned that they had found information online without indicating an identifiable source.

The survey results paint a picture of a city that visitors associate with football above practically all other attributes. When considering football it should also be noted that visitors overwhelmingly consider MUFC as being more closely linked with Manchester than the city's other major club, MCFC, which, only relatively recently has enhanced its global profile winning multiple trophies during the second decade of the 21st century. The other elements for which Manchester is renowned, shopping and nightlife, also figure prominently in the image people hold of the destination. The DMO's efforts in promoting the arts and highbrow culture as an integral part of its market offering, combined with the historical legacy of Manchester, appear to be less important from the perspective of the average visitor.

Having considered the objects of both case studies separately the following section (5.3) presents the findings of a content analysis study into the websites and social media platforms managed by the DMOs of both destinations that was extended to include two other major European cities. It is a vital component of the research since

it provides clear evidence or lack thereof for the leverage of sports franchises by DMOs in the online space.

5.3 Findings of content analysis study on sports franchise leverage

Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) talked extensively of the need for DMOs to understand the virtual world that has fundamentally altered the tourism paradigm over the past number of decades. The proliferation of online platforms and the ease of access to information, often in the form of user generated content, presents challenges where one faux pas can result in PR disasters and damage limitation exercises. Conversely, assiduous management and mastery of the online space allows for considerable competitive advantage through direct engagement with targeted audiences, increased market reach and important access to data that facilitate the development of effective marketing strategies.

This section looks at the results of a study undertaken as part of the thesis that examined the virtual platforms of the DMOs of Amsterdam and Manchester, and the extent to which they leverage the elements of football and the sports franchises in both cities for tourism ends. The results are presented in a combined format since they form part of a broader investigation that for purposes of comparison extended to the cities of Munich and Barcelona. Both are also major tourism destinations and home to the football giants of Bayern Munich and FC Barcelona respectively. This offered a more objective view on the efforts of *A&P* and *MM*, in a wider context, that also serves as a useful benchmarking exercise. The study additionally provides a longitudinal perspective on the subject of leverage, albeit in the online space, since it was completed during the early phase of this research and acts as barometer of progress that is elaborated upon in chapter six.

The importance of the internet and the rise of social networks have fundamentally disrupted the manner in which DMOs conduct business (Li, Robinson, & Oriade, 2017). Today's traveler enjoys access to information via countless online sources, as evidenced by this study's visitor surveys, that have altered the way people plan for trips, book accommodation and travel options, plus most importantly, share information with others. Technology continues to transform and define the future of destination marketing. DMOs have recognised this in establishing destination themed websites and branched out into the arena of social media establishing a strong presence across the most visible platforms.

A tailor made content analysis tool was used to conduct a systematic examination of the official virtual spaces of the DMOs of Amsterdam, Manchester, Barcelona and Munich. This focused on identifying and analysing the approach employed by each DMO in relation to its city's most celebrated football club. The content of the platforms was manually coded and investigated from three perspectives; promotional, information dissemination, and push towards purchase through external links. Each mention of a football club was subsequently categorised according to its intensity with, for example, a website directly providing a link to a page where match tickets or stadium tour/museum tickets were offered for sale, as being of high intensity or strength. The categories allowed for the emergence of themes indicating whether the DMO's message equated to leverage of the football club. The popularity of each platform was also compared to those of each city's respective football club. The study limited itself to a set number of units of analysis in respect of the online platforms used by DMOs. These included the DMO proprietary website, its Facebook page, Twitter feed, YouTube account, and Instagram account.

5.3.1 Results

Data were collected over a two day period covering March 9th and 10th, 2016. Outside the gathering of basic numerical and ranking information the research strategy looked at identifying any incidence where virtual platforms administered by DMOs allude to the destination's primary football club in the digital space. Web pages falling within the same category were subject to identical search strategies across all destinations e.g. every Facebook page was examined in an identical manner irrespective of the city. The following section looks at each city systematically with major findings highlighted.

Figure 5.12

Drill Down Statistics For First Reference of Football Club on DMO Proprietary Website

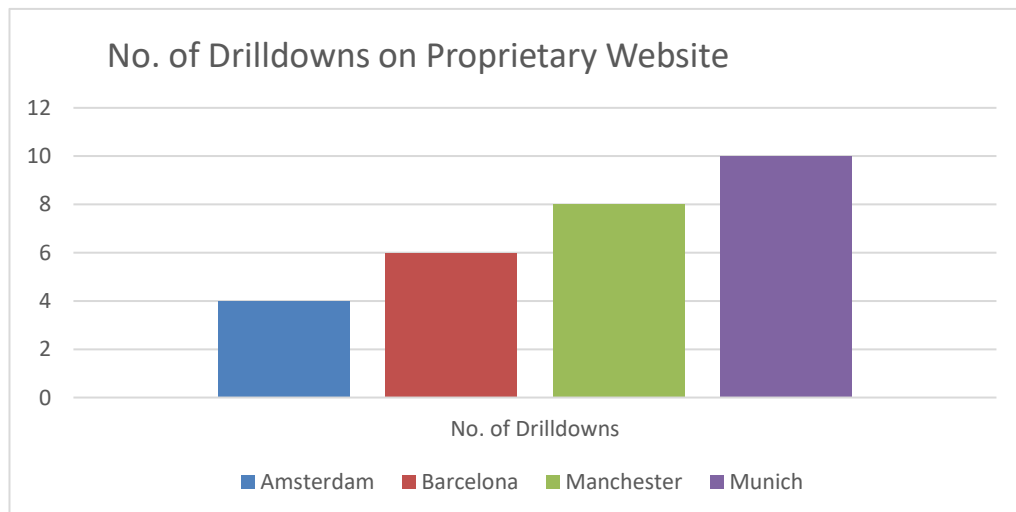
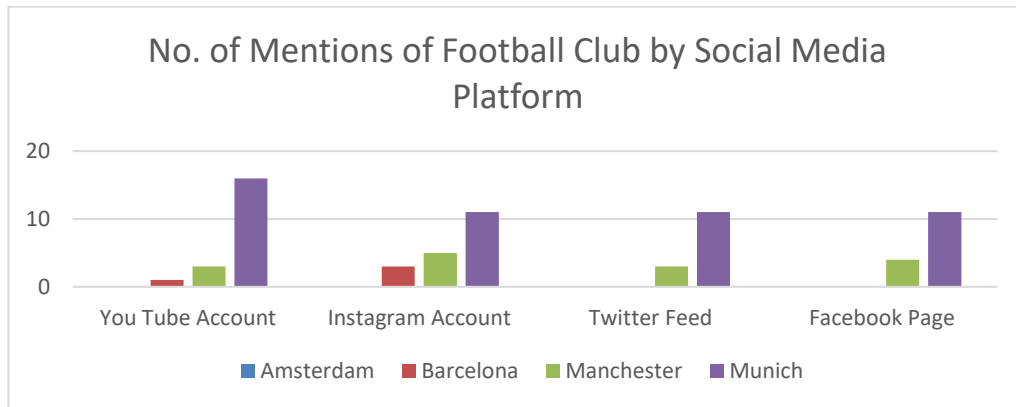


Figure 5.13

Number of Mentions of Each City's Main Football Club on DMO's Social Media Platforms



Amsterdam: Iamsterdam.com is the proprietary website of A&P that functions in a manner providing mass communications to users with little or no opportunity for audience interaction or user generated content. It is ranked as the 30,720th most popular website globally by Alexa (2016). The search strategy followed the most obvious route in examining references to AFC Ajax. From the homepage four drilldowns were necessary to uncover the first incidence referring to the football club. Drilldowns measure the number of webpages, from the opening page, before a reference to the football club is noted. The message conveyed met the criteria for information dissemination of medium intensity that in turn led to another page featuring information dissemination of high intensity resulting in an external link to the football club. The domain does not offer users possibilities to purchase goods or services related to Ajax.

Interestingly, when aggregated across all four DMOs, the social media platforms under *A&P*'s tutelage proved to be the most popular. Despite this, and over the two month period analysed, there were no instances where AFC Ajax was referred to on any of *A&P*'s social media portals that were regularly updated.

Manchester: The city is well represented across the entire digital spectrum. *MM*'s proprietary website, VisitManchester.com, is ranked 294,626th globally in terms of popularity, according to Alexa Analytics (a subsidiary of Amazon.com that specialises in web intelligence). The DMO site's general content is delivered under the guise of mass communication with limited scope for audience interaction or user-generated content. In drilling down from VisitManchester.com's homepage, following the most obvious route, the city's most prominent football club, in this case MUFC, is first directly mentioned two pages in. The message transmitted is promotional in nature and can be described as medium intensity, according to the coding criteria. This in turn leads to another page where the tone of the message transmutes to that of push-to-purchase of high intensity, where an external link is offered that allows visitors opportunities to purchase football goods and services. Visitmanchester.com does not allow the user to directly buy football club related merchandise or tickets internally within its domain.

In relation to *MM*'s social media sites it was found that the content across all its platforms was highly interactive and, on the whole, user generated responses were encouraged. However, mention of MUFC or football on these sites was quite sporadic. The Facebook page, as with those of the other cities, was scrutinised over a two month

period. This resulted in four incidences where the football club was referred to via content that can be described as promotional of medium intensity. The football club was also mentioned 4 times over the same two month period on the DMO's Twitter feed that can also be described as promotional of medium intensity. *MM*'s official Instagram account features two incidences of photographs related to the football club that can be categorised as information dissemination of low intensity, while on YouTube, two videos were present; one promotional but of low intensity, the other information dissemination of low intensity. The Facebook and Twitter feeds of *MM* were regularly updated replete with information of relevance to visitors.

Munich: The city's proprietary website, Muenchen.de, is ranked 22,322nd globally in terms of popularity (Alexa, 2016). The site's content is delivered under the guise of mass communication with no scope for audience interaction or user-generated content. In drilling down from Muenchen.de's homepage, following the most obvious route, the city's most famous football club, FC Bayern Munich, is first directly mentioned two pages in. The material transmitted can be described as information dissemination of low intensity. Additional mentions of the football club were found further in, with a link to an external website offered to visitors four pages from the homepage. Muenchen.de does not allow the user to directly buy football club related merchandise and/or tickets within its domain.

Analysis of Munchen.de's social media platforms resulted in 33 instances where FC Bayern Munich is referred to. The messages conveyed are almost equally split between being promotional or information dissemination of generally medium intensity, with

no push-to-purchase intent. Interestingly, the most common platform where the football club appeared was YouTube with 13 incidences. This was followed by Twitter and Facebook with 7 each and Instagram with 6 mentions respectively.

Barcelona: Barcelonaturisme.com is the official site of the city's DMO. It has a ranking of 103,137 in global popularity according to Alexa (2016). In following the same research path as the other proprietary domains, it was found that two drilldowns from the homepage were required to reveal the first instance where the city's iconic football club is referred to. The message can be categorised as one of information dissemination of low intensity that subsequently leads to a similarly categorised message of medium intensity. A further drilldown features a promotional message of high intensity but excludes a push-to-purchase external link. In fact, Barcelonaturisme.com was the only DMO website (of the four researched) which offered users the possibility of directly purchasing goods and services linked to its city's famous football club within the proprietary environment.

Visit Barcelona is the social media incarnation of Barcelonaturisme (DMO). In drilling down through the same four platforms a total of four incidences are identified where FC Barcelona is referred to. One can be found on YouTube, where the message is categorised as being of low intensity information dissemination, and three on Instagram which relates to content of a promotional nature. Interestingly, no mention of FC Barcelona was found on either the DMO's Facebook page or Twitter account.

5.3.2 Synopsis of content analysis study

It is clear from the results that DMOs are deeply committed online in terms of promoting their respective locations. Each organisation featured has spread its efforts over a significant number of platforms that are constantly evolving. The results highlight the level to which they engage in utilising their respective football clubs as part of the *bona fide* tourism offer, but they also underline the similarities and differences in how each DMO goes about trying to achieve this.

In analysing the data only Munich's DMO stands out as an organisation that moderately appreciates the tourism potential that its preeminent football club offers. Overall the results show relatively few incidences where any of the DMOs make reference to the football clubs in their respective cities. In the case of Amsterdam there was no mention whatsoever of AFC Ajax on its social media platforms. This may relate to the fact that Ajax is a club that is least associated with the city in terms of its name and is also the least popular, on a global scale, of the football clubs featured. Moreover, the visitor's image of the city of Amsterdam does not readily conjure up images of football or Ajax, despite the celebrated nature of the club. This is supported by the comments of those interviewed for this study and indeed the visitor survey in Amsterdam that is discussed further in chapter six. Barcelona, on the other hand, is a city synonymous with football, yet even there it appears that the city's DMO largely ignores what is a worldwide brand that enjoys a very positive image. Barcelona has a wealth of attractions that it can incorporate into its tourism offer but the relative absence of FC Barcelona from the DMO's social media output poses some serious questions as to whether the organisation is fully leveraging one of its premier tourism

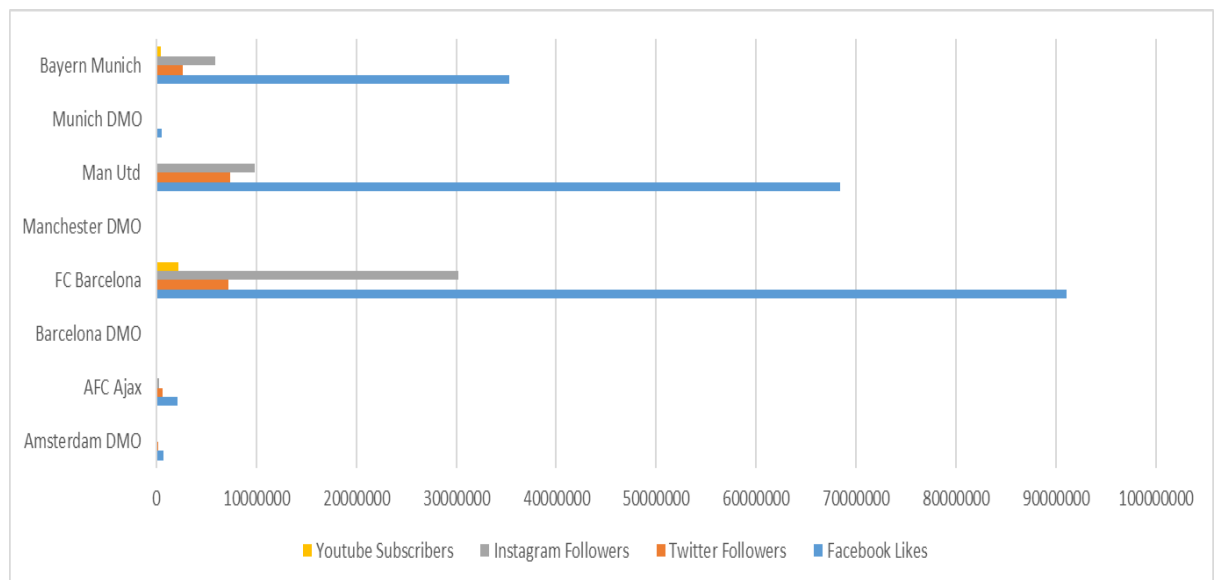
assets. In the case of Manchester the results indicate some efforts being made to incorporate the iconic MUFC brand into its online marketing efforts, but it also seems uncertain as to how to utilise the club in terms of presenting the city's tourism offer to the public. Manchester, of course, is also home to MCFC, a club that has quickly gained in worldwide appeal following its acquisition by a wealthy United Arab Emirates based conglomerate. MCFC also lead the way in the use of innovative online and virtual reality technology in enhancing the visibility of its brand (Tremlett, 2017). Its relative obscurity on the platforms managed by *MM* is notable. The DMO, as a non-partisan entity, cannot be seen to favour one club over another or may risk alienating certain potential visitors due to the tribal like rivalry associated with the sport. These variables may form the basis for the uncertainty surrounding the efforts of *MM*. Barcelona and Munich face a similar if less pronounced challenge when one considers the stature of their respective 'second' clubs i.e. Espanyol and 1860 Munich. A further limitation on effective leverage, as demonstrated in the study, was the notable lack of visual material associated with the sports franchises across all platforms. This indicates the complex commercial nature surrounding the sports franchises who are wary of others exploiting their intellectual property, in this case preventing the use of imagery associated with their brands based on copyright infringement laws.

In gathering the data one particularly unexpected observation was made. DMOs almost universally failed to encourage audience participation or promote user-generated content. It was surprising, and certainly unanticipated, to discover that the manner of engagement of DMOs, particularly in the arena of social media, appears at odds with current marketing practice. Moreover, one could speculate that the inclusion of content relating to highly recognisable football clubs within DMO administered social

networking platforms would pay immediate dividends in terms of increasing popularity, and creating opportunities for meaningful engagement. DMOs, on the whole, appear either reluctant or indifferent when it comes to effectively incorporating football clubs into the image they wish to portray of their destinations in the virtual space.

Figure 5.14

Social Media Popularity: DMO v Football Club



In conclusion, figure 5.14 is noteworthy if only for exposing the disparity in terms of popularity between the online presence of the DMOs compared to that of the sports franchises. From the study's perspective this is of particular relevance since it illustrates the huge reach of these football clubs and underlines the potential for leverage afforded by such globally recognised brands. It also speaks to the marketing expertise of the sports franchises in effectively curating their online presence. In

Manchester the differences are quite stark with MUFC enjoying almost 1000 times the exposure on FaceBook alone when compared to the VisitManchester.com page. The situation is less dramatic in Amsterdam, but even here AFC Ajax attracts a far larger audience than Amsterdam's DMO despite the relative popularity of *A&P*'s FaceBook page, when compared to those of the other three tourism agencies. DMOs have made concerted efforts to expand online and across multiple platforms, yet in terms of penetration they lag seriously behind these sports "brands" that are identified with their respective locations; a point that should surely be of interest to policy makers.

DMOs, on the whole, appear at best hesitant or at worst indifferent when it comes to effectively incorporating football clubs into the image they wish to portray of their destinations in the virtual space. This has implications for the leverage of these assets on a wider more holistic level. Within the context of this thesis, the results also depict confusion or perhaps a reluctance on the part of *A&P* and *MM* to engage in leveraging sports franchises in the service of tourism. It could also simply point to a lack of expertise in how to go about this effectively. These concerns are integral to the discussion in chapter six.

5.4 Summary

Amsterdam is a popular, overcrowded city whose people both benefit from and occasionally resent the tourism phenomenon in their midst. Visitor numbers have increased significantly in the past decade to the extent that the city's DMO no longer promotes Amsterdam to the leisure travel market. Resident perceptions of over-tourism and the resulting inconveniences foisted upon locals have seen the DMO

change tack and develop a strategy seeking to mitigate the most deleterious effects associated with tourism and congestion. The strategy positions the city as an attractive destination to the MICE market and aims to leverage the city's lesser known neighborhoods for their tourism potential. These initiatives are largely supported and dovetail with the concerns of the DMO's main stakeholders (residents and business), whilst seeking to ameliorate the visitor experience in the city.

The most successful sports team in the Netherlands is undoubtedly AFC Ajax, Amsterdam's football club. Ajax has a colorful history and is known the world over, yet it is rarely cited as a motivating factor by tourists in influencing their decision to visit the city. Few visitors associate Amsterdam with sport, let alone its football club, and even those involved in the tourism sector acknowledge Ajax as being less than integral to the image people hold of the city. *A&P*, having embarked on a strategy to disperse visitors more equitably throughout the region, has pinpointed the district surrounding the Johan Cruyff Arena (home of Ajax), as one of the areas to be exploited for its tourism potential. This is welcomed by many, most notably by the stadium holding company and the football club itself, but there remain concerns that visitor behavioral characteristics, particularly the reluctance of many to divert from the traditional tourism circuit within the "canal ring", render such an endeavour challenging. The stadium tour and museum were projecting an increase in visitor numbers from 120,000 to 200,000 by 2022 but those involved in managing the attraction suggest that the surrounding area requires additional entertainment amenities to sustain and increase its appeal in the long-term.

In a relatively short period Manchester has been transformed from a city characterised by its links to the industrial revolution, the subsequent demise of its manufacturing base and urban decay, into what is now a thriving tourism destination. The sectors dependent on hospitality and tourism employ approximately 100,000 people and the arrival of visitors positively impacts the economy to the tune of GBP 9 billion annually. The city's DMO operates in a stable political environment locally, permitting the development and implementation of long-term planning. Strategic plans are based on the input of stakeholders across the city representing a diversity of interests.

The city contains a multitude of different visitor attractions, yet the stand out feature for many, which influences how it is perceived and is pivotal in the decision to visit, is its association with football. With two football clubs playing in the highly mediatised English Premier League, Manchester frequently finds itself globally showcased on a stage that would normally be beyond the reach of *MM* and its finite resources. There is a clear dichotomy to the appeal of both clubs with MUFC said to have a fan base in excess of 600 million people. Manchester is also home to the UK's National Football Museum but the tourism authorities remain cognisant of having to curate the market offering so as not to appear over reliant on one factor (football), to the detriment of all others. *MM* contends that it leverages the city's associations with football and its major clubs to optimal effect, yet the evidence gathered during the course of this study suggests that this is an idle boast with football playing a much more important role in the visitor decision making process than previously imagined.

Both cities face differing challenges going forward. Amongst others, Brexit in the case of Manchester is still a largely unknown factor, and the fruits of *A&P*'s Great Neighborhood initiative in Amsterdam have yet to be ascertained. The study's premise, based around the concept of tourism leverage with football and prominent sports franchises seen as the tools of choice, makes for very different propositions in both locations. The capacity of the DMOs to co-opt football and its clubs in the service of tourism that resonates with core audiences constitute another important element that needs to be evaluated. These issues, considered alongside the literature reviewed in chapter two, form the basis for the discussion in chapter six.

Chapter Six: Discussion of Results

6.0 Introduction

This study investigates the suggestion that sports franchises constitute legitimate tools to be leveraged for their tourism potential in destinations where the circumstances permit. It was conducted primarily through the prism of DMOs or similar agencies whose remit, according to Pike (2004), is in enhancing a destination's competitiveness. This thesis builds on the tenets of the research pioneered by Laurence Chalip and his contemporaries such as Beesley (2011), Leyns (2002), O'Brien (2007) and Sparvero (2007, 2013), who championed the use of sport in the employ of tourism as an asset to be leveraged. Whilst inspired by the seminal work of Allan et al. (2007) that highlight the impact of football clubs engaged in season long competition on the visitor economy of Glasgow, this study signals a distinct departure in the field, transitioning from economic impact and legacy to leverage, thus laying the groundwork for further scholarly enquiry.

The DMOs of Amsterdam and Manchester, along with each city's principal sports franchises; Ajax, MUFC and MCFC, form the basis for this multiple case study investigating the premise that the latter represent assets that could be leveraged for tourism ends, offering significant competitive advantage for these locations. Were arguments to be made in favour of such they might prove important and generalisable for destinations sharing similar characteristics.

Chapter one of the thesis began with the following statement:

Logic dictates that Destination Marketing Organisations, while representing many stakeholders, should leverage a location's most visible assets to enhance the attractiveness of the destination at any given opportunity.

The results of the research question the veracity of such a sweeping statement and highlight ambiguities that shape how leverage is applied in cities that experience tourism in very different ways. Stakeholder interactions often determine the path chosen, with individual actors frequently occupying a space and mindset that calls for the use of what this researcher refers to as pragmatic utility in developing initiatives that progress the goals of the DMO. In purely practical terms the DMOs of Amsterdam and Manchester display very different visions as to what leverage entails, particularly when it comes to using sport, in this case football, and each city's globally renowned football clubs as platforms for leverage. The findings paint a picture of Amsterdam, where *A&P* has developed a well thought out strategy towards leverage that incorporates, yet transcends, the use of sport and its principal football club, Ajax, as an attractor based on its pragmatic utility as a stakeholder. In Manchester, a city demonstrably associated with football due to the recognition enjoyed by its major clubs, MUFC and MCFC, *MM* expresses a confidence in its strategy pertaining to the leverage of these assets, and football generally, that belies their importance in how Manchester is actually perceived by visitors. The shortcomings inherent in both strategies, but more notably in that of *MM*, are revealed in the study's findings and their interpretation that constitute a valuable repository of information. This

information also highlights instances where leverage is elevated in a manner that paved the way for the study's development of a framework of best practice that incorporates features lending themselves to replication in other milieus sharing similar characteristics.

In order to fully interpret the study's findings, derived from multiple sources, the initial research objectives are individually addressed in this chapter. Results are compared across both cases with inferences made that are discussed in relation to the prior works and theories outlined in the literature review of chapter two. The research objectives centred on the following topics:

- An examination of the reasons behind the emergence of sports franchises as tourism products
- Research into the long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal
- Identifying the impact of the sports franchise on the perception of place and destination image
- An examination of the relationship between Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and the sports franchises in each city
- Insights on DMO interactions and engagement with stakeholders in its respective environment
- An investigation of tourism leverage initiatives in both locations including the current state of play between the DMO and the sports franchises with the stated objective of identifying best practice

The research objectives are interlinked and are tackled from two perspectives. The initial three explore the place of the sports franchise in a tourism context. The remaining objectives look to the DMO and how it operates within its environment, including stakeholder interactions, and also crucially identifies initiatives related to leverage. Only in investigating and addressing these research objectives could the study's premise be assessed on its merits and a best practice framework developed. The thesis is the first of its kind in exploring a sphere that is underserved by the research community and in advocating for the tourism leverage of what are essentially large commercial sports brands for the wider benefit of local communities and other stakeholders.

The sports franchise in a tourism context (6.1, 6.2, 6.3)

The following sections 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 examine the sports franchises in terms of how they have evolved as tourism products (6.1), the durability of their tourism appeal (6.2) and the role each plays in destination image (6.3).

6.1 The emergence of sports franchises as tourism products

Tourism has spawned a host of derivatives with sport, experienced as an active participant or as a spectator witnessing an event, being principal amongst them (Zauhar, 2004). Preuss (2005) and Matheson (2010) contend that studies concerning sports tourism have long been characterised by their focus on legacy planning, or economic impacts in relation to mega events such as the Olympic games or the FIFA world cup. Few have considered sports franchises involved in highly mediatised season long competitions as entities worthy of investigation, nor of their potential to

be considered as tools to be included in a destination's promotional mix. This study breaks that mould and its findings very clearly demonstrate that some sports franchises are hugely important actors, often despite themselves, in the arena of tourism.

For tourism authorities to tap this potential and leverage it for optimal effect an understanding of how sports franchises such as MUFC, MCFC and Ajax have become tourism attractions in their own right is a prerequisite. Only in examining the manner in which these globally recognised sports clubs have emerged as pull factors, often inciting visitation to their respective cities, can strategies be formulated by DMOs, or similar agencies, that enhance a destination's image and attractiveness (Gretzel et al., 2006).

The results of the visitor surveys conducted in both cities indicate a dichotomy in how significant the sports franchises, and football generally, act as agents in influencing the decision to visit either location. Manchester and its clubs ply their trade in a competition, the EPL, which is broadcast across the globe eliciting huge interest and media coverage. The intense mediatisation of the competition has greatly expanded the appeal of the clubs with MUFC, in particular, becoming a *de facto* symbol of the city on the international stage. In contrast Ajax, by admission of one of its directors, is so peripheral in a city with so many other world class attractions that it appears almost inconsequential in tourism terms. Despite this the club's Johan Cruyff Arena tour and museum was projecting 200,000 visitors annually by 2022 and the visitor intercept survey conducted in Amsterdam depicts a clear and somewhat unexpected interest in visiting the stadium by 17% of respondents. The domestic Dutch football league may

not possess the prestige of the EPL, but it is nonetheless a popular competition dominated by Ajax, permitting the club almost perennial entry to the UEFA Champions League that allows it to showcase its brand on a global stage. Whilst the football connotation differs in both destinations, the realised and actual potential of utilising this attribute should not be lost on the DMOs in either location.

6.1.1 Foundations as tourism attractors

The highs, lows, struggles and successes of these clubs make them objects of historical interest (see sections 3.1.2 and 3.2.2). Visitors questioned in the two cities, and the experts consulted, clearly indicate that the clubs and football generally occupy a far more prominent position in how Manchester is viewed when compared to Amsterdam. The emergence of these organisations as tourism products owes much to the transformation of the sport from the early 1990s. At that moment in time football found itself very much at a crossroads. It was faced with an almost existential crisis as a result of hooliganism and disasters in stadia that were barely fit for purpose, leading to tragic loss of life such as at Hillsborough in 1989 where 96 fans perished (Murray 1998). Governments felt compelled to intervene and initiated a number of reforms that would act as a catalyst for the sport's metamorphosis. Stadia were refashioned and new safer all seater arenas built that appealed to a far wider audience, making an already popular sport even more attractive heralding a renaissance in its fortunes. TV companies were quick to enter the fray with Rupert Murdoch's BskyB conglomerate optioning global rights to broadcast the restructured EPL to vast audiences (Andrews, 2003). Prior to the 1990s live broadcasts of football matches were almost exclusively restricted to major finals or the FIFA World cup. Now for the first time global audiences were able

to follow the fortunes of clubs on a weekly basis involved in season long competition that made for compelling viewing.

The enhanced media spotlight of the EPL was reflected internationally with the major European leagues in Spain, Italy and Germany quick to follow suit in developing a more fan friendly product. The football clubs operate on multiple levels. Primarily they are sporting organisations but such is their appeal, particularly in Manchester, that the stadia of each of the three clubs featured in this work established their own museums and stadium tours. Despite being involved in the world of sport, football clubs, with MUFC at the vanguard, have diversified activities in order to exploit the commercial opportunities afforded by their sport. MUFC has reached a stage, from a business perspective, whereby it regularly features as one of the most valuable sporting brands on the planet according to Forbes magazine (2018), which valued the club in excess of \$4 billion. Its cross-town rival MCFC attracted the attention of the ruling family of Abu Dhabi who purchased it in 2008 enabling it to become one of the richest football clubs in the world..

In the Dutch context Ajax is not simply the most successful club on the field of play, but is also the country's most valuable sports club, traded on the Dutch stock exchange accumulating much of its revenue through sponsorship deals, advertising, the sale of its merchandise, match ticket sales and broadcasting rights. It has also branched out internationally and is the parent club of Ajax Cape Town in South Africa.

In terms of revenues, direct proceeds from tourism related activities account for a relatively small portion of income for all three clubs, however, the development of museums and stadium tours has proven a big attraction for committed fans and visitors alike. The museum and tour at Old Trafford was rated as Manchester's second most popular paying attraction in 2018 (Marketing Manchester, 2020), with 62% of survey participants signaling they had or intended to visit it during their stay in the city. Ajax also hosts a museum and tour at its Johan Cruyff arena. Those responsible for the facility are optimistic going forward for increased visitor numbers having contracted with other stakeholders in the city in a bid to enhance its profile in a busy tourism market. Similarly, MCFC has sought to capitalise on the tourism phenomenon in Manchester with its own stadium tour and museum that incorporates virtual technology to engage the more tech savvy visitor. Having visited the museums and tours of all three clubs, the researcher can substantiate the claims made by the management of each in promoting their respective facility. Perhaps surprisingly, the tour and museum at Ajax's Johan Cruyff Arena was the most impressive of all to the extent that this researcher would describe it as a "best in category" attraction. The Johan Cruyff Arena portrays itself as a beacon for innovation in stadium design with a commitment to sustainability and the circular economy, making it one of the few carbon neutral stadia on the planet. This innovative philosophy is reflected in the design of the stadium tour and museum. It is perhaps somewhat unfortunate that it is located in a city that encompasses so many other much more famous world class attractions. Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) suggested that the success of this type of visitor attraction is frequently down to the friendly personable nature and storytelling abilities of those employed in leading tours and guiding visitors through

museums. The people employed at the facilities of the three sports franchises appear to possess these attributes in abundance.

6.1.2 Football tourists

In an era notable for the pervasive use of social media, the ubiquitous “selfie” opportunity and celebrity culture, football and its clubs have also found themselves well placed to exploit the contemporary *leitmotif* (Lyu, 2016). People interested in visiting the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester turn to the internet and frequently social media platforms for information. *A&P* and *MM* have developed numerous digital spaces catering to the phenomenon but lag well behind the levels of penetration enjoyed by the football clubs (figure 5.12). Whereas in the past, fans visited to attend games or experience the almost liminal nature of touching “hallowed ground” (Filo, Chen, King & Funk 2013) i.e. the club stadium, the cultural shift brought on by technology has opened up football and its clubs to new audiences. Dinhopf and Gretzl (2016) mention how social media and the taking of photographs of oneself with a smart phone subsequently posted online, the “selfie”, has attracted people to venues and places that they otherwise might not be inclined to visit. In Manchester, at the MUFC stadium, this is witnessed on a daily basis with services on hand, provided by the football club and businesses in the area, to respond to the demands of a variety of travelers. The Old Trafford Megastore is the dropping off point for visitors having completed the MUFC stadium tour. The same situation prevails at the Johan Cruyff Arena in Amsterdam where visitors exit through the Ajax store presenting opportunities for selling merchandise. Tourists spend considerably more money than those regularly attending games, according to Abosag et al. (2010), adding another

compelling reason for the three clubs' willingness to promote their stadia as genuine tourist attractions. The clubs themselves recognise that a large portion of visitors to the stadium, even some of those attending live games, are not diehard football fans in the traditional sense, which corresponds with Hunt et al.'s (1999) description of sports fan categories. They consequently offer a diverse range of options corresponding to what are effectively different market segments that lead to this research proposing a general typology of the modern day football tourist.

The framework developed by Hunt et al. (1999) for classifying sports fans in relation to their behaviour, ranging from the "temporary" fan to the "fanatical", maintains its relevance as a contemporary heuristic (p. 439). However, based on this study's findings, and most critically the advent of discourse over social media, the football tourist displays some characteristics that were not considered by Hunt and his colleagues and are represented in table 6.1. The typology presented fits the present day reality and could prove valuable to DMOs seeking to develop strategies in relation to this growing market. The categories clearly describe the different types of football tourist that the sports franchises, at the very least, are acutely aware of. The main points of interest for the DMO relate to the level to which each category influences the decision to visit, the propensity to seek out other attractions during the course of the visit and the use of online platforms in communicating the visit to external audiences.

Table 6.1

Football Tourist Typology

Category	Characteristics & Motivation	Involvement
Non-fan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accompanies others, temporary engagement in ‘fandom’ - Accesses information online and likely to portray/justify visit via social media - Will seek out options and other stimuli to justify visit 	<p>Passive to reactive</p> <p>Unlikely to have influenced decision but influences choice in situ</p>
Neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Accompanies others and/or is event ‘junkie’ - Knowledgeable of football and other sports - Unlikely to visit frequently - Accesses information online and uses social media to communicate visit to others - Will seek to visit other attractions 	<p>Active and likely to have participated and/or made decision to visit</p>
Devoted	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Travels in groups of like minded diehards - Occasionally accompanied by non-fans (family/friends) - Very knowledgeable of football club and local attractions - Uses social media to portray visit - Conservative and unlikely to change behaviour as frequent visitor or with aspirations of becoming such 	<p>Active and primary decision maker</p>

Table 6.1, derived from the research findings, intentionally refrains from rigid classification and sub-categories. Although these certainly exist, the typology described respects the tenets of Hunt et al.'s (1999) work, but limits the categories since the objective is to consider football tourists rather than fans (who if living locally would not be considered as tourists). The characteristics and motivations pertaining to each football tourist type are inferred from data gleaned from the visitor intercept surveys, respondent interviews and the researcher's observations on the ground as a participant football tourist. These are then cross referenced with the aforementioned framework of Hunt et al. (1999). The non-fan and neutral football tourist constitute especially interesting target markets as far as initiatives based on leverage of the sports franchises are concerned, whilst the devoted football tourist may offer the DMO a suitable outlet in operationalising such endeavours.

6.1.3 Synopsis

The research demonstrates that sports franchises forming part of this study, and by extension others in comparable situations, can be considered legitimate tourism products. Figure 6.1 lists just some of the more tangible elements that could be classified as such.

Figure 6.1

Sports Franchises as Tourism Products



- Stadium
 - Football match
 - Matchday entertainment
 - Museum & tour
-
- Hospitality suites
 - Restaurants & bars
 - Conference/meeting rooms
 - Shopping facilities
 - Accommodation (some stadia incorporate hotels)
 - Monuments/statues

Professional football clubs, playing in elite competitions, generate such huge global interest that the arguments made by Sparvero and Chalip (2007) in relation to employing them for tourism ends are fully supported. Given the high profiles of these sports franchises it comes as a surprise that so little attention has been paid by scholars in exploring their tourism potential since the evidence uncovered suggests that it is both vast and relatively untapped. The research also builds on the sports fan typology, developed by Hunt et al. (1999), in proposing a typology for the football tourist. This could prove a valuable tool for the DMO in devising strategies based on the leverage of sports franchises, but could also be adapted to incorporate other destination specific characteristics. Where the leverage of sports franchises is concerned however, the question arises for DMOs as to whether they are simply temporary attractors or are

capable of sustaining this tourism appeal over the long term. Section 6.2 considers this quandary from the perspective of *A&P* and *MM* that has implications beyond the study's focal cities of Amsterdam and Manchester.

6.2 Long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal

DMOs operate in a very competitive sphere where events and circumstances can quickly outpace even the most highly tuned strategies. Subject P (Destination Marketing Academic) speaks of a stable environment being crucial for the DMO in developing strategic plans for a destination. Stable partners are also a requirement, suggests the DMO Executive of Amsterdam (Subject C). She questions the logic of using a sports franchise involved in season long competition for tourism purposes since sport can be fickle based on the fortunes and success of the franchise. This is clearly an important point to consider when assessing the use of football clubs for tourism leverage, yet the evidence contradicts this, at least where MUFC, MCFC and Ajax are concerned.

Parry (2012) argues that the most loyal fan, represented in table 6.1 as a devoted football tourist, is not fickle and purely swayed by success, although he adds that it would be foolhardy to dismiss this since it is an important factor in cultivating loyalty. The stadium tour and museum at Ajax attracts visitors who are invariably dedicated football fans, according to its director (Subject D). Their interest in the sport and club does not necessarily co-relate with on-field success, which is consistent with Parry's (2012) assertion. Although Ajax continue to be successful in the Dutch context, the stadium attractions largely focus on the past highlighting the club's historical narrative,

a hugely important attractor according to Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic). A similar situation is played out in Manchester, where MUFC has witnessed little recent on-field success, yet visitor numbers continue to rise for the club's museum and tour whilst practically every home game at Old Trafford is sold out irrespective of results.

The combination of elements (tour and museum) sold to the traveling public at all three stadia relate to the history and culture surrounding these clubs and the legendary players that personify them. The study's visitor surveys clearly demonstrate the public's appetite for such attractions and thus speak to their long term viability as dependable tourism products. The sport's media enhanced profile has transformed, what are essentially community assets (Spavero & Chalip, 2007), into huge commercial brands that has led to a commodification of the sport into elements which can be bought and sold (Bodet & Chanavat, 2010). This extends to the game's most famous players, many of whom have developed highly successful brands around their personas (Vincent, Hill & Lee, 2009). The Manchester clubs have found themselves at the forefront of this significant cultural phenomenon where football and its personalities form part of popular culture. Ajax, for its part, has recently changed the name of its stadium to the Johan Cruyff Arena, an act in itself that resonates beyond football into the realm of culture and heritage.

6.2.1 Too big to fail

The sports franchises covered by this study, as demonstrated by the findings, are aggressive commercial entities that seek to monetise their brand at every turn. Whilst tourism may not afford the outlandish sums of income derived from TV broadcasting

rights (Andrews, 2003), the development of museums and stadium tours generally point to organisations that are cognisant, to a certain degree, of their tourism potential and understand it as a strategic endeavour, perhaps more so than the DMOs themselves. At the very least, in catering to the sports tourism market the clubs offer what Ramshaw and Gammon (2017) refer to as the tangible immovable (stadium, museum), intangible movable (the players, sporting moments etc.) and the intangible aspects such as supporter rituals. Through the development of these facilities sports franchises, and not simply those featured in this study, have clearly identified at least one market segment, that of the sports heritage tourist where contemporary team performance is of peripheral interest, thus negating some of the arguments surrounding the whimsical nature of sport according to Wood (2005). Visitor numbers to these facilities, including the National Football Museum in Manchester, should compel the DMOs to take note since the nature of this market exhibits traits that might be exploited were effective leverage initiatives in place.

The tourism landscape prevalent in Amsterdam and Manchester is distinctly different. Visitor numbers in Manchester have increased steadily (table 3.3), practically year on year, but the city has yet to experience the mass tourism of Amsterdam and feels there is room for further growth, as indicated by a vote of confidence from the hospitality sector where room capacity has increased exponentially (figure 3.4). This undoubtedly provides increased opportunities for MUFC and MCFC that they are wont to capitalise on. Meanwhile the mass tourism of Amsterdam, whilst engendering much local discussion at how best to mitigate its more negative effects, offers Ajax an opportunity to cement itself as the central attraction in a district of the city earmarked for tourism development. All of this evidence supports the premise that these sports franchises are,

and can be, stable partners whose interests are best served by not simply sustaining but increasing their appeal over the long term. Figure 5.12 demonstrates the scale of that appeal in the online space as far back as 2016, with table 6.2 detailing how that appeal has expanded in the period up to 2021.

6.2.2 Synopsis

The findings clearly depict Manchester as a city whose footballing heritage is an important pull factor in attracting visitors. In a city that hosts the UK's National Football Museum alongside two of the sport's biggest names, football can be considered a stable attribute that lends itself to strategic tourism initiatives. The appeal of the clubs is growing, irrespective of on-field success and the stakes involved are so great, particularly when looked at financially, that the prospect of either Manchester clubs or the EPL faltering appears remote. In Amsterdam, and despite its relatively low profile as a tourism partner, Ajax, along with the Johan Cruyff Arena and its facilities (museum and tour), are firmly established as tourist attractions even if, for the time being at least, the market they cater to is made up almost exclusively of sports and sports heritage tourists. Threats to the effective use of football are slight in both destinations and would potentially require fan behaviour regressing to the anti-social practices of the past resulting in large-scale public disorder or hooliganism. Stadia and games are policed so tightly that this is highly unlikely. The marketing of the sport as well as the consumer focused development of club facilities and stadia have made the football experience increasingly family friendly. Modern facilities and the popular culture aspects associated with the sport have rendered it more attractive to the different types of fans as described by Hunt et al. (1999), and in this study's football

tourist typology (table 6.1). The clubs make a point of providing attractors to even the less dedicated visitors, or non-fans, in order to ensure their experience is satisfactory, or perhaps unexpectedly memorable. The findings also suggest that despite their profiles as elite European football clubs, Ajax, MUFC and MCFC, share similar characteristics from a tourism perspective that could be attributed to sports franchises beyond the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester. They also share a keen interest for remaining in the limelight of the sport irrespective of sporting performance, which is most clearly demonstrated by MUFC whose on-field woes in recent years appear to garner as many headlines as when it was enjoying a sustained period of sporting success.

To gauge the potential of leveraging these football clubs for tourism ends, it was necessary to gather evidence on the extent to which they play a role in how their host cities are perceived in a wider context. The findings point to cities occupying different ends of a wide spectrum as far as their principal sports franchises are concerned.

6.3 The impact of sports franchises on the perception of place and destination image in Amsterdam and Manchester

Gretzel et al. (2006) suggest that the ultimate task of the DMO is to develop an image for the area it represents. *A&P* and *MM* confidently communicate the image they have decided to portray of their respective cities. One of the key foci of this study was to gauge the level to which the football clubs of Amsterdam and Manchester are associated with their host cities and the part they play in what Gunn (1972) calls the organic destination image. Only in understanding this can a case be made in favour of

or against the leverage of these sports franchises in a tourism context. Clarity in this area would also facilitate the DMO in developing or reviewing strategies that employ the sports franchises in promoting or shaping the tourism experience in both destinations.

6.3.1 Two visions of success

A&P, through its marketing literature, paints Amsterdam as a canal-side city and bustling hub of commerce that welcomes other cultures with open arms. The content analysis study undertaken as part of this thesis (see section 5.3) investigated the extent to which AFC Ajax was prevalent across digital platforms administered by the city's DMO. The results of the study revealed that Ajax exists very much on the fringes of tourism interest in Amsterdam, when considered through the lens of *A&P*, with scant references to it across official documentation. Meanwhile, *MM* describes Manchester as youthful, diverse, energetic and bursting with character. Football is not mentioned, nor are arguably two of the city's most famous exports to the world, MUFC and MCFC. In Amsterdam, a city with a surplus of iconic tourist attractions, the quasi exclusion of Ajax is understandable in terms of how *A&P* communicates the city's image. In Manchester, a city that has undergone a huge transformation since 1996, mirrored by the metamorphosis of its football clubs over a similar timeframe, the omission of any football related connotation might be seen as unusual, particularly when considered in light of the findings of the study's visitor survey categorically depicting the organic image of Manchester in terms of its association with football.

Kavaratzis (2012) contends that DMO attempts at place branding frequently belie a tendency to be based on management or politically expedient decisions that sometimes fail to consider the realities on the ground. Politics, social concerns and commercial interests frequently coalesce to form an acceptable consensus that does not conform to how outsiders and potential visitors imagine a destination. Despite such concerns, Amsterdam, through assiduous management of a well ordered process that included the participation of stakeholders, has been successful in developing a city brand, “I Amsterdam”, that reflects, for the most part, how people view the Dutch capital. However, when the “I Amsterdam” brand was unveiled Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2007) expressed some misgivings as to whether it actually communicated a coherent message clearly, illustrating the difficulties inherent to destination branding. The iconic “I Amsterdam” logo can be seen across the city and is incorporated into all official communications of A&P (figure 6.2). The evidence relating to Manchester suggests that developing an effective brand for a city with multiple attributes remains complex (Pike, 2005). The city’s brand logo itself (figure 6.2), visible across all of MM’s marketing literature, is hardly distinctive and fails to add value in differentiating the destination as described by Boisen et al. (2018).

Figure 6.2

Brand Images Amsterdam and Manchester



For the city brand to be successful Alociar and Ruiz-Lopez (2019) contend that it is important to understand the destination image and not to impose a set of subjective tenets on a location that fails to adequately address the concerns or aspirations of all stakeholders. This study would argue that the strategy of *MM* in how it portrays the city of Manchester, from the visitor perspective, is at odds with how Manchester is imagined by visitors and other interested parties, within and without the city. The “Original Modern” branding concept used to promote Manchester appears almost reluctantly to include football and MUFC as a postscript. It is buried on practically the last page of the policy document outlining the “Original Modern” concept (Marketing Manchester, 2018a), and notably does not mention MCFC, the National Football Museum or football at all in holistic terms. By contrast, almost all those interviewed for this research in relation to Manchester, including a senior marketing figure of *MM*, acknowledge the importance of football and the city’s clubs in how Manchester is perceived both as a place and tourism destination. Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) goes as far as to suggest that the city and football are virtually synonymous and equates it to Wimbledon’s association with tennis. The visitor survey further entrenches this notion, with football revealed as being the single most outstanding attribute whether in terms of influencing the decision to visit, or the imagery that travelers associate with the city (figure 5.10, table 5.6).

Destination image is a highly subjective and personal concept (Alociar and Ruiz-Lopez, 2019). It is also an important antecedent of visitor satisfaction and influences behavior before, during and after visitation. Gunn (1972) was one of the early pioneers to look at destination image within the confines of tourism. He contended that two factors were at play in how people perceive a destination, namely induced and organic.

The induced image was said to lie within the control of those actively promoting a locale. *A&P* has managed quite successfully to portray an induced image of Amsterdam that is consistent with the organic image i.e. beyond the control of the DMO, whose origins can emanate from a diverse range of sources from media to family and friends. The findings of this study, particularly those of the visitor survey, portray Amsterdam as a tolerant open city characterised by its canals and architecture. This corresponds to how the DMO wishes to depict the city. Whilst visitors noted the importance of the city's nightlife, including the famous red-light district and the relaxed attitude towards soft drugs, the DMO's reticence to mention these is understandable although the "open, tolerant" elements put forth in the induced image may cover such aspects. *A&P*'s branding of Amsterdam and the image people hold of the city has quite clearly worked in its favour, even if solely viewed from the perspective of ever increasing visitor numbers. Likewise, *MM* could point to the success of its vision for Manchester if purely looked at from the perspective of how the city has seen its tourism stock rise, albeit from a very low base, in becoming England's second most visited city after London.

6.3.2 Football associations

The findings show that neither Ajax nor football are considered as integral components of Amsterdam's image. Indeed, despite insisting on Amsterdam being used in its official communications (Ajax of Amsterdam), the club, as alluded to by a high ranking official of *A&P*, could be located anywhere. This assertion is an important indicator of how Ajax is perceived in tourism circles. Others have suggested that the lack of a clear identifiable marker with Amsterdam precludes the logical type of

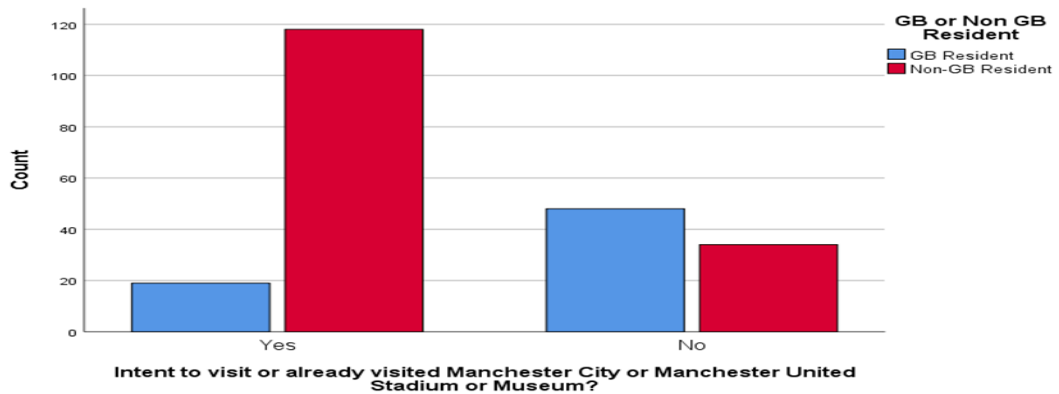
association people make between MUFC and MCFC with their host city. Amsterdam has such a wealth of iconic visitor attractions that the club exists both literally (it is located in a suburb south east of the centre) and figuratively on the margins of tourism interest. The evidence further suggests that few people are drawn to visit Amsterdam due to its association with Ajax, which is reflected in the results of the visitor survey and from people working within the city's tourism sector. This is not to say that the club and its facilities do not merit inclusion as part of the city's tourism offer, as can be seen in the level of interest survey respondents expressed in visiting the stadium tour and museum. It should also be noted however that Ajax, despite its commercial orientation, fails to fully grasp the opportunities afforded by tourism in a city that is nonetheless straining under the pressure of over-tourism within its inner canal ring. Those responsible for its tourism facility have expressed optimism, with the introduction of new and supposedly more innovative board members, that this perplexing situation is slowly changing.

MM has struggled to develop a coherent image for the city it represents. The DMO's description of Manchester is cryptic and fails to hone in on the abundant attributes of the destination, as described in the framework developed by Echtner and Ritchie (1993) that looks at capturing all the most important components inherent to a location. In applying Gunn's (1972) initial treatise on destination image, the induced image of Manchester showcasing an "energetic, youthful" and "diverse" city with "character", is what Tamajon & Valiente (2017) might label a practitioner led attempt that homogenises destination image into mediatised sound bites. There is no doubt that these characteristics represent Manchester to some degree but could be equally applied to a multitude of cities across the globe. The visitor's organic image of Manchester

referred to earlier in this section speak of a city whose major characteristic, or point of differentiation, revolves around its association with football. Interestingly, the connection confirms a notion, long held by the researcher, that people from outside Manchester are far more likely to identify the city with football than with any other attribute. Data gleaned from the visitor survey clearly show that the further geographically displaced the individual is from the city, the more likely they are to make such an inference. Figure 6.3, for example, demonstrates that foreign travellers are much more likely to visit the museums and stadium tours of the city’s football clubs during their visit when compared to their British counterparts.

Figure 6.3

Intent to visit stadium tours and museums in Manchester



This information should be considered of crucial importance by those within the DMO responsible for marketing strategies targeting the overseas visitor. The role of MUFC in perpetuating the link to football is also very apparent and generally accepted, but the approach adopted in not becoming overly reliant on one sports franchises to the

detriment of the other is something that *MM* is highly cognisant of, and its strategy in attempting to co-opt both is laudable. It could be helped in this by the presence of the much visited National Football Museum in the city, a potentially unifying partner.

A contradiction is evident between the DMO and visitors in how they imagine Manchester as a city. *MM* and others consulted during the course of the research make reference to the city being a “happening place” with a vibrant nightlife, a large number of serious cultural attractions and a history as one of the world’s first great industrial cities. Manchester’s renowned music scene is also a source of great local pride, as is its historical legacy as being the birthplace of the suffragette movement, but these images, whilst absolutely grounded in reality, appear completely at odds with how the vast majority of contemporary travellers view Manchester. Assigning such attributes defining the city as a “type” of place has potential appeal but it is something that should be assessed carefully by the DMO in developing a place brand according to Chang, Peters and Marafa (2016). Manchester is, above all, synonymous with football and to a lesser degree shopping, in how it is imagined by the average visitor with the attitude and friendliness of local residents also highly appreciated. *MM*’s stance on not recognising football as constituting a dominant emblematic narrative for the city is something that this researcher finds difficult to comprehend. However, the literature provides precedent for the current approach of *MM* when considered from the perspective of Anholt (2005), who describes tourism destinations as an amalgamation of different products necessitating a strategic marketing approach based on the characteristics of specific target audiences. The DMO’s position is consistent with this approach and supported by references made by *MM*’s marketing executive (Subject I) where he cautions against painting too narrow a picture of the city internationally.

6.3.3 Synopsis

If the main task of the DMO is to develop an effective image for a location, as suggested by Gretzel et al. (2006), this study reveals it as a complicated process that refuses to conform to easily definable standards. Despite the best efforts of countless scholars invested in researching this construct, Echtner and Ritchie (1993), Gartner (1993), Jenkins (1999), Byron and Zhang (2010), amongst others, the subjective nature of how image is interpreted by the individual traveller compounds its complexity. Nonetheless *A&P* has succeeded in developing a generally accepted image for its city corroborated by the findings of this study whereas *MM* has not. In reality the findings suggest that *MM* has developed a touristic image for Manchester that appeals to a narrow audience of local stakeholders, but does not resonate with the wider travelling public. *MM* might claim that its strategy has proven successful, as evidenced by increasing visitor numbers, but this researcher would argue that its failure to fully grasp the potential offered by the city's association with football, and its two principal clubs, represents a metaphorical "own goal."

The research objectives are considered from two perspectives, initially highlighting the place of the sports franchises in a tourism context before delving into the operational environments of the DMOs and their capacity to develop appropriate strategies around leverage. The previous three sections (6.1, 6.2, 6.3) deal with how sports franchises, and not merely those featured here, have evolved as important actors within the tourism landscape yet represent a resource with vast potential that is still largely untapped. The findings reveal how the world's most popular sport, football, has morphed over the past 30 years into a major cultural phenomenon that transcends

borders and continents, embodying the forces of globalisation in the truest sense. MUFC claims to have over 650 million fans worldwide, almost 10 times the population of the United Kingdom, and whilst most of these will never visit the club's Old Trafford stadium, a significant number have made the journey, or aspire to do so. This situation is replicated to varying degrees at the other clubs that form part of this research and indeed in other locations where similar circumstances exist. Football clubs have become poles of attraction, not simply for the devoted fan, but for others whose motivations are more nuanced, as described in the study's football tourist typology (table 6.1). Their emergence as genuine drivers of tourism has gone largely unnoticed by researchers and tourism professionals. This is perhaps out of a reluctance to accord trust in the whimsical nature of a sport where club fortunes can oscillate wildly. The findings reveal that such a lack of trust is unfounded and that these organisations, deeply embedded in their communities, have become major commercial entities operating in a competitive business environment, with long term strategies in place to ensure growth across diverse sectors, including tourism. If anything, the sports franchises covered by this study, having stood the test of time, represent stability and longevity that DMOs should recognise and leverage for the greater good. Football clubs are often emblematic of their cities and act as *de facto* ambassadors for these locations, reaching audiences that the DMO alone could never hope to access.

In returning to the specifics of this multiple case study, it can be seen that football is clearly a factor in how destination image has formed of Manchester, certainly when related to what Gunn (1972) calls the organic image. The sport and Ajax are far less important in how Amsterdam is perceived by the visitor, but in examining whether a basis exists for the leverage of the sports franchises it was necessary to investigate the

relationships between each city's DMO, its respective football clubs and others within its operational environment. Epp (2013) contends that the operational performance and the mandate of the DMO in devising effective marketing strategies for a location can only come about as the result of successful stakeholder engagement and clear communication between all parties.

The DMO, stakeholders and leverage

This section covering 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 considers the place of the respective DMO in relation to its stakeholder environment, including relationships with the sports franchises and leverage initiatives in both locations.

6.4 Relationship between the DMO and the sports franchises

In fulfilling its mandate the DMO acts as the primary instigator of actions promoting its location or, as in the case of this research, in developing leverage initiatives in respect of each city's sports franchise(s). The nature of the relationship between DMO and, in this instance, the football clubs, is a critically important predictor in shaping the outcomes of such actions. Ideally it would be one of mutual respect and enthusiastic cooperation. The realities on the ground in Amsterdam and Manchester paint a more nuanced picture but also highlight an option relating to leverage that was unexpected at the outset of this study. Although a cooperative effort, thus implying a healthy relationship as espoused by Jetter and Chen (2012), is the preferred backdrop to leverage, the research illustrates that even tacit approval, requiring little proactive engagement of the sports franchise, may suffice for initiatives to progress in certain

circumstances. The researcher terms this as pragmatic utility, which is further explained in section 6.4.1.1.

6.4.1 Relationship dynamics

DMOs operate in a very complex environment that requires maintaining a balance between disparate interests encompassing a wide variety of stakeholders. D'Angella and Go (2009) consider the DMO as occupying the central space within a social network, the smooth performance of which is based on the DMO fostering inclusion that confers legitimacy on its work. Zach (2012) makes the case for cooperative marketing of destinations that, by necessity, requires collaboration and consensus across this DMO led social network. Zach (2012) also cautions that cooperative marketing is not a panacea for all and that businesses by their very nature are embroiled in competition that often makes them reluctant to divulge information deemed sensitive, or to trust the motives of other parties. The evidence collected supports the concerns and observations of the aforementioned authors. *A&P* and *MM* are public-private partnerships comprised of members whose interests vary greatly. The fine balancing act required on their behalf involves many hundreds of partners, including a significant number whose resources exceed those of the DMOs themselves, an observation also made by Zach (2012). This aptly describes the situation on the ground in both locations, especially in highlighting the bilateral relationships in Manchester between *MM* and MUFC and MCFC respectively, and to a lesser degree in Amsterdam, between *A&P* and Ajax. In the case of Manchester, Zach's cautionary note on competition and the reluctance of parties to engage with others based on such is exemplified by the highly competitive nature of the relationship between both

Manchester clubs, on and off the field of play. This situation further complicates the work of *MM*, particularly with football being such a major component of the destination's image (see section 6.3). In Amsterdam, Ajax is a highly prized asset from the DMO's perspective (despite its relatively weak tourism profile) who readily admit that the club, not necessarily by design, promotes Amsterdam externally (at no cost to the DMO) when involved in international sporting contests; a notable example of pragmatic utility in itself.

Whilst challenges exist, in examining the present and past relationships between these organisations the findings paint a generally positive picture with grounds for optimism going forward. The interactions between the tourism organisations and the sports franchises are very much characterised by their practical nature with situational factors dictating their format. *MM* enjoys a healthy relationship with both Manchester clubs that is long standing with clear lines of communication in place. The agency contends that it promotes football heavily in all its marketing initiatives, although the evidence available does not corroborate this across its virtual platforms, nor in its efforts at branding the city. Of its own admission, MUFC suggests that it actually enjoys a stronger relationship with the national DMO, VisitBritain, than with *MM* since they are very much focused internationally where much of the interest in MUFC lies. In Manchester, the first challenge faced by the DMO in dealing with the clubs prior to even considering the leverage of these assets as an option, is linked to the business models of both and the legal parameters surrounding them. The business activities of sports franchises involve numerous commercial partners and sponsorship deals complicating the use of images and even the names of players who frequently develop their own proprietary brands. The second, equally daunting challenge, if *MM* looks at

co-opting the clubs for the greater good of the city and its many stakeholders in its promotional efforts, is the clubs' unwillingness to work together. This *status quo* is a significant impediment and is perhaps the single most important factor regulating *MM*'s current strategy in how it attempts to leverage these assets. It also partially explains why it promotes the city in such a generic manner despite the findings emphasising the importance of football in how Manchester is perceived by visitors. The adversarial relationship between MUFC and MCFC is not necessarily the result of sporting competition, but speaks of more serious competition on the business front. This sees the clubs vigorously defending their "brand" where the concept of risk within the stakeholder environment, as described by Freeman (1984) and Harrison and Chalip (2005), is not always understood or appreciated by the DMO.

In Amsterdam, Ajax would be considered a latent or dormant stakeholder according to the Stakeholder Saliency model of Mitchell et al. (1997). Despite Ajax being a former member of the DMO's inner advisory circle, the Metropolitan Club, it exerts little influence in the present day. In contrast, the Manchester clubs possess the attributes of highly salient stakeholders, held in high esteem by the DMO, according to official documentation and Subject I, a marketing executive with *MM*. Ajax's engagement with some of its closest partners, particularly the unit responsible for the stadium tour and museum, hints at difficulties in how it behaves within its stakeholder environment. The museum's representative (Subject D) provides an example of this in noting the club's reluctance to promote the stadium tour and museum on its official website. This is an unusual stance, but also exemplifies the club's priorities where tourism is concerned. The relationship between *A&P* and Ajax was also described as "odd and awkward" by elements in the tourism organisation and is again indicative of

the peripheral role the club plays in a tourism context. Reminiscent of the situation in Manchester, the DMO contends that the relationship between the two parties is further complicated by the commercial nature of Ajax. On a more upbeat note however, the club itself, via a prominent member of its board, suggests they are more than open to collaborating for tourism ends under the proviso that such collaboration results in increased business opportunities for Ajax. It is surprising to note that the commercial angle appears to be an overarching concern for Ajax in Amsterdam when compared to the Manchester franchises whose concerns revolve primarily around protecting brand equity, and the interests of their business partners, rather than actively pursuing opportunities to exploit in the tourism domain. The findings also clearly demonstrate that relationship dynamics between these parties, DMO and sports franchises, are a determining factor in how leverage actions are developed in both locations, with the added complication in Manchester of the inter sports franchise relationship between MCFC and MUFC.

6.4.1.1 Pragmatic utility

Freeman (1984) explicitly encourages organisations to embrace a practical approach in applying the tenets of stakeholder theory in how they conduct themselves and cooperate with partners. This is especially pertinent to DMOs faced with large numbers of stakeholders whose behaviour can influence whether strategic objectives are met. Based on the study's findings, but particularly in considering the relationship between *A&P* and Ajax, the researcher proposes the concept of pragmatic utility as a tool that facilitates interactions within the stakeholder environment. Pragmatic utility can be described as an additional dimension in determining the importance and the

likely behaviour of stakeholders, predicated on the usefulness or utility of the stakeholder. It specifically looks at cultivating relationships with predetermined outcomes in mind, whilst ensuring that the transactional nature of the exchange is beneficial to the goals of the focal organisation and the stakeholder.

Figure 6.4

Pragmatic Utility: The Essentials



The focal organisation can rarely expect all stakeholders to assume similar levels of commitment to joint initiatives or programmes. An understanding of pragmatic utility permits it to carefully weigh the benefits (or pitfalls) of engaging with stakeholders once accurately identified, according to the framework developed by Mitchell et al. (1997), (figure 2.1). It constitutes an additional strategic tool for organisations liaising with multiple partners in settings that would be familiar to most DMOs. These organisations are constantly juggling the needs and wants of parties who, to varying degrees, all have something at “stake”, according to Harrison and Chalip (2005), yet not all partner contributions can be considered equally important for the DMO in achieving its objectives. It is particularly useful in circumstances where a stakeholder displays limited levels of interest in, or commitment to, the objectives of the focal organisation but still recognises the potential benefits arising from such.

The extensive stakeholder environment within which *A&P* operates, and the scope of the DMO's activities, necessitates a practical approach in selecting the relationships to pursue with strategic objectives in mind. *A&P*'s current relationship with Ajax serves as an apt demonstration where pragmatic utility is applied within the context of the city's Great Neighborhood campaign, explained further in section 6.6.2. The interactions between both parties (DMO and Ajax) are at best transactional, with *A&P* occupying the role of initiator and Ajax that of a latent stakeholder, but one which nonetheless signals tacit approval of its participation in the aforementioned campaign. The desired outcomes stemming from the relationship meet the most basic criteria of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory in that they are positive for Ajax, the focal organisation (*A&P*) and other stakeholders.

6.4.2 Cooperation or competition?

Both *MM* and *A&P* are skilled operators in the field of destination marketing. The visitor numbers in the two cities alone are testament to this. To a certain extent their strategies respect the principles of cooperative marketing as espoused by Wang and Krakover (2008), who argue that success with such initiatives depend very much on a horizontal approach advocating "coopetition" (p. 126). Wang and Krakover (2008) describe this as an environment where businesses not only compete, but also collaborate for mutual gain, on an equal footing, concluding that it represents an almost utopian scenario in which destinations can thrive. However, the business models of the respective football clubs make horizontal collaboration and "coopetition" for mutual benefit at best problematic. Appealing to the clubs' civic pride for cooperation so that each city reaps the rewards, thus enhancing the brand equity of the sports franchises,

is something that the DMOs might consider. Chalip (2006), O'Brien and Chalip (2007b), Sparvero and Chalip (2007) all argue in favour of such, describing sports franchises as community assets that have a duty to add value to their localities. This research goes further with the contention that sports franchises have a responsibility to their host communities and in this case offering themselves willingly as leveragable assets for tourism initiatives. There are also compelling business reasons for doing so that should not escape the attention of either the sports franchise or tourism agency. Not only should the DMO appeal to civic pride, but if necessary bring pressure to bear highlighting the infrastructure and amenities put in place by cities enabling the sports franchises to operate and prosper, as has occurred with those featured in this thesis.

In Amsterdam, such a move, in principle, should stand a greater chance of success since Ajax does not have a direct competitor as is the case in Manchester where polite mutual distrust defines the relationship between MUFC and MCFC. The areas for optimism in relation to leverage are based on different variables and circumstances related to how these destinations experience tourism. *A&P* has identified some options in Amsterdam afforded by mass tourism in seeking to mediate its impact on the quality of life of city residents. These are discussed in section 6.6. The association of football with Manchester, including the presence of the National Football Museum in the city centre, affords *MM* the possibility of developing a genuine cooperative marketing strategy linked to football, but one that benefits other stakeholders and the wider community. In facing an uncertain future the DMOs, but particularly *MM*, might also be better served by creating business units within their organisational structure specifically responsible for developing mutually beneficial relationships with the

sports franchises, and sport generally, with an eye to opportunities for leverage as has been done in other locations (Pouder et al., 2018).

6.4.3 Synopsis

The findings speak to the DMOs encountering challenges in how best to cultivate fruitful relationships with these major sports brands, with the importance of each different in both cities, as illustrated in section 6.3. The commonalities inherent to either situation are linked to the commercial status of the football clubs who are wont to view engagement in a careful light so as best to protect brand equity. This issue lies at the core of DMO attempts to leverage these organisations for tourism ends but this study proposes solutions that require emboldened strategies on the part of the DMO (see section 6.7).

Subject H, who worked on a successful marketing strategy for the city of Leeuwarden, European capital of culture in 2018, cautions that broad stakeholder consensus is a prerequisite for the success in enacting tourism strategies that affect whole communities. Both *A&P* and *MM* operate within vast stakeholder environments and their interactions with the sports franchises described in this section occupy but a small portion of their overall activity. In fulfilling the objectives of this study surrounding leverage, the study then looked at the DMO's place and operations within the wider stakeholder landscape of Amsterdam and Manchester.

6.5 DMO and other stakeholders; engagement and interactions

The previous section (6.4) commented on the case specific nature of DMO engagement with sports franchises, a small yet critically important aspect that inevitably shapes outcomes in both Amsterdam and Manchester. It should be noted, however, that this study's premise based on the leverage of sports franchises for their tourism potential comes with the caveat that such is only considered successful if the benefits accrued are felt and understood within the wider stakeholder environment. Whilst the DMO formulates its own performance goals it is also answerable to its patrons, the stakeholders, who are the ultimate arbiters in determining whether the organisation has met those goals. Its interactions with these actors, and the respect in which they hold it, are thus pivotal to the DMO's success.

A&P is an accomplished organisation that can trace its roots back to the development of the city's "I Amsterdam" brand. As a tourism destination Amsterdam was linked with a whole host of unsavory elements, including a pernicious association with soft drugs, prostitution and a city where almost everything was tolerated, according to Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2006). Although it has never fully eradicated this imagery, as evidenced by the findings of this study's visitor survey, the successful rebranding of the city took place under the auspices of the organisation that has evolved into *A&P*. The change in name from *Amsterdam Marketing* to *Amsterdam & Partners* in 2019 came about as a result of it wishing to be seen as less of a DMO and more of a collaborative concern that addressed the interests of all stakeholders (including visitors), across the entire Amsterdam region. It was effectively transformed into a practitioner of place marketing, reflecting the claims of Niedomysl and Jonasson

(2012) who argue that DMOs become the vehicle for the implementation of place marketing strategy as they mature. The operational scope of *A&P* and its engagement with partners, both public and private, beyond the tourism sector, is reflected in its demand driven approach. Having dispensed with promoting Amsterdam to the leisure tourism market the focus shifted to making the city more livable and prosperous for its residents, visitors and businesses.

MM shares a similar philosophy to *A&P* in seeking the best possible outcomes for the city, its residents, visitors and businesses. Where it differs can be discerned by its focus and the manner in which it fulfils its mandate. *MM* is a division of the Growth Company, an organisation that is comparable to *A&P*, with a far broader remit for the development of Manchester. *MM* is solely concerned with promoting the destination as an attractive place for visitors, students and businesses, whilst providing opportunities for residents. It is essentially a traditional DMO.

6.5.1 An uneven playing field?

Freeman (1984), in developing his treatise on stakeholder theory contends that its greatest challenge is the common belief that efforts to satisfy the interests of one group of stakeholders invariably come at the expense of others. This is an issue faced in both Amsterdam and Manchester by the respective DMOs, and one that adds a layer of complexity to stakeholder engagement that should result in actions benefitting the wider stakeholder environment. *A&P* has over 1,000 partners spread across the Amsterdam region. It is nigh on impossible to gain the unanimous acceptance of all partners for every single decision taken. The findings again typify this in illustrating

how some important figures in the hospitality industry question the agency's decision to suspend promotional campaigns targeted at the leisure market, yet at the same time are supportive of *A&P*'s attempts at luring the business visitor for conventions and conferences. The organisation's funding comes via three distinct channels. One third is provided by the city authorities, including surrounding municipalities, of which there are 32. Private partners provide another tranche of funding, again up to one third of the budget, with the remaining funds generated by consumers via the sale of the DMO's products such as the "I Amsterdam" city card and merchandise. As a consequence of this, the interactions between the DMO and its various partners are nuanced and not purely based on a quest for capital that typify the strategies of many DMOs, according to Kavaratzis (2004). The largest single partner is the municipality, the officers of which effectively represent Amsterdam's residents and their diverse political persuasions. This complicated stakeholder ecosystem is characterised by what Nienhuser (2008) describes as resource dependency whereby each stakeholder, to different degrees, possesses attributes that can influence the organisation and its actions. There can be thus little doubt, as exemplified by the results of this study, that Amsterdam's DMO operates very much according to the principles espoused by Freeman (1984) in his seminal work on stakeholder theory. He contends that only in recognising the diversity of stakeholder requirements can an organisation be both successful and sustainable over the long term. *A&P* would appear to be the functioning embodiment of such an organisation.

A&P describes itself as integrated marketing organisation, according to its CEO. Its metamorphosis, including the name change, has seen it transformed from a conventional promotion driven DMO to one more concerned with place marketing that

requires consensus building. In fulfilling its remit this study contends that *A&P* liberally applies the concept of pragmatic utility through its interactions within its broader stakeholder environment, where it cultivates relationships rooted in their usefulness in shaping desired outcomes. The agency's actions on the ground clearly expose a stakeholder hierarchy. Whilst officially promoting the belief that it serves three core audiences; residents, business and visitors, the overarching commitment of the organisation in redefining the city in terms of livability speaks clearly as to the identity of its core stakeholders; Amsterdam's inhabitants. The city's residents and concerns about mass tourism that impinge on quality of life have become the principal issue facing *A&P*. These concerns are voiced through the municipal authorities, the single most potent stakeholder that possesses the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency as indicated in stakeholder typology framework of Mitchell et al. (1997). *A&P* has engaged in a number of initiatives to mitigate the negative connotations associated with over-tourism and congestion within the city's canal ring. Whilst the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic has provided an urgent impetus in reassessing the city's tourism priorities, the DMO's strategy, especially relating to the Great Neighborhood initiative, should not necessarily be seen as reactive since it was the result of much research and discussion that often foresaw the challenges on the horizon.

MM's focus is unapologetically external, with Subject I, an executive of the agency, stating that its role is entirely concentrated on economic development and not in appeasing the concerns of the local populace. That task is left to the Growth Company. As a not-for-profit organisation *MM* is essentially "owned" in the words of one of the agency's chief executives, by the ten local authorities that make up the Greater Manchester region, with Manchester city council being the principal stakeholder. A

major part of its funding comes from *MM*'s approximately 500 members. These range from Manchester airport, providing up to a third of all funding, to the football clubs, museums, art galleries, theatres, hotels and restaurants, down to the individual tour guide. Additional capital is provided by the national DMO, VisitBritain, in funding specifically approved projects. The organisation's external gaze makes for an entirely different stakeholder environment when compared to Amsterdam. Whilst it actively engages with its over 500 partners, the relationships appear very much defined by individual stakeholder saliency as represented in the framework of Mitchell et al. (1997). An example of this can be seen in its dealings with Manchester airport, where *MM* has practically assumed the role of the airport's international marketing arm. The approach taken by *MM* appears more in tune with Laplume et al. (2008), as well as Harrison and Chalip (2005), who in deference to Freeman (1984), consider stakeholders as actors with something at risk. The risk here may extend from threats to brand equity, in the case of the sports franchises, to the investments individual stakeholders contribute in terms of funding. Whilst the research was not privy to the details pertaining to funding, the obvious inference made is that entities with stakes in the arts and culture exert significant influence over the DMO if purely considered from the image that *MM* portrays of the city across its official communications.

Although a not-for-profit enterprise *MM* is very commercially oriented looking to provide a return on investment for its partner organisations. In its corporate documentation, *MM* notes that it strives to be an "exemplar" DMO (Marketing Manchester, 2019). On the whole *MM* comes in for high praise from practically all subjects interviewed for this thesis who actively engage with it in Manchester's tourism sector. It has developed clear lines of communication with its various partners,

as suggested by Epp (2013) and has cultivated an air of trust, what Trunfio and Della Lucia (2019) define as a stakeholder intangible, which has ultimately resulted in creating a competitive advantage for the destination.

A&P and *MM* occupy very different roles in their respective cities, but both have proven effective in carrying out their designated mandates. The stakeholder environment of Amsterdam, and the concerns of stakeholders, is very different to that faced by *MM* in Manchester, and determine how both organisations operate. The period covering this research witnessed a change of attitude towards tourism in Amsterdam with huge numbers of visitors triggering a backlash of sorts. *A&P* has responded to this, and in some ways had the prescience to foresee the situation, developing plans and initiatives to mitigate problems of congestion and other issues associated with mass tourism. The challenges are ongoing and further complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic, but as an organisation, *A&P* has also gained the respect, trust and confidence of its stakeholder/partners. *MM* operates under the umbrella of the Growth Company that takes responsibility for many of the issues faced by *A&P* in Amsterdam. This provides *MM* with the autonomy to act as a DMO purely tasked with driving audiences to the city, leaving some of the more complex stakeholder interactions to its parent organisation. Similarly, it has gained the confidence of those it serves and as seen in the next section has creatively engaged with stakeholders in furthering Manchester's aim of becoming a top 20 global city by 2035.

6.5.2 Synopsis

Both DMOs appear to meet the generally accepted criteria to be considered high performance organisations with *MM*'s objective of being considered an "exemplar" DMO a testament to this, but the issues they face, although different, are not uncommon and must resonate with DMOs in other locations. The study's findings illustrate the challenges encountered by DMOs in not simply meeting the expectations of partners, but in assuaging the concerns of others. This is not simply based on the varying degrees of influence exerted by stakeholders, but is grounded in identifying the pragmatic utility of individual partners that facilitate the DMO in pursuing its objectives, as demonstrated in Amsterdam. *A&P* and *MM* perform different functions, but both have clearly made choices when it comes to engaging with stakeholders, privileging some over others, a point of concern for Freeman (1984). In essence DMO behaviour is shown to be less than egalitarian in how it cultivates stakeholder relationships. This might appear as an obstacle in the effective leverage of the sports franchises, but could also prove an opportunity since the DMOs have demonstrated skill, and considerable acumen, in carefully navigating the stakeholder environment. Leverage of the sports franchises requires a broad consensus emerging that can be amplified through these privileged relationships, provided that the benefits of leverage initiatives trickle down to the less privileged partners.

Whilst the DMOs exhibit a large capacity for innovation their strategies in respect to the leverage of the sports franchises, although articulated in a confident manner, leave room for improvement. In footballing parlance the examples of leverage uncovered figure in the lower echelons of the championship (sub elite competition) rather than in

pantheon of the EPL and Champions league where these clubs routinely perform. Notwithstanding this, examples of initiatives do exist based on the leverage of these same sports franchises, and in other domains, that have met with some success. These are discussed in the following section (6.6) and suggest grounds for optimism, laying the foundations for the study's development of a best practice framework.

6.6 Leverage: Current state of play and best practice

The premise of this study initially considered leverage from what could be described as a “traditional” perspective, interpreted by Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) as utilising a particularly attractive tourism product to elicit interest in the location that provides a platform to highlight other attractions within the destination. As a process this appears eminently logical and relatively simple. The study's findings, however, reveal that the leverage of sports franchises for their tourism potential, as suggested by Sparvero and Chalip (2007), is not so straightforward. Chalip's (2017) theory on leverage describes how the process should work in broad terms, when applied to sporting events, but fails to include critical factors that render its application far more complex where commercial entities (professional sports teams) become the leverageable resource. This study builds on the leverage literature in addressing issues identified by the findings in relation to sports franchises that are also substantial business concerns. Whereas Chalip and his cohorts provide the basis for the “why” and “what” for the leverage of sports events, and suggest that sports franchises lend themselves to the concept of leverage, this thesis expands on their work in proposing how it may be achieved. In doing so, it also identifies the principal factors that currently hinder or facilitate the effective implementation of leverage strategies

harnessing the prestige of sports franchises for tourism purposes. Amsterdam and Manchester, via their respective DMOs, have proven to be adept practitioners when it comes to the concept of tourism leverage but less adept, or perhaps less interested, in extending that expertise to applying it where each city's respective sports franchises are concerned.

6.6.1 Leverage in the city

A&P has been so successful at exploiting the iconic imagery of waterways, art, culture, counter culture and tolerance associated with Amsterdam that it has become one of Europe's top city destinations. Indeed the research findings illustrate quite clearly that *A&P*'s branding of Amsterdam has worked with the imagery portrayed dovetailing, for the most part, with visitor sentiments of what sets Amsterdam apart. Visitor numbers have skyrocketed to the extent that they have become problematic, with the bulk of tourism activity occurring in just a few districts of the city, within the canal ring, a UNESCO world heritage site. Short of declaring a moratorium on tourism, the city has felt compelled to act in order to regulate its practice and moderate its most negative effects.

A&P's strategy in regards to leverage respects the central themes of the work of O'Brien and Chalip (2007b) who proposed that leverage should not be pursued uniquely for economic gain but needs to incorporate wider social and environmental benefits. The agency's Great Neighborhood campaign is an innovative strategy rolled out in 2016, seeking to alleviate the impact of tourism in certain areas to provide a more equitable spatial dispersion of visitors, whilst stimulating activity and

opportunities in 11 of the city's lesser known neighborhoods. It is a work in progress and it is considered a long term initiative in how to make the city more attractive for residents, tourists and business, whilst incorporating clear social and environmental targets. The project demands considerable involvement and consensus building across the wider stakeholder landscape. The Great Neighborhood campaign effectively leverages, not simply the attractions within these areas, but their authenticity representing a more genuine image of Amsterdam that feeds into the *zeitgeist* of the moment, much sought by travelers (Rickly-Boyd, 2012). Amsterdam clearly faces an uphill battle in encouraging tourists, whose average length of stay is 2.7 days, to venture beyond the canal ring, but such is the situation (prior to the onset of the Covid-19 emergency) that *A&P* is committed to the programme and displays patience in assessing its effectiveness. From a research perspective the campaign is perhaps one of a kind in allowing for longitudinal empirical testing of what could be referred to holistically as a comprehensive place marketing initiative underpinned by leverage, with the aforementioned characteristics of the 11 neighborhoods being the objects of such. It is consistent with how Anholt (2005) describes place branding in destinations being most effective when promoted through sub-brands rather than a single all encompassing narrative. Although frequently cited during the course of this work, it should nonetheless be noted that the Great Neighborhood campaign is an important endeavour that has provoked interest in other cities burdened with over-tourism. It was developed and being implemented as this research progressed and represents an unexpected approach to leverage by *A&P* that was deemed "innovative" by academics interviewed for the purposes of the study (Subject P and Q).

MM takes a view on tourism leverage that is more explicit, specifically selecting pull-factors to attract visitors to Manchester in the hope that their interest is piqued, inciting them to experience additional attractions during the course of their stay. The agency's activities in highlighting many of these are well documented with frequent references to the city's art and cultural credentials across all its official media, reflecting perhaps the pervasive influence of certain stakeholder groupings. The use of the city's music scene, and associated nightlife, is similarly used and cited as being an important factor influencing the decision to visit for a certain demographic, also supported by the findings of the study's visitor survey. Manchester's shopping opportunities are likewise exploited to a large extent in promotional campaigns and offer a glimpse of what might be achieved in other areas. Shopping as an activity does not enjoy universal appeal, as shown by the results of the aforementioned survey, but in tandem with other attributes, lends itself conveniently to the concept of leverage. All of these pull-factors are consistent with the image that the *MM* seeks to portray of the city as a "vibrant, happening" destination and leave little doubt as to the DMO's expertise in operationalising leverage as a tool for tourism ends. Interestingly, they are also relatively generic activities that preclude specific associations with individual actors.

Manchester's history is populated by much evidence of leverage in practice, the standout example being the Commonwealth games of 2002, whose legacy is still felt in certain areas of the city today. It was also effectively exploited, despite being a sporting event, to highlight Manchester's aspirations as a centre of culture with the establishment of the Manchester International Festival. This is a significant example of best practice where sport was leveraged as a platform to launch an entirely and seemingly unrelated activity promoting art and culture. The games stand alongside the

Olympics of Barcelona, 1992 and Sydney, 2002, as among the most preeminent illustrations of best practice that host cities of similar events have found hard to emulate. Mega sporting events in particular are the subject of much research (Matheson, 2010), a great deal of which is restricted to legacies and urban renewal, ignoring other notable elements linked to leverage championed by scholars such as Chalip and advanced by this research. The foresight of Manchester's authorities in permitting MCFC to relocate to the stadium, built for the Commonwealth games, appears to be the result of a remarkable combination of legacy and leverage, the latter ensuring that MCFC would act as a catalyst in the continued development of this previously neglected district surrounding the stadium. The expertise of the DMO is apparent, both in Manchester and Amsterdam, but current evidence suggests that this *savoir faire* is not being exploited to its full potential, especially as far as the study's main protagonists, the football clubs, are concerned.

6.6.2 Champions of leverage? DMOs and sports franchises

This study has attempted to highlight the use of sport from a perspective that has largely avoided academic scrutiny, namely in investigating the potential of sports franchises involved in season long competition within a tourism context. The advantages to this are apparent in Manchester and Amsterdam where the necessary infrastructure is already in place. The teams occupy state-of-the-art stadia that include a wide range of leisure facilities. All are well served by public transport that precludes the levying of additional costs on the taxpayer (Allan et al., 2007). The findings demonstrate that the sports franchises elicit varying degrees of visitor interest and it is

only the prevailing conditions relating to the tourism experience in both cities that shape how they might be employed as objects of leverage.

Ajax is a hugely respected football club but is so loosely associated with Amsterdam, for the purposes of tourism, that few consider it worthy of use as a focus for leverage. Its own board members even appear indifferent despite the club enjoying a substantial international media profile and its location in one of Europe's most popular city break destinations. This inevitably adds a layer of difficulty, particularly when the object of leverage itself (Ajax) displays such an attitude, but it is not unique to Amsterdam, according to Subject Q (Sports Tourism Academic) who has witnessed a similar phenomenon in New Zealand concerning the country's renowned All Blacks rugby team. Surprisingly Ajax tends to ignore its potential in the tourism sphere that is partly explained by its own business environment. Despite being the primary tenant of the Johan Cruyff Arena it does not directly administer the stadium's museum and tour, in essence its sole point of contact with the tourism sector. Whilst benefiting financially the rewards are relatively minor when compared to its overall income and the stadium does not attract the levels of international visitors seen around the stadia of MUFC and MCFC in Manchester, yet the findings show it still elicits a noteworthy level of visitor interest (see table 5.4).

From the upper echelons of *A&P*, to hospitality and tourism operators in the city, Ajax is seen as "peripheral" given the pull of Amsterdam's other tourist attractions, although the evidence from the content analysis study involving the DMO's digital platforms clearly demonstrate that its tourism potential is neither promoted nor exploited. The

results of the visitor survey also indicate that Ajax plays a very limited role in how people view the city. The experts consulted concur in stating that Ajax does not possess the cachet of a club of the stature of MUFC that lends itself to leverage in the traditional sense. This lies at the core of what this study has uncovered, certainly in relation to Amsterdam and Ajax. The club could not be considered a pull factor in attracting visitors to Amsterdam but nonetheless constitutes a tourism attraction, as demonstrated by the findings, that provides a partial solution to *A&P* in mitigating challenges emanating from over-tourism in Amsterdam's main tourism district.

In the past the DMO has used Ajax sparingly in its promotional material and online platforms, but by means of its Great Neighborhood campaign has more recently placed Ajax, and the Johan Cruyff Arena, central to the plan for the *ZuidOst* district of the city where Ajax is located. The stadium, being the focal point of the area, plays a pivotal role in how *A&P* has demonstrated a quality for which Amsterdam is renowned; creativity. Promoting the neighborhood as a cultural melting pot with entertainment at its core marked by football, music venues and cinemas, *A&P* has, by its own admission (Subject C, DMO Executive)), looked at leverage in a radically different light. The district surrounding Ajax and its stadium is on the outskirts of the city and could be considered suburban, but it offers what Urry (2002) describes as an authentic, if different, experience of the city that is brash, modern and contemporary; diametrically opposite to the traditional images of canals and quaint architecture that are the hallmark of Amsterdam. The ambition is not simply to alleviate congestion caused by tourism within the canal ring, but to ultimately render the city more livable for its residents on a social, environmental and economic level, all the whilst providing its many visitors with more options. This is consistent with the leverage literature in

encouraging initiatives that transcend purely economic parameters resulting in social and other benefits to the host community. The management of the Ajax stadium tour and museum is optimistic that the plan will bear fruit, as is *A&P*, but also understands the strategic nature of the campaign. Whilst *A&P* may look at the Great Neighborhood campaign as offering a radical twist on the concept of leverage, the theories underpinning it are long established and supported by a whole host of scholars such as Kavaratzis and Ashworth (2007, 2008), Chalip (2006), Medway and Warnaby (2013), Sparvero and Chalip (2007), O'Brien and Chalip (2007). The most interesting aspect to what *A&P* has undertaken is in the actual implementation of the strategy, hitherto confined to the theoretical realm, that may serve as a future reference point for initiatives elsewhere. It also acts as a pioneer of sorts linking tourism leverage to a sports franchise involved in season long competition. One of the potential weaknesses to this approach, where *A&P* and Ajax are concerned, can be found in the relationship between both parties with the DMO being the principal instigator of change and Ajax occupying the role of latent stakeholder (Mitchell et al., 1997). There can be little doubt that a more constructive relationship, one that elevates Ajax to the status of a definitive stakeholder, would stimulate a more enthusiastic exchange and increase the chances for the initiative to succeed. However, in the meantime *A&P*'s use of pragmatic utility in cultivating this relationship appears to provide an appropriate foundation for future progress.

The study's findings clearly illustrate Manchester's football credentials. *MM* contends that it leverages the city's football clubs to the fullest extent possible. Indeed, there is evidence of leverage, yet the virtual space and platforms administered by the DMO suggest that football is just one of many facets to Manchester. Across its online

platforms *MM* appears mindful of potentially conflicting interests and depicts an image of Manchester that resonates locally, or to a British audience, rather than internationally. The visitor survey explicitly shows the manner by which geography plays a role in how people perceive the destination. It appears that the further the individual is geographically displaced from Manchester, the stronger the image of football becomes. Similar observations have been made by many of those interviewed during the research relating to experiences of foreign travel and the inferences people make once they understand that their collocutor hails from Manchester, or has links to the city. This has serious implications for *MM* in how it actively promotes the destination. The holistic approach taken domestically conveys an ambiguous message that fails to hone in on a tangible point of differentiation. The “Original Modern” brand, and promoting an image of Manchester that incorporates contemporary and classical culture alongside a vibrant nightlife, holds limited generic appeal and could quite feasibly be applied to other British cities, or indeed many of its European competitors as outlined in section 6.4. *MM* contends that football and shopping are the city’s principal points of attraction for the visitor, which is corroborated by the research and in that specific order, yet it fails to leverage the former to its full potential. In a curious way Manchester could be considered aspirational in how it wishes to be perceived and appears to adorn its industrial and working class heritage within an edifice of art and culture. This extends in some ways to *MM*’s attitude towards the use of football and its famous sports clubs, the effective leverage of which could enable the city to meet its target of becoming one of the great global city destinations by 2035. It would be incorrect to suggest that *MM* is deliberately condescending in how it views football, but its stakeholder structure and promotional campaigns speak to an organisation that is perplexed to some extent in how best to mine this rich and

relatively untapped resource. Their task is not made any easier by the clubs themselves who invariably eschew collaborating on projects even if under the auspices of a third party.

Despite the evident challenges, *MM* does make a point in providing examples of collaboration with the major football clubs of Manchester and how it has engaged with both on an equal footing in promoting the city to international audiences. The Manchester derby event staged in Beijing in 2016 is one such illustration, perhaps even of best practice, where the clubs temporarily joined forces in collaborating with *MM* for the benefit of the city and its wider stakeholder environment. It is considered to be one of the most visible examples of *MM* leveraging football for optimal effect, but could equally be described as a demonstration of what Laplume et al. (2008) label as “instrumental” stakeholder behaviour (p. 1159). The media interest generated by the Beijing event provided the clubs with a platform to showcase their brands in a very important market. It incorporated a vital commercial incentive for both organisations that is fundamental in stimulating the cooperation of participants in initiatives involving multiple stakeholders, according to Egels-Zanden and Sandberg (2010). Whilst *MM* argues that it makes liberal use of the football clubs in promoting Manchester this is one of the few concrete examples found where they are jointly involved, but it should also be noted that the setting practically demanded participation. The challenge for the DMO is in eliciting such cooperation in other settings, such as for the purposes of marketing campaigns or other promotional initiatives, yet *MM* frequently falls short in this regard if the results of the online study on leverage are to be considered (see sub-section 5.3). In Abu Dhabi, where MCFC’s owners are based, MCFC is leveraged by the DMO in promoting Manchester through

campaigns including Etihad Airways, the national carrier. Other examples of the DMO leveraging the clubs do not figure as prominently in the public eye and mostly involve both MUFC and MCFC requested to provide corporate hospitality at their stadia for important visitors and potential investors looking to do business in the region.

The DMOs in both cities clearly approach the topic of sports franchises and leverage quite differently. Whilst the current approach in Amsterdam may be more suitable, given the prevalent tourism climate in the city, *MM*'s strategy is underwhelming, particularly when considered in respect of the findings and the importance of football as an emblematic component of Manchester's organic visitor image. The study's role is not to apportion blame on any individual actor as to the success or lack thereof relating to current practice. The premise of the research is that the effective leverage of the sports franchise results in benefits across the DMO led stakeholder environment, which requires the commitment and understanding of numerous parties. The following section (6.6.3) considers these aspects and the willingness of the major stakeholders to cooperate for the purposes of tourism leverage but also concludes with a compelling example in favour of such.

6.6.3 Reluctantly engaged?

The researcher might question the respective DMO's appetite for the leverage of football and these famous clubs, but there can be little doubt that the most significant challenge to the effectiveness of these endeavours, and highlighted by the research findings, lies with the clubs themselves. This raises the specter of whether the sports franchises are earnest players when it comes to being subjects of leverage, even if the

outcomes bolster brand equity and their standing within the community. Such a determination also potentially confines the sports franchise, as is the case with Ajax, to the margins of the DMO's stakeholder environment that evidently may serve to hamper attempts at leverage. Whilst there may be an adversarial tone to realising initiatives in Manchester, home to two major clubs as opposed to Ajax standing alone in Amsterdam, this is not an intractable issue.

The clubs featured in this study, and indeed most major sports franchises elsewhere, constitute powerful commercial entities. Each protects its own interests and in doing so is often circumspect regarding initiatives that may be perceived as engendering risk to the brand. Bryson (2004) contends that understanding stakeholder risk is essential for cooperative efforts to succeed, however, the very different worlds inhabited by DMOs and these major football clubs, suggest that such understanding is not a given. In many respects the attitude of the sport franchise in relation to risk dictates its behaviour. This is supported by the findings. In Amsterdam, Ajax is willing to cooperate on a *quid pro quo* basis but has proven itself a sometimes difficult organisation to deal with, according to *A&P* and others. Issues pertaining to image rights and the use of symbols associated with the clubs cloud attempts at effectively co-opting these brands into genuine partners from a tourism perspective. This is a fundamental discovery and has repercussions for DMOs everywhere looking to exploit the tourism potential represented by professional sports franchises. In an era where visual imagery propagated over social media plays an increasingly important role, the inability of DMO to incorporate even the most basic symbol, the club crest, into marketing literature currently limits opportunities for leverage.

Ajax's behaviour displays characteristics associated with social exchange theory in seeking financial rewards from cooperation with *A&P* or other parties, as suggested by Ward & Berno (2011). Manchester's sports franchises are surprisingly less focused on this, but exhibit a mutual distrust that stymies cooperation and marketing efforts that could greatly benefit the city at large. Jetter and Chen (2012) argue that such mistrust and a fear of competition can undermine DMO attempts at cooperative marketing initiatives, and effective leverage of a destination's most valuable assets. This is exemplified in Manchester where an attempt by the DMO, in collaboration with the National Football Museum (based in Manchester), to develop a simple tourism product that included entry to all three museums (MUFC, MCFC and the National Football Museum), met with stiff resistance by the clubs and has yet to see the light of day. Manchester, in looking to leverage these entities for their tourism potential, is also faced with the classic stakeholder balancing act in that the sports franchises represent organisations whose resources and influence vastly surpass those of the DMO, yet they play a hugely important role in how the destination is imagined. Mitchell et al. (1997) define this as possessing power that allows these organisations to influence or impose their views on the focal organisation and beyond. *MM* is naturally concerned with appearing neutral in relation to both franchises and in exploiting their brand recognition is careful not to emphasise one to the detriment of the other, despite this study's findings highlighting the more salient role of MUFC in shaping visitor perceptions.

In light of such a challenging environment, *MM*'s handling of its interactions and leverage of the football clubs may well be the most politically prudent strategy to follow, although this researcher would argue that this approach fails to adequately

leverage a resource with huge potential in a city where conditions are practically serendipitous. Medway and Warnaby (2013) contend that only the concerted efforts of local stakeholders, under the guidance of the DMO, can enable a location to develop an effective destination image. Wang and Krakover (2008) further advocate that local champions and deeply committed partners are crucial in providing the necessary momentum to marketing initiatives. Manchester has one such potential champion in its National Football Museum that could act as a unifying force in highlighting the city's shared football heritage. The researcher further suggests that football, rather than the individual sports franchises themselves, should be the focus of leverage, at least in a city such as Manchester home to a large number of professional sports clubs. This would also be consistent with *MM*'s current strategy in exploiting the generic over the specific and, in the case of football, might constitute an even stronger asset in the DMO's arsenal. Ajax, in contrast to its Manchester counterparts, enjoys a unique position in Amsterdam as the city's only major sports franchise yet appears curiously non-committal, and certainly has proven less than a pro-active partner with *A&P* for tourism leverage in the Dutch capital. In both locations, and indeed if applied to the wider arena, the researcher contends that sports franchises should be suitably educated in their duty and responsibility to society as community assets and demonstrate an ability to engage as earnest actors in any leverage initiatives that may involve them.

Despite the many challenges highlighted during the course of this research, the case for the leverage of sport as represented by the football clubs at the heart of this study, has been clearly justified. The research objectives were tackled from two perspectives with the initial three (sections 6.1, 6.2, 6.3) considering the position of the sports franchises within a tourism context. Sections 6.4, 6.5 and 6.6 subsequently portray the

DMOs as being able partners and indeed capable progenitors of initiatives surrounding leverage. They are well respected and have demonstrated skill and diplomacy in managing complex stakeholder relationships that have yielded benefits to their host cities. They have also proven to be innovative organisations with considerable experience in the field of tourism leverage, yet circumstances have conspired to render this task more difficult where the sports franchises are concerned, not least of which are the levels of commitment of the sports franchises themselves. However, the challenges faced are not insurmountable and the potential gains warrant the effort.

There are many compelling reasons to consider these assets for tourism ends, but perhaps the study's early content analysis examination into the leverage of sports franchises in the virtual space offers the most startling, yet simple, justification for doing so. In 2016 the online popularity of the sport franchises dwarfed that of the DMOs across all the platforms examined (see figure 5.12). Fast forward to 2021 and table 6.2 makes for an even more convincing argument in favour of leveraging the sports franchises featured in this study, and indeed others beyond it that share a similar profile. The exponential increase in the online reach of these football clubs, when compared to the DMOs, is offered as a dramatic reminder to the DMOs of the potential these clubs represent and is included here as a modest example of what might be achieved in a wider context.

Table 6.2

Social Media Popularity Index: DMO v Football Club 2021

	Amsterdam DMO	Ajax	Manchester DMO	MCFC	MUFC
FaceBook Likes	907000	3300000	127000	40000000	73200000
Twitter Followers	390000	1400000	16500	9600000	25300000
Instagram Followers	250000	5600000	66200	23500000	40200000
Youtube Subscribers	4900	767000	1100	3190000	4000000

Logic suggests that collaborating with the sports franchises for tourism purposes would clearly allow the DMO broader access to markets, permitting it not only to influence the visitor experience, as might be the case in Amsterdam, but to promote other lesser known attributes of a location such as in Manchester, by means of leveraging the global notoriety of the sports franchise. Table 6.2 also highlights a notable increase in the importance of visually oriented social media platforms such as Instagram being exploited by the football clubs, and indeed the DMOs. This represents an additional yet interesting challenge for the DMO since many of the issues hindering the effective leverage of the sports franchises are linked to the use of official imagery, as alluded to earlier in this section.

6.6.4 Synopsis

The study's main protagonists, the sports franchises and the respective DMOs, inhabit different realities that on first glance appear irreconcilable, yet in considering how these parties operate an increasingly convincing case is made in favour of exploiting the sports franchises as leveragable assets. All three football clubs, and by extension others in comparable circumstances, have established well frequented tourist oriented

facilities at their stadia. They have stood the test of time and have become part of the social fabric in their respective locations, with the clubs in Manchester also yielding considerable influence in how visitors view that city. They offer a combination of elements that the “exemplar” DMOs featured in this study would be remiss in ignoring, yet despite some evidence for leverage this researcher contends that the sports franchises still constitute a largely untapped resource.

The findings depict a highly convoluted environment, replete with commercial and legal ramifications related to the business models of sports franchises that were not specifically addressed by the leverage literature in assessing their suitability as objects of tourism leverage. Intellectual property rights in particular, linked to the use of imagery associated with the clubs, have proven a major hindrance to effective leverage. This partially accounts for the way in which DMOs engage with the football clubs, who have proven themselves to be less than pro-active partners. A major contribution of this study is in bridging this gap and adding to the firm foundations of the leverage literature. The research considers these aspects and others in proposing a framework of best practice for the leverage of sports franchises in a tourism context that the researcher advances as generalisable to other milieus possessing similar characteristics.

6.7 Framework for sports franchise leverage

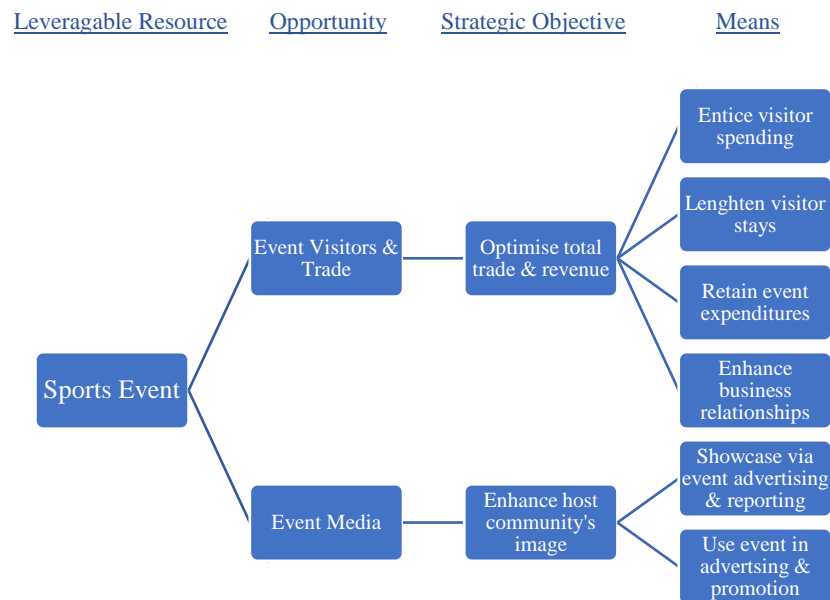
Whilst influenced by a number of studies, notably the work of Allan et al. (2007) on the economic impact of the “Old Firm” in Glasgow and the study undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University (2013) on the value of football to Greater Manchester,

this research sought its primary inspiration in the works of Laurence Chalip and those who have collaborated with him in the field of tourism leverage related to sport. A principal objective of this study was to produce a model or framework of best practice, linked to the leverage of globally renowned sports franchises for their tourism potential in destinations. Selecting the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester as test subjects the framework is presented in figure 21 and explained thereafter.

Chalip (2004) developed a general model for sport event leverage that was subsequently amended in O'Brien & Chalip (2007b). It represents a starting point for the development of this study's framework leveraging the use of sport franchises, but differs in scope. It depicts the concerns of an era where researchers were encouraged to move from mega-event "legacies", to leverage of other sporting events (Chalip, 2017), focusing on outcomes that transcended the habitual economic parameters. Chalip's model is reproduced in figure 6.5 as a process driven archetype defined by a focus on short term economic outcomes. Significantly, it also broke new ground in leveraging sporting events for beneficial social outcomes. However, his work retains a narrow frame of reference where the target audience consists of visitors specifically attracted to the sporting event, with the beneficiaries being those serving them. The generic nature of the model is such that it retains its relevance today where infrequent or one off sporting events provide DMOs with opportunities for leverage. Nonetheless it would require significant adaptations were it to be scaled up to meet the challenges encountered in the leverage of sports franchises involved in season long competitions. It also assumes explicit cooperation on the part of the leverageable resource and does not consider the wider stakeholder environment, issues that proved crucially important in developing the framework for sports franchise leverage.

Figure 6.5

Chalip's (2004) Model for Sport Event Leverage



Note: Adapted from Chalip, L. (2004). Beyond impact: A general model for host community event leverage. In B.W. Ritchie and D. Adair (Eds.), *Sport tourism: Interrelationships, impacts and issues*. Channel view.

The development of the framework for sports franchise leverage (figure 6.6) respects the basic tenets of Chalip's (2004) model yet also supports leverage initiatives resulting in triple bottom line benefits i.e. social, environmental and economic, as suggested in O'Brien and Chalip (2007b). It shares common ground with the aforementioned model (figure 6.5) in adopting its process flow as a fundamental starting point, whereby sport is portrayed as a leverageable resource that may be employed in achieving certain strategic objectives. In a significant departure, however, it extends Chalip's (2004) work into the arena of professional sports franchises rather than the limited parameters surrounding a simple sporting event. This is an important

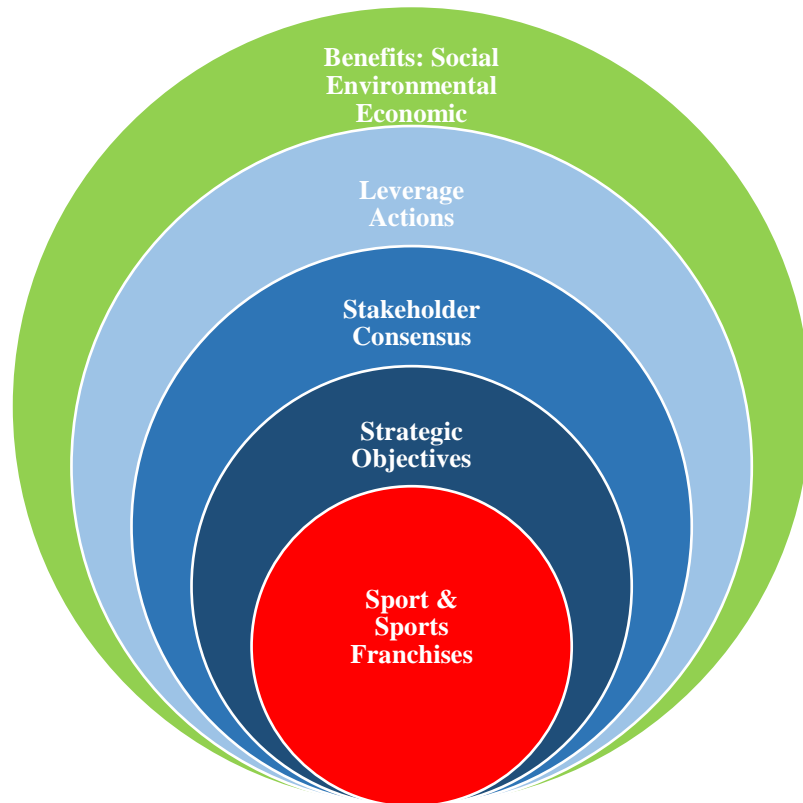
addendum to sports tourism leverage that is specifically advocated by Sparvero and Chalip (2007) and builds on the literature in addressing the distinct challenges associated with the leverage of what are essentially commercial brands. It constitutes a first of its kind that offers guidelines to DMO and policy makers in destinations where opportunities may exist. The framework draws on the study's findings that, whilst location specific, are not atypical and should resonate with DMOs in other cities or regions. Whereas the work of Chalip set out the rationale behind the leverage of sport for tourism ends, this research describes how that may be implemented with internationally recognised football clubs serving as the vehicles of choice. The researcher posits that the framework is generalisable in locations sharing similar characteristics but cautions, in reflecting on the words of Kirkup and Major (2006), that the creation of a model whose reliability is beyond question is both practically and logistically impossible.

Figure 6.6 illustrates the steps to be taken in the process for the effective leverage of sports franchises. The framework is principally derived from the discoveries made during the course of the study in Amsterdam and Manchester, two cities whose experience of tourism is vastly different, and an understanding of the literature covered in chapter two. The researcher also contends that it supports the principles underpinning Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory, whilst also adding to the understanding of such and the stakeholder saliency model of Mitchell et al. (1997) in unearthing the concept of pragmatic utility.

Figure 6.6

Framework For Sports Franchise Leverage

DMO operational environment



- (i) **Sports franchise/sport (leverageable resource):** The framework should be viewed through the prism of the DMO and its operational environment. The leverageable resource is thus the sports franchise, the actual sport itself or both elements, which are complementary. In certain cases the vehicle for leverage might simply be a tourism product associated with the sports franchise such as its museum and stadium tour. Amsterdam and Manchester provide contrasting examples based on the relative importance of the sports franchise in how each city is imagined by visitors and serve

as a benchmark for other comparable locations. The circumstances prevalent in both destinations are present to a large degree in many other cities. Whilst this study focuses on football franchises, other sports, such as rugby, American football, baseball, basketball and ice hockey, might equally be considered for their leverage potential since they are also characterised by the prominence of individual sports franchises.

It is incumbent upon the DMO to possess a clear understanding of stakeholder typology enabling it to clearly pinpoint the most relevant characteristics of the sports franchise partner. In Manchester, both MUFC and MCFC play strong roles in how the city is perceived and are very conscious of such. They occupy positions of definitive stakeholders, as described by Mitchell et al. (1997), and possess attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. Ajax is a latent stakeholder, according to the aforementioned researchers, and the use of this asset for purposes of leverage may ultimately be based on exchanges that, from the DMO perspective, are underscored by the concept of pragmatic utility. The DMO decides on whether it is more expedient to consider the sport, in this case football, as the object of leverage or the individual franchise although this may also be determined by the behaviour of the franchise itself. In a destination typified by two major franchises (Manchester), the sport itself should be considered the object of leverage although cooperation between franchises is still to be encouraged (see section iii). In Manchester, another stakeholder, the National Football Museum, additionally facilitates this holistic approach.

- (ii) **Strategic objectives:** DMOs invariably have long term strategic objectives in place for their localities and the leverage of the sport and/or franchises is therefore considered in this light. In Manchester these include increased visitation to the city and a wider share of benefits across society. Likewise in Amsterdam, a wider share of benefits constitute a strategic objective but as a city impacted by over tourism and congestion, an important objective is a more equitable dispersal of visitors throughout the city to alleviate congestion, reflected in an enhanced visitor experience and an improved quality of life for residents. Obviously if emulated in other locations the strategic objectives may differ, however those in the cities highlighted are not atypical. Others in a non-exhaustive list of possibilities might include the development of tourism infrastructure, meeting sustainability goals, creating employment opportunities or extending the length of visitor stays. Such variety speaks to the flexibility of the framework. The strategic objectives determine the subsequent courses of action to follow that are equally dependent on the prevalent stakeholder environment. Evidently incorporating the leverage of sports franchises within broader destination wide objectives requires careful planning and a pragmatic mindset that stimulates stakeholder consensus.
- (iii) **Stakeholder consensus:** The DMO finds itself at the nexus of a large network of stakeholders and uses its expertise and experience to foster consensus within its environment (Zach, 2012), without which the leverage initiative is likely to fail. In doing so it is cognisant of how each stakeholder perceives risk. Consensus is cultivated through transparency and effective

communication, particularly in how the leverage of sport and the sports franchises is portrayed with an emphasis on outcomes that resonate beyond the scope of the sports franchises themselves. Where the complexity of the stakeholder landscape gives rise to the emergence of privileged relationships these should be managed to broker a broader consensus.

In stimulating consensus with and amongst the sports franchises, the DMO appeals directly to the civic pride of these organisations in acting as ambassadors for their host cities, but also instigates an exchange where they feel duty bound to place themselves in the service of the communities that enable them to prosper. This also includes explicitly highlighting the many benefits to the sports franchises. These are commercial enterprises that clearly have a lot to gain financially from increased visitor numbers to their facilities and heightened awareness of the brand with, for example, the added cachet that tourists are prone to spending more on goods and services such as club merchandise than locals (Abosag et al., 2010).

The DMO should also seek to negotiate an arrangement where symbols and other copyrighted imagery, clearly identifying the sports franchises, can be exploited for mutual benefit since effective leverage assumes an unambiguous association between the destination and the sports brand. This is crucial to the endeavour since the sports franchise is also duty bound to protect its brand and only in successfully navigating the complex legal and business minefield surrounding these entities can leverage be fully

optimised. In locations such as Manchester, where sport is the dominant narrative, a specialised unit should be created within the DMO to cultivate these relationships with an eye towards leverage as suggested by Poudet et al. (2018) and practiced successfully elsewhere.

- (iv) **Leverage actions:** Leverage actions necessitate strategies that are similarly subject to consensus building and involve cooperative marketing campaigns or other promotional activities based on having carefully identified target markets. The study's football tourist typology (table 2.1) might aid in identifying shared market characteristics and thus facilitate in the development of suitable initiatives. The research findings also highlight some potential examples. Manchester is more closely associated with football in foreign markets than with any other element. It would therefore be logical to target these foreign markets leveraging this aspect of the city for maximum gains. In Amsterdam, Ajax, despite having a relatively low tourism profile, is deemed attractive to visitors interested in sports heritage and of a particular gender, males. Specific campaigns or activities could be developed to leverage these aspects targeting such markets. The possibilities for leverage are only limited by the imagination of the DMO provided the requisite cooperation is forthcoming from the sports franchise (as provided for in step iii). Actions should also be geared towards the host community in building support for leverage initiatives.

Further examples are included in the final chapter's recommendations section but leverage actions might include some of the following:

- Online marketing campaigns that incorporate social, environmental or economic objectives
- promotional events involving the clubs engaged in pre-season tours abroad
- exploiting the opportunities for stadium billboard advertising in real time during televised games
- development of jointly branded merchandise with the sports franchises
- the use of players, based on national origin or language, in appealing as ambassadors to specific target markets but also in promoting diversity and inclusivity
- matchday hospitality for preferred partners
- actions aimed at lengthening visitor stay and increasing spending, mitigating effects of seasonality
- creating awareness of the destination's unique attributes that not only act as tourism attractors but invoke civic pride
- efforts aimed at attracting inward investment and companies to the location
- showcasing the locations as international student cities
- initiatives aimed at enhancing the image of the host community

- promoting specific events that also demonstrate the benefits of sports franchise leverage to the broader stakeholder community

(v) **Benefits/outcomes:** Finally, effective leverage initiatives based around sport and sports franchises should deliver outcomes that are designed, as per the suggestions of Chalip (2004), with social, environmental and economic concerns in mind. In Amsterdam these benefits are clearly demonstrated by *A&P*'s Great Neighborhood campaign, where alleviating congestion in the city centre results in a cleaner environment, more social cohesion and economic stimulus for the outlying districts that form part of the programme. Similarly, in Manchester, the effective leverage of sport and the franchises would stimulate an increase in visitor numbers that allows other attractions to thrive, expands business opportunities, promotes the creation of jobs and provides taxes for the city, allowing it to invest in environmental programmes. It follows that positive outcomes are communicated to the populace thus establishing a virtuous circle permitting the implementation of further initiatives. It is also imperative to appeal to the commercial interests of the clubs at the core of these initiatives since the findings clearly suggest that the overarching incentive for their cooperation is ultimately rooted in the potential for economic gains. The added bonus for them is that this simultaneously enhances their standing in the community from the perspective of corporate social responsibility.

Finally, the basis for using the sports franchises engaged in season long competition speak to these initiatives being sustainable over the long term and providing benefits across the stakeholder environment on an ongoing basis.

This study responds to the call within the leverage literature for the inclusion of sports franchises as agents for tourism leverage. Sparvero and Chalip (2007) requested that future researchers develop strategies to operationalise the leverage of these bodies. They also encouraged research in identifying factors that facilitate or inhibit the use of sports franchises for such endeavours. The framework as outlined and explained in figure 6.6 addresses these important issues.

The framework for sports franchise leverage does not constitute a linear process and, as demonstrated by this multiple case study, is complex and often problematic. However it provides options, based on the strategic goals of the DMO, as to how leverage unfolds. The research clearly illustrates that Amsterdam's understanding of leverage is quite different to that of Manchester and thus underscores the adaptability of the framework. It presents a format that could be replicated in locations where conditions are favorable, or form the basis for the development of strategies in destinations that have yet to conceptualise the use of sport and sports franchises for tourism purposes. The researcher would also argue that the framework might be applied beyond the realm of sport, with the leveragable asset being interchangeable with other elements that exhibit potential for tourism leverage. This greatly expands the possibilities for testing it across a wide variety of settings.

If Pike (2004) argues that the main task of the DMO is to enhance a destination's competitiveness, the framework proposed here facilitates the DMO in this undertaking. It further complements the work of Chalip (2004) in elevating the role of sports franchises, represented by storied European football clubs, as catalysts for tourism who, notwithstanding their media enhanced stature, have been consigned to the margins of tourism enquiry and have gone largely unnoticed by DMOs, despite evidence of their tourism potential. The findings also indicate that there is little to justify DMO concern in engaging these entities for tourism ends and that they can become stable partners in a process resulting in sustainable benefits across the wider stakeholder landscape.

6.8 Summary

The title of this thesis, *Sports franchises as catalysts for tourism in an urban setting*, is based on the principles of leverage and the opportunity afforded to destinations, home to world recognised sports franchises, to exploit these assets for their tourism potential. The objective of the study was to investigate whether the travelling public's awareness of such iconic sporting brands could elicit interest in the destination and serve as a platform in creating awareness and visitation of a location's other tourism products. This might result in increased visitor numbers, or meet other strategic goals that provide wider benefits across the stakeholder landscape. Extensive review of the literature reveals that essentially no research of a similar magnitude has been undertaken where sports franchises involved in season long competitions are the focus of studies linked to tourism and leverage. In selecting the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester, within a multiple case study design, the research covers extensive ground

and embodies elements of what Stake (2005) describes as intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. Intrinsic in providing location specific information unique to each case, instrumental in illuminating concerns beyond the focus of the case itself and collective in gaining wider understanding of issues that may be generalisable in comparable milieus.

All research objectives were thoroughly explored and the data gathered provide answers that make a categorical case for DMOs to not only recognise the leverage potential of sport and sports franchises for tourism ends, but to develop appropriate strategies around such. Sports franchises, in this case football clubs, have emerged as tourism products in a world transformed by technology that has provided a platform for these entities to increase exponentially in popularity over time due to the global media attention they attract. Despite reticence in some quarters that question the durability of these organisations in sustaining their appeal, it should be noted that the franchises featured in the study are subject of long illustrious histories that have eased their entry into the domain of tourism. The findings corroborate Parry's (2012) contention that contemporary on-field success is not a prerequisite in maintaining the appeal of football clubs since this is rooted in the almost liminal nature of sites associated with the folklore of the sport. The study's "football tourist typology" (table 6.1) further suggests that the sport's tourism appeal is robust and vast, even attracting those who display little interest in the sporting aspect itself and are wont to visit for other reasons. The football tourist typology should serve as a useful tool for DMOs and other policy makers faced with similar conditions to those described in this research, particularly in identifying characteristics associated with certain target markets that can form the basis for the development of appropriate strategies.

As the world's most popular game, football has spawned clubs that elicit interest and loyalty beyond the borders of their own countries or even continents. MUFC, MCFC were founded in the 19th century with Ajax established in 1900. All three have met the tourist demand in some manner, with the development of stadium museums and tours being the most visible example where history and the past are essentially commodified whilst additional heritage is built on an ongoing basis. The appeal of each club varies, with the teams in Manchester occupying a more prominent position in how that city is viewed by visitors when compared to Amsterdam.

The study investigated two major DMOs, *A&P* and *MM*, both of whom are well respected and have gained the trust of stakeholders on whose behalf they serve. Indeed, within their respective operational environments they adhere to many of the principles advocated by Freeman's (1984) in his treatise on stakeholder theory. They operate under quite different mandates, although the strategic objectives of both seek the best possible outcomes for their cities, the goal of DMOs everywhere. Examples abound as to their propensity for innovation, their level of expertise, flexibility and dedication to strategic objectives, yet when it comes to this study's main premise based on the leverage of sports franchises, neither *A&P* or *MM* has fully realised its potential in this regard. Whilst the approach of *A&P* in relation to Ajax by means of the Great Neighborhood campaign is novel, the initiative is subsumed in a broader strategy involving so many actors that precludes a large focus on Ajax. However, delving into the relationship and interactions between *A&P* and Ajax permitted the researcher to proffer an addendum to understanding Freeman's (1984) work and the stakeholder saliency framework of Mitchell et al. (1997), in the form of pragmatic utility, a construct that appears to facilitate Amsterdam's DMO in implementing strategy.

The case for leverage of football and the sports franchises is far more compelling in Manchester, as is clearly evidenced by the research. Manchester has become synonymous with football, to the extent that it should constitute the lynchpin of DMO marketing strategies, at least where overseas markets are concerned. Whilst *MM* insists that it leverages football to the fullest, this is not borne out by the study's findings. *MM* is exceedingly cautious in becoming over reliant on the city's association with the sport and its major clubs. This is perhaps down to stakeholder pressure where interests representing art and culture appear to exert particularly strong influence or, as is the contention of this researcher, due to the adversarial nature of the relationship between MUFC and MCFC, their reluctance to cooperate on joint initiatives and in their protection of brand equity. These aspects prevent the DMO in fully engaging with the clubs on initiatives that could yield positive outcomes for the city. They also speak to a degree of confusion, or at worst complacency in a strategy that appears to be successful if looked at purely in terms of increasing visitor numbers (table 3.3), but one which fails to grasp the importance of football to Manchester and its image from the visitor perspective (see figure 5.8 and tables 5.6, 5.7). For all its industry and creativity *MM* appears to struggle in recognising the outstanding opportunities represented by the city's two major football clubs. The online reach of MUFC and MCFC alone (table 6.2) should demand the agency's attention in how to best harness these assets for optimal gains, irrespective of the effort required, since the rewards of doing so are warranted if the city is to reach its strategic goals for 2035, when it hopes to be considered as one of the top 20 global cities.

The research acknowledges that both cities make some effort to leverage sport and their respective sports franchises for tourism ends. The current strategy of Amsterdam

may be adequate, but in Manchester the approach is disappointing given the location's attributes and prevailing conditions that appear very favorable. The study's framework for sports franchise leverage proffers options derived from the experiences in both cities and the literature that suggest a way forward for Amsterdam and Manchester whilst acting as a template for other locations. It is a first of its kind archetype involving renowned European football clubs whose reach transcend national borders that hints at their vast tourism potential. Whereas the literature provided the rationale for the leverage of sport for tourism ends, including Chalip's (2004) model, the framework for sports franchise leverage (figure 6.6) builds on this in illustrating a clear route to follow in how to implement leverage in a strategically sustainable manner where the "sporting event" is exchanged for sports franchises engaged in season long competition. The framework additionally offers a solution to the most intractable obstacle to the effective leverage of these entities. This relates to the business model of the sports franchise that aggressively shields exploitation of the brand by outside parties and thus potentially limits the DMO in co-opting it for tourism leverage. It also exposes the challenges involved when seeking to leverage multiple rival sports franchises in a city for tourism purposes (Manchester), and how even a relatively peripherally associated sports franchise can be leveraged for tourism ends (Amsterdam). These are areas that have largely avoided scrutiny and as such could be considered fertile ground for the research community. Leverage, cooperative marketing and stakeholder theory are seen as inextricably linked and indeed prove complementary within the context of this work.

With Amsterdam and Manchester forming the backdrop for this multiple case study, this thesis unequivocally argues that leveraging sports franchises in the service of

tourism offers cities, home to such organisations, a significant competitive advantage. It also contends that leverage as a construct, binding sport to tourism, is eminently adaptable but heavily influenced by the prevalent stakeholder landscape in destinations with the DMO at its nexus. It urges these same organisations (DMOs), and other policy makers, to carefully consider adopting the framework of sports franchise leverage in locations where conditions are favourable or customizing its structure to situations where other leverageable characteristics are identified.

Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Contributions

7.0 Introduction

This final chapter begins with an overview of the research including its key findings. It is followed by the manner in which the research contributes to theory, particularly in respect of tourism leverage, destination marketing, sports tourism and understanding the stakeholder environment in tourism destinations. A synopsis of practical implications is then provided outlining options and recommendations for the cities covered by the study and their applicability in a broader context. The work's limitations are subsequently addressed, followed by implications for further research and concluding remarks.

7.1 Overview of study and key findings

The study investigated the possibilities for tourism leverage afforded by renowned sports franchises in the cities of Amsterdam and Manchester with aspirations for applicability in a wider context. It builds on the work of Chalip (2004, 2006, 2017) and other scholars who collaborated with him in exploring the leverage of sport for tourism purposes (Chalip & Leyns, 2002; O'Brien & Chalip, 2007; Sparvero & Chalip, 2007; Beesley & Chalip, 2011). It was conducted with objectivity in mind but through the lens of the respective DMOs in both locations. Given the complexity of the issues explored a multiple case study design was adopted that respected the tenets of Yin's (2009) approach whereby each case was conducted separately following the same protocols before findings were compared (chapters five and six). Pragmatism, as espoused by Denscombe (2008) and Feilzer (2010), afforded the researcher further

options that led to the use of a mixed methods paradigm in providing a comprehensive basis for the gathering of data and their subsequent analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The data covered a wide swath of territory, both literally and metaphorically. This included large amounts of documentary evidence, multiple strategic conversations with expert informants, an online study into leverage in the virtual space and a visitor intercept survey in the two cities that was preceded by an international pilot study. The findings initially highlighted the milieu of the sports franchises from a tourism perspective before considering the role of the DMO, its operational landscape and stakeholder environment. In considering these two dimensions the study's premise, focusing on leverage, was scrutinised on its merits, ultimately resulting in the development of a framework for sports franchise leverage (figure 6.6). In providing a blueprint to follow, based on this framework, the study unequivocally encourages DMOs and other policy makers to consider the leverage of sports franchises for tourism purposes in destinations where the conditions are favourable.

The following two sections, 7.1.2 and 7.1.3, provide an overview of the findings based on the research objectives linked to the sports franchises and DMOs before leading into the framework for sports franchise leverage in section 7.1.4.

7.1.1 A match made in heaven? The sports franchise and tourism

This section considers the research objectives related to the sports franchises listed in table 7.1.

Table 7.1

Research Objectives Related to Sports Franchises

-
1. An examination of the reasons behind the emergence of sports franchises as tourism products
 2. Research into the long-term viability of sports franchises sustaining tourism appeal
 3. Identifying the impact of the sports franchise on the perception of place and destination image
-

The initial research objective looked at assessing the tourism context of the principal sports franchises of Amsterdam and Manchester; specifically how they evolved from purely community based sporting organisations into entities with worldwide appeal. This appeal has enabled them to diversify their product base to include tourism attractions such as museums and stadium tours. The findings show that the organisations featured in this study enjoy worldwide recognition due to their storied pasts, the position of football as the world's most popular game and the enhanced mediatisation of the sport over the past 30 years. The interest generated is most evident in Manchester where the clubs and football act as significant pull factors in eliciting visitation to that city. Given Amsterdam's tourism reputation the profile of Ajax is less evident and the club exists as a niche tourism product in the city, catering to sports tourists and those interested in sports heritage. In considering the diverse nature of people attracted to football, and the activities surrounding it, the research also stimulated the development of a typology of the modern day football tourist (table 6.1). Building on the sports fans typology of Hunt et al. (1999), the taxonomy relating to football tourists should prove valuable to sports franchises and DMOs with target audiences in mind, facilitating leverage based marketing initiatives.

The second research objective assessed whether the sports franchises themselves make for long term stable partners in tourism endeavours, an essential characteristic if they are to be employed in initiatives founded on leverage. Despite some concerns related to the supposed whimsical nature of sport, the evidence gathered clearly points to the type of sports franchises depicted in this study as exhibiting stable characteristics that speak to their enduring viability as tourism partners. The tourism appeal of these organisations is not predicated on contemporary ongoing sporting success, as suggested by Parry (2012), and the management of the franchises understand that this appeal is multi-dimensional, as illustrated by the study's typology of the football tourist (table 6.1). In essence these football clubs, and by extension others with similar profiles, operate in a sporting and business environment where the juxtaposition of popular culture and financial investment have made them essentially too big to fail, irrespective of on-field performance. This is a point that was self-evident to experts involved in sports tourism, but one that nonetheless required affirmation for DMOs where the successful implementation of strategic endeavours is dependent on stable stakeholder partnerships. It also partially explains the current unease, as evidenced by the study's findings, in fully engaging with these entities (sports franchises) in developing comprehensive strategies based on leverage.

The final research objective specifically linked to the sports franchise explored the role it plays in destination image, or how closely (or loosely) it is associated with its host city from the perspective of the traveling public. Ajax, MCFC and MUFC demonstrate how sports franchises shape destination image across a wide spectrum, ranging from being a barely perceptible factor to playing a dominant role. The findings indicate the importance of football generally in how the city of Manchester is imagined by visitors,

to the extent that it constitutes the destination's single most distinctive characteristic. This in itself makes a compelling case for the leverage of these sporting assets for tourism ends, with the sport and its clubs being considered practically synonymous with that location. In Amsterdam the situation is far more nuanced with Ajax barely registering as an important element in destination image that in large part is down to the city's many other iconic visitor attractions. It is also linked to the club's appellation, Ajax, which fails to note its Amsterdam origins, unlike its Manchester counterparts. These differences are important predictors as to how sports franchise leverage unfolds as demonstrated by the research findings in Amsterdam and Manchester with implications for destinations elsewhere.

7.1.2 In league? The DMO, stakeholders and leverage

This section now considers the research objectives related to the DMO, its partners and leverage as outlined in table 7.2.

Table 7.2

Research Objectives Related to DMO

-
4. An examination of the relationship between Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) and the sports franchises in each city
 5. Insights on DMO interactions and engagement with stakeholders in its respective environment
 6. An investigation of tourism leverage initiatives in both locations
-

Harmonious stakeholder interaction is essential for the DMO in successfully carrying out its objectives (Jetter & Chen, 2012). The relationship between the DMO and the

sports franchises is of paramount importance where the leverage of the latter is concerned. The research findings in this regard are curious in that on first glance the relationships appear cordial and business like, even in Amsterdam where Ajax exists on the margins of tourism interest. In Manchester, *MM* describes its relationship with both the city's major sports franchises in positive terms, yet further scrutiny uncovers two major concerns that directly impact on the DMO's ability to develop truly effective leverage strategy in relation to MCFC and MUFC. Firstly, these football clubs constitute huge commercial entities engaged with a myriad of business partners whose patronage accounts for a significant portion of their income. They are justifiably protective of their proprietary brands, to the extent that any attempt by others hinting at exploitation of the brand, or imagery associated with it, is met with deep suspicion and potential litigation. Secondly, MCFC and MUFC typically refuse to cooperate on initiatives that may be of mutual benefit and, by extension, of benefit to the wider stakeholder community in Manchester. The commercial nature of the clubs undermines Wang and Krakover's (2008, p. 126) arguments for "coopetition" and is more reflective of an environment described by Zach (2012) where cultivating cooperation between competing stakeholders can be challenging. The situation is replicated in Amsterdam, minus the presence of a rival franchise, and is mediated by the less salient role Ajax plays in the city. In contrast to the Manchester franchises who exhibit all the characteristics of definitive stakeholders, it is interesting to note that Ajax's peripheral status does not necessarily negate its usefulness to *A&P* as a potential tourism partner. In exploring the manner in which *A&P* engages with Ajax, the research proposes an addendum to the understanding of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory and the stakeholder saliency model of Mitchell et al. (1999) in the

form of pragmatic utility, a tool that may be of interest to DMOs elsewhere (figure 6.4).

The study ultimately addresses the issues related to the commercial nature of the franchises and their reluctance (in Manchester) to cooperate by means of the framework for sports franchise leverage (figure 6.6). This is predicated on the DMO appealing to the civic pride and duty of the sports clubs in acting as ambassadors, and partners in leverage, for the location they represent, and emphasising that it is a symbiotic relationship in that the location provides the essential infrastructure and other supports permitting the sports franchise to thrive.

The following research objective looked at the manner in which the DMO behaves and interacts with other parties in its environment. A basic tenet of the study acknowledges the hypothesis of Chalip (2004) that leverage can only be considered successful when a variety of benefits are felt across the wider stakeholder landscape. The findings depict two DMOs that are innovative and share similar objectives in wanting the best possible outcomes for their locations. Their respective mandates are distinctly different, with *A&P* assuming a more holistic place marketing role compared to *MM*, which is externally focused on driving audiences to the city. The research reveals complex stakeholder environments that would be familiar to DMOs in other locations. It also highlights the emergence of privileged relationships, based on stakeholder saliency, that can hinder or facilitate leverage efforts and might be a cause for concern when considered from the perspective of Freeman's (1984) treatise on stakeholder theory. However, in developing these relationships, each DMO exhibits a level of

expertise and acumen in navigating its stakeholder environment that leave little doubt as to either's ability in ultimately delivering on effective leverage strategies (were they to be sufficiently developed) where the sports franchises are concerned.

Examples of leverage are considered in the final research objective and only add to emphasise the experience and know-how of the DMO in already applying leverage strategies in its respective location. *A&P* has leveraged the iconic imagery associated with Amsterdam over the years that has been effective to the point of the city experiencing over-tourism, culminating in a backlash by the city's residents. In a demonstration of foresight, the agency's Great Neighborhood campaign seeks to deal with this issue in showcasing some of the city's lesser known districts, including the area surrounding the Johan Cruyff Arena, featuring Ajax as the principal actor within a culturally diverse entertainment hub. Leverage of Ajax in this case is underpinned by its pragmatic utility as a stakeholder where Ajax's role, befitting its status on the periphery of DMO interest, simply requires its tacit cooperation. *A&P* essentially recognises Ajax's usefulness as a stakeholder and thus leverages its brand recognition, resulting in benefits for both parties and others in the neighborhood where the stadium is located. It is not an ideal situation but lays the foundation for future progress. Similarly, in Manchester *MM* has demonstrated considerable skill in leveraging elements associated with the city for tourism purposes and purports to leverage the city's footballing heritage, as represented by its two popular sports franchises, to the maximum. Overall, this is not borne out by the findings although on occasion the DMO has shown glimpses of what it is capable of in exploiting Manchester's football credentials with the Beijing "Manchester derby" event of 2016 being a notable example.

In response to the call by Sparvero and Chalip (2007) to identify elements that facilitate or hinder the effective leverage of professional sports teams, the study comes to a surprising conclusion; the clubs themselves through their corporate structures and business models represent the most significant obstacle to the DMO developing leverage strategies involving them. The legal and commercial ramifications that characterise any dealings with the sports franchises distort DMO attempts at optimal leverage of these organisations for tourism gains. These factors were not fully examined by the literature in exploring the leverage of sport and despite the compelling case made for the leverage of the world renowned football clubs represented in this thesis, such issues continue to stymie progress, yet there is a way forward. In considering the discoveries made during the course of this research a solution and a pathway to follow is proposed by means of the development of the framework for sports franchise leverage (figure 6.6). The framework provides the DMO with a template that can be applied across different milieus, is adaptable, and considers the challenges inherent to the leverage of these commercial organisations.

7.1.3 Framework for sports franchise leverage

The study has taken a balanced view in looking at the leverage of sports franchises for their tourism potential. The major football clubs of Amsterdam and Manchester are instantly recognisable global sports brands that attract international attention, and act as *de facto* ambassadors for their cities to greater or lesser degrees. It is therefore somewhat surprising that they have elicited little curiosity of tourism scholars, despite evidence of their tourism potential in plain sight, if simply considering the facilities these clubs, and other sports franchises, have developed catering to fans and visitors.

It is equally surprising that DMOs have failed to fully harness this resource in the service of their locations and at best tackle the leverage of sports franchises in a halfhearted manner that conveniently meets the generic terms of the DMO mandate. The reasons behind this have been investigated and the behaviour of certain parties more clearly understood, yet the overarching conclusion reached, based on the evidence, is that there is an unequivocal case to be made for the leverage of sports franchises involved in season long competitions from a tourism perspective. The research, inspired by the works of Laurence Chalip and others who championed the cause of sports leverage, has taken these issues into consideration in developing a framework that is both holistic and flexible enough to be applied across different settings and one that forms the basis for the development of comparable models for tourism leverage. It is the culmination of a journey into leverage that has implications for the cities featured in this work and other destinations faced with similar circumstances.

The framework for sports franchise leverage builds on Chalip's (2004) model for sports event leverage and responds to the call by Sparvero and Chalip (2007) for the leverage of professional sports teams in locations where such is warranted. Whereas Chalip's work moved away from measuring economic impacts or the leveraging of mega sporting events such as the Olympic games, the framework resulting from this study extends into an area of interest that occupies a space where popular culture, sport, business and tourism merge. In considering globally recognised sports franchises that participate in highly mediatised season long competitions, the framework is a first of a kind archetype. Its components are derived from the evidence gathered from a wide variety of sources, but principally informed by findings related to the major sports

franchises of Amsterdam and Manchester that offer vastly contrasting backdrops pertaining to leverage. This again speaks to the flexibility of the framework and its applicability in locations where strategic objectives developed by the DMO may vary greatly, resulting in collective outcomes based on social, economic and environmental concerns.

7.1.4 Synopsis

The research findings enhance the understanding of sports franchise leverage for tourism ends. They provide an explanation for how globally renowned sports teams have expanded their interests beyond the purely sporting realm into other sectors of the economy such as tourism. The study's proposed typology of the modern football tourist (table 6.1) illustrates the diversity and durability of the growing appeal of these sports clubs, many of whom have become the visible manifestation of their host cities on the world stage, leading for calls by scholars for the leverage of these assets for wider societal benefits. The findings additionally address the challenges inherent to co-opting these entities for tourism leverage through the prism of the DMO and offers pragmatic utility as a tool in facilitating certain types of stakeholder interactions that assist in implementing leverage initiatives based on the proposed framework for sports franchise leverage. The framework constitutes an original archetype distinguished by its adaptability permitting its application across a wide variety of settings.

7.2 Theoretical contribution

The research contributes to the field of knowledge relating to tourism leverage, destination marketing, sports tourism and stakeholder theory, whilst demonstrating

that these areas overlap where the use of sports franchises in the domain of tourism is concerned. Significantly, it also adds to the literature on a subset of sports tourism, football tourism, in addressing the hitherto overlooked role of internationally renowned football clubs involved in season long competitions from a tourism perspective and lays the groundwork for further research.

7.2.1 Tourism leverage, sport and football tourism

Mega sports events have long been the subject of studies linked to legacy and impact (Matheson, 2010; Chalip, 2017). The literature review (chapter two) highlighted a change in focus towards the leverage of sporting events with studies such as those of Chalip (2006), O'Brien and Chalip (2007) or Beesley and Chalip (2011), being prominent amongst them. A number of other studies including Allan et al. (2007), Robert et al. (2016), examined the cases of football clubs in Glasgow and Swansea where the local team Swansea City had gained promotion to the EPL, but restricted themselves to measuring economic impacts. Whilst interesting these studies also signaled a conspicuous paucity of literature linking sports franchises to tourism or leverage and it is crucially in this area where this thesis makes a significant theoretical contribution.

In exploring the leverage of professional sports teams for tourism purposes, the study extends the work of Chalip and his colleagues on tourism leverage into a previously under scrutinised domain, and reveals leverage as an extremely malleable construct. The development of the framework for sports franchise leverage encapsulates and builds on the theoretical concepts proposed by Chalip (2004), whilst also providing

practical solutions and a process to follow for the effective leverage of these assets, who exhibit considerable tourism potential. In identifying sports franchises, or indeed the sport itself as a genuine leverageable resource, the framework addresses the concerns of Sparvero and Chalip (2007) and incorporates elements of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder theory in its conception.

The study adds a dimension to sports tourism, and indeed football tourism, in departing from the tried and tested research path exploring specific events. These are one off activities and, where football is concerned, almost exclusively linked to mega events such as the FIFA world cup (Knott et al. 2016). In focusing on identifiable football clubs of differing stature, the research sheds light on the main protagonists of the sport, often hugely recognisable brands, and the role these bodies play as tourism attractors. The typology of the modern football tourist (table 6.1) also serves as an important contribution to the literature on football tourism from both a marketing and consumer behavioural standpoint.

7.2.2 Destination marketing and stakeholders

The contribution the thesis makes to theory surrounding destination marketing forms part of continuum of thought following on from section 7.2.1. The use of sport as an attractor for destinations is long established (Zauhar, 2004). Indeed, certain locations, such as St. Moritz have been associated with sport (wintersports) for generations, to the extent that it forms an intrinsic part of the resort's promotional mix and largescale sporting events have been used successfully in increasing tourism in destinations such as the Sydney Olympics of 2000 (Morse, 2001). The phenomenon of sports heritage

tourism (Ramshaw & Gammon, 2017) and its more contemporary offshoot related to football (Wright, 2019b), portrays another aspect to destination marketing that is more closely linked to the themes of this research. Whilst impact studies (Allan et al., 2007) have provided an economic rationale for the use of football clubs in promoting destinations, the rise of sports heritage tourism, often manifested through its associations with identifiable sports clubs, provides the literature with an initial glimpse of the tourism potential these organisations possess. In highlighting the tourism credentials of renowned football clubs, this study goes beyond sports heritage tourism. It contributes to the field of destination marketing in advocating the importance of these entities and their usefulness in shaping destination image, whilst elevating their status as genuine tourism attractors. It fills a void in the literature surrounding destination marketing in providing empirical evidence as to the role of football clubs in how destinations such as Manchester are perceived and how they might be employed in destination marketing initiatives. The findings from Manchester, in particular, also typify the difficulty in developing a coherent destination image for locations, as suggested by Alociar and Ruiz-Lopez (2019), since the induced image of the location, as developed by *MM*, does not reflect its organic visitor image.

The research also supports the contention of Zach (2012) in describing cooperative marketing as a counter-intuitive activity for some organisations, as witnessed by the behaviour of the sports franchises, but one that is nonetheless an essential component of destination marketing. For destination marketing to be truly effective, the DMO or other similar agencies, as the focal organisation responsible for implementing destination marketing strategy, must fully understand the minutiae of stakeholder theory (Freeman, 1984). The study's contribution in this area is in illustrating how

destination marketing, cooperative marketing and stakeholder theory, plus leverage, are clearly interlinked and in proposing a tool, pragmatic utility, to facilitate fruitful stakeholder relationships where necessary. This is exemplified by *A&P*'s leverage of Ajax and its stadium as the cornerstone of its plan for the south east district of Amsterdam within the context of the Great Neighbourhood campaign. The plan is based on the expediency (utility) of co-opting a pre-existing asset, and one whose latency in the endeavour requires little engagement on behalf of the DMO. This pragmatic approach appears to provide for a win-win situation all round and Ajax, for its part, appears to accept the arrangement despite not actively contributing to it. This is a practical example but adds modestly to the knowledge and understanding of stakeholder theory and interpreting the stakeholder saliency model of Mitchell et al. (1997), whilst providing a tool facilitating stakeholder interactions.

The study also corroborates the assertion of Niedomysl, and Jonasson (2012) that DMOs tend towards becoming the practitioners of place marketing in locations as they mature. This is apparent in Amsterdam where the evolving responsibilities of *A&P* have transformed it beyond the scope of the more traditional DMO such as *MM*, which is solely responsible for driving inbound tourism traffic to that city.

7.2.3 Synopsis

The theoretical contributions of this study are multi-faceted. The subject matter dealt with necessitated an approach to the research that investigated complex issues, often linked to theory, but grounded in the practicalities faced by DMOs in cities with different experiences of the tourism phenomenon. The study's findings in respect of

tourism leverage related to the sports franchises constitute its most significant contribution that is best represented by the framework for sports franchise leverage. Its (figure 6.6) development was only made possible by adapting a cross-disciplinary approach with discoveries made relating to stakeholder behaviour, tourist typology, sports/football tourism and destination marketing. These theoretical contributions, alongside the applied implications for organisations, form the basis for the research recommendations discussed in section 7.5.

7.3 Applied implications and recommendations

The study's premise was centred on discovering whether destinations represented by Amsterdam and Manchester, had legitimate grounds for leveraging major sports franchises (football clubs) as platforms to encourage interest in and visitation to their respective cities. The conclusions illustrate the strong case to be made for doing so, but given the circumstances inherent to both locations, the manner in which this can be achieved varies. The findings already point to leverage being employed by the DMOs in respect of the football clubs, but also reveal shortcomings, best-practice and future possibilities for both destinations. In taking these into consideration, this section looks at the implications for DMOs and makes a number of recommendations. These may also be of interest to the tourism authorities in locations where similar circumstances prevail.

As previously alluded to the DMOs in Amsterdam and Manchester may share a common vision of improving the image of these cities in the face of both domestic and international audiences, but the operational scope of each organisation is vastly

different. This fundamentally shapes the way in which they approach the concept of leverage, especially when applying its use to sports franchises for tourism purposes. Amsterdam is a mature destination whereas Manchester is a relative, albeit successful, newcomer from a tourism standpoint. The challenges facing Amsterdam due to mass tourism are quite different to those of Manchester. Equally, the football clubs and the associations visitors make between football and these cities populate different ends of the spectrum.

This research does not seek to be contentious, but the evidence gathered suggests that a compelling case exists for far more effective leverage of sports franchises such as those featured in this study. Whereas the approach adopted by *A&P* in Amsterdam towards the leverage of Ajax may be pragmatic, given the prevalent tourism environment, it does not fully harness the tourism potential of the sports franchise. In Manchester, despite the contention of *MM*, the present strategy is painfully inadequate considering the global profile of its respective sports franchises and the importance of football to the city's image. The recommendations offered here draw on the study's framework for sports franchise leverage, which also includes a number of common leverage actions further demonstrating the flexibility of the model. Whilst case specific they do however share a common starting point that has implications for DMOs looking at sports franchise leverage in other destinations. This relates particularly to the commercial nature of sports franchises that constitutes the greatest hindrance to optimal leverage of these assets with the principal recommendations addressing this issue being:

- The DMO should seek to establish a closer rapport with the sports franchise based on encouraging the latter in recognising its importance to the locality and in fulfilling a civic duty to its host city. This would specifically stimulate circumstances where the sports franchise acts as an ambassador for the location and as a willing partner in leverage initiatives that depend on its participation. This involves building an accepted consensus (as per the suggestions of the framework for sports franchise leverage) that highlights the benefits to the sports franchise in bolstering brand equity and being seen as adding value to the local community.
- Negotiating a loosening of the legal ramifications involving imagery associated with the franchises that permits the DMO to exploit, within reason, clearly identifiable markers facilitating leverage.

Other practical options open to both cities, and by extension those in comparable milieus, might include some of the following that also mitigate aspects of seasonality associated with tourism:

- Showcase the cultural diversity of the city by focusing on the multi-national make-up of the sports franchise playing staff. (Football is an international sport with many of the top clubs featuring star players from widely different backgrounds).
- DMOs should encourage the sports franchise to display DMO branding imagery across official documentation, marketing literature and online platforms, with DMOs reciprocating in kind.
- Exploiting the vast reach of sports franchises to facilitate wider dissemination of DMO initiatives, such as leverage actions or information related to strategies

such as Amsterdam's Great Neighbourhood campaign. This type of action also clearly demonstrates the benefits of sports franchise leverage to other interested stakeholders.

- Target visitors interested in culture and heritage. Football has much to offer in this area and enhancing the prestige of such can provide access to new markets.

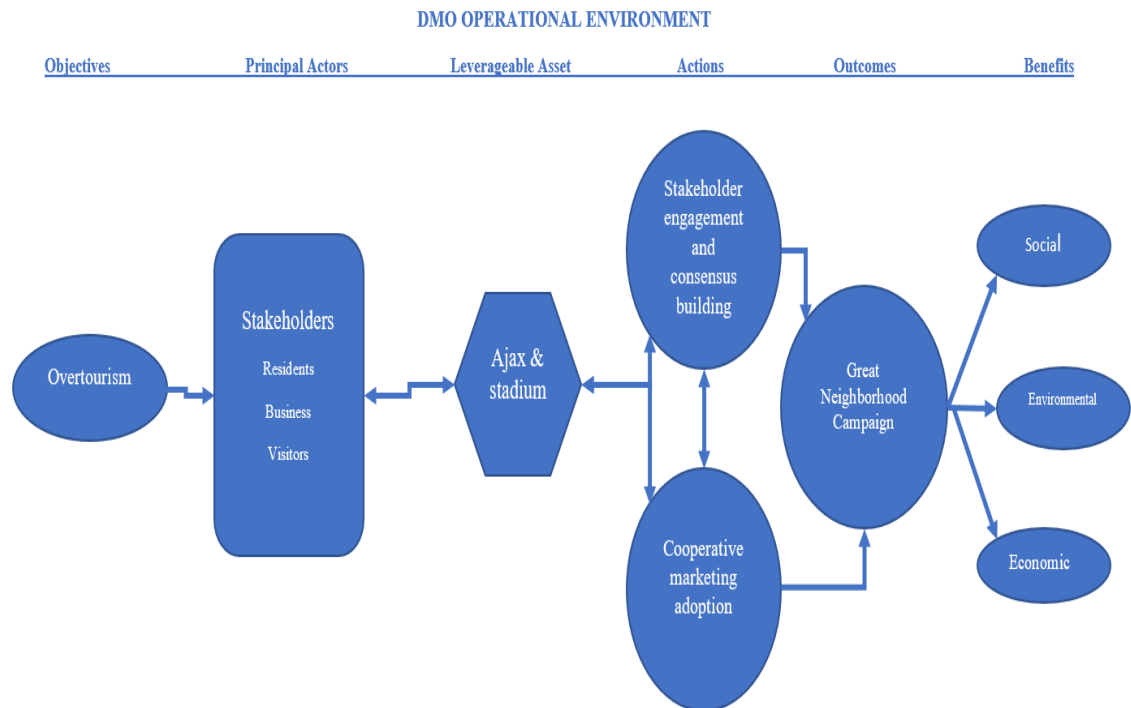
7.3.1 Recommendations for sports franchise leverage in Amsterdam

Amsterdam is reassessing its tourism environment and has developed a strategy to mitigate the more contentious factors associated with over tourism in the city by means of its Great Neighbourhood campaign. Ajax plays an important role as the central point of attraction in one of the eleven districts selected to encourage a more equitable distribution of visitors throughout the city. This researcher, and indeed experts consulted during this study, applaud the initiative, yet the evidence gathered suggests the current plan in leveraging Ajax for tourism purposes is suboptimal, but does form a suitable foundation upon which to build. A more effective strategy for leverage requires a more robust partnership to emerge between *A&P* and the sports franchise. This requires both parties to adjust the nature of the relationship that elevates Ajax to a position of definitive stakeholder. This would stimulate its active participation as a legitimate actor in the visitor economy and in how the city is perceived externally. In future iterations of leverage, the study advises the DMO to carefully consider the importance of exploiting the global reach of Ajax and ultimately go beyond the present scope of the Great Neighbourhood campaign in communicating an image of Amsterdam internationally that is aligned with its strategic objectives.

Figure 7.1, derived from the framework for sports franchise leverage, takes current *A&P* strategy into account in illustrating how Ajax can be used more effectively as a leverageable resource. Wider stakeholder consensus leading to cooperative marketing initiatives are essential to the success of such. Interestingly, in Amsterdam, and despite the relatively weak tourism profile of Ajax, those interviewed in this study clearly signalled such consensus in relation to Ajax as a vehicle for leverage. For the time being the critical challenge is seen as over-tourism and dispersal of tourism traffic, with Ajax as a leverageable asset whose elevation to active definitive stakeholder can prove more effective in delivering the proposed benefits across the wider stakeholder landscape of which it is a part. The actors mainly affected by tourism congestion in the city are local residents, tourists and businesses. The Great Neighbourhood campaign is a laudable initiative but, as it stands, undervalues Ajax and the principal recommendation here is to stimulate an environment that empowers the sports franchise, transforming it from a tacit, reactive actor, to being a proactive partner. In identifying Ajax as the pivotal attraction in the city's south-east district the club's role in delivering the desired outcomes increases its importance to the DMO that should result in more effective leverage than is currently envisioned.

Figure 7.1

Schematic of Sports Franchise Leverage for Amsterdam



When executed correctly the process described in figure 7.1 meets *A&P*'s criteria in providing social, economic and environmental benefits to the city. Whilst the process appears straightforward, the study recommends some concrete actions that the DMO might take in collaboration with Ajax that enhance its stature as an attraction worthy of curiosity, beyond the realm of the sports fan or sports heritage tourist. These include:

- Ajax reconfiguring its relationship with the business unit of the Johan Cruyff Arena responsible for the stadium tour and museum. The club should become more involved in managing the facility. This is a hugely attractive tourism product that is currently poorly served by the *status quo*, yet one which displays huge potential as evidenced by the results of the study's visitor survey. For its

part the DMO is advised to create more awareness for the stadium tour and museum via the popular “I Amsterdam” city card.

- *A&P* publishing more Ajax related content across its online platforms and quickly directing visitors to pages where tours can be booked, along with other Ajax related products. This is a simple step that is practically guaranteed to be seen in a positive light by Ajax and serves as a foundation for building a strong relationship that is essential to the ultimate success of the DMO’s strategy for south east Amsterdam. It would also serve as a visible example of the club’s elevation in status as a tourism partner.
- Encouraging Ajax and the holding company of the stadium in developing additional tourism products based on the persona of Johan Cruyff. At the very least this would bolster the appeal of the Johan Cruyff Arena as a compelling attraction given the former player’s stature as an icon of Dutch culture.
- The DMO exploring future possibilities of exploiting Ajax’s international exposure in competitions, such as the UEFA Champions League, for communication and promotional ends.

7.3.2 Recommendations for sports franchise leverage in Manchester

The study’s findings demonstrate an overwhelming case to be made for a more robust and targeted leveraging of football as a strategic asset in Manchester. This may raise concerns in certain quarters, but these are far outweighed by the discoveries made during the course of this investigation. Once the issues surrounding the commercial and legal ramifications inherent to the sports franchises are adequately addressed, *MM* has a resource at its disposal that enhances the city’s international profile and acts as a major influence in attracting visitors, as evidenced by the study’s findings. In

Manchester consensus building and collaboration takes on a more complicated guise, due to the sporting and business rivalry between the two major franchises. Inadvertently, this also adds to the rationale for leverage since the sporting rivalry alone is a newsworthy story in itself.

Figure 7.2, based on the framework for sports franchise leverage, depicts how leverage unfolds in Manchester and specifically calls for the establishment of a unit dedicated to sports leverage within the DMO to explore further opportunities. This has proven successful in Sydney (Morse, 2001) and Pittsburg (Pouder et al., 2018), where these bodies have engaged in developing and implementing tourism strategies that specifically incorporate the leverage of sport. The researcher recommends that *MM* leverage football as a holistic tourism product that includes the presence in the city of the National Football Museum as another hugely important component of the destination's footballing heritage, as illustrated in figure 7.2. This additionally facilitates the DMO in acquiring the consent of MCFC and MUFC, since neither is favoured to the detriment of the other. Consensus building and cooperative marketing initiatives, in collaboration with other important stakeholders, are critical in establishing the foundations for successful outcomes. Thus, the wider benefits arising from the leverage of football in Manchester should resonate beyond the scope of the football clubs themselves and be clearly communicated across the entire stakeholder landscape. These benefits, in respecting Chalip's (2004) arguments for sports leverage, include social, economic and environmental components that bolster community wide support. Finally, the research findings also reveal that Manchester is especially synonymous with football in overseas markets and the resulting leverage actions

should reflect this with international audiences targeted. Conveniently, such a strategy is commensurate with *MM*'s external focus.

Figure 7.2

Schematic of Sports Franchise Leverage for Manchester



Leverage has proven an extremely adaptable construct and there are many options open to the DMO. Whilst figure 7.2 describes the process for sports franchise leverage in Manchester, the research proffers some actionable solutions available to *MM* and the sports franchises in this regard. These recommendations include:

- Exploiting the worldwide publicity and media attention generated by the Manchester derby, a rivalry that captures the attention of the sporting world and mainstream media. Games between both teams take place at least twice during the course of the football season and are highly anticipated by a huge global audience.
- Developing holistic football tourism products that feature the wider footballing heritage of the Greater Manchester region that go beyond MCFC, MUFC and

the National Football Museum. The conurbation is currently home to eight professional football clubs.

- Developing aspects of leverage combining elements attracting different market segments that are illustrated in the typology of the football tourist (table 6.1) e.g. football and shopping opportunities, music and sport, football museums and other cultural attractions etc.
- Advising the DMO's leverage unit, once established, to seek out sponsorship opportunities with the sports franchise and the latter's commercial partners in generating publicity for the tourism sector and promotional campaigns. Under normal circumstances this would be financially prohibitive for the DMO, but in a mutually beneficial exchange, where the franchise and its partners reap CSR related benefits, such collaboration could prove very effective.
- Encouraging the DMO to conduct research into the importance of football and the sports franchises to Manchester that can be presented to the clubs and other stakeholders further underpinning the rationale for leverage.

The recommendations volunteered in this section form the metaphorical tip of the iceberg and could vary widely depending on the imagination of those involved and the strategic objectives of the DMO and sports franchise. There are, however, evident limits as to how far the DMO can advance a leverage agenda that is overly reliant on one, or a small number of partners, without provoking some unease within the wider stakeholder environment. Similarly, the sports franchise is beholden to its shareholders, investors and commercial partners that are wont to impose restrictions of their own.

7.4 Limitations

As with studies of a similar magnitude, the research met with certain limitations. Many of these are related to the research design and the pragmatic demands, both philosophical and practical, placed upon the researcher.

Employing a case study methodology, even extended to the multiple case format, restricted the field of enquiry to two destinations. Whilst specifically selected for the purposes of this thesis, and deemed appropriate for the objectives and aims of the work, additional cities might have been selected, if only for comparison purposes and to gauge the consistency of findings. The decision to limit the study to two cases was a matter of expediency, based on time and resources. The degree and depth of research undertaken related to both cases also necessitated assiduous management of time and resource allocation by a researcher conducting the study whilst working full-time.

The collection of field data also proved challenging with interview access an often arduous process requiring a great deal of time and effort. Organisations, whilst generally interested in and willing to engage with the research, routinely restricted access to one designated individual. This resulted in a single narrative where a small number of respondents were occasionally less than forthcoming in terms of candour when confronted with questions considered sensitive to the organisation they were representing. It also limited access to others whose input might have added an extra dimension in understanding the issues being investigated, such as those working in the digital marketing departments of the respective DMOs. The visitor intercept surveys were also administered during the course of the football season. It would have been

preferable to extend these to the close season, summer period, when football does not garner as much media attention, but this was unfeasible due to time constraints.

Despite these concerns, the thesis achieved its objective in exploring the leverage of sports franchises for their tourism potential and in addressing all the research objectives. Those participating in the study, particularly individuals occupying positions of power and influence in the upper echelons of the respective DMOs, proved to be very open and transparent once apprised of the research focus. The organisations themselves, including the sports franchises and DMOs, displayed great interest in the premise of the research and its findings.

Finally, it should also be noted that all data collection took place prior to the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic and their interpretation was based on the circumstances prevalent at such time. Whilst confident that the study's findings still hold true, the ever changing conditions (at time of writing) might potentially lead to the reinterpretation of some elements.

7.5 Implications for further research

The thesis investigated an area that intersects multiple disciplines yet at its core centres on hugely recognisable sporting brands that reach vast global audiences. It is surprising that few, if any, studies conducted hitherto focused on the leverage of sports franchises for their tourism potential or as tourist attractions. This is perhaps the single most important contribution of this research, in that it opens up a field that calls out for

further scholarly investigation that incorporates social, cultural, economic and environmental dimensions. In addressing the research objectives, the study unearths as many questions as answers. Inspired by the work of notable scholars such as Laurence Chalip and his clarion call for the leverage of sport, the thesis by extending into the realm of the professional sports franchise, lays a firm foundation that others can add their voices to in building an edifice of knowledge.

The subject matter is contemporary and could be considered as being of genuine public interest. Sports franchises are essentially communal assets that exhibit characteristics of public goods in certain respects. Their community based origins suggest that they should also fulfill a duty to society and lend themselves to initiatives such as tourism leverage. In proposing the framework for the leverage of sports franchises (figure 6.6), the study provides a clear pathway for scholars to follow that should act as a catalyst for its testing across different settings, allowing for adjustments and improvements to be made. Whilst the scope of the research was wide and the conclusions support the rationale for leverage, questions remain as to how the DMO creates conditions that optimise the leverage of sports franchises in order to benefit the wider stakeholder environment. This researcher contends that further exploration of the stakeholder environment, as experienced by DMOs operating under different constraints, would facilitate leverage initiatives and DMO operations themselves. Crucially, where leverage is concerned, the research provides options as to how this takes place, but leaves the study of how this is operationalized, and measured by the DMO, to others.

Future studies might also seek to replicate the protocols of this research in other locations and cross-reference the findings. This might include destinations that embrace attractions other than the sports franchise as the object of leverage. It would also be of particular interest to repeat the content analysis study into the online leverage of the sports franchises (section 5.3) that would provide the basis for a longitudinal view of how this has evolved over time. Finally, Amsterdam's Great Neighborhood campaign was referred to frequently during the course of this work. As an on-going initiative it should be of great interest to the research community as to how leverage unfolds in that particular context.

In conclusion, it would be remiss of the researcher not to acknowledge the implications for the tourism industry and research as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The industry ground to an extraordinary halt during this period and its recovery is set against a backdrop where even the most optimistic planners are wont to consider scenarios that were once unpalatable. The OECD (2020) has called for the tourism sector to become more sustainable and resilient. The urgent task of researchers is to explore how this can be achieved. The concept of leverage going beyond the use of sport is one such area, covered by this study, that appears well suited to play a role in tourism's convalescence. In covering a field of interest that is presently underserved, it is also hoped that the findings of this research bridge the gap, even modestly, between theory and application permitting a diffusion of ideas with practical and actionable implications for tourism destinations as they emerge from the specter of the pandemic.

7.6 Concluding remarks

A compelling case has been made for the leverage of sport franchises involved in season long competitions by tourism planners in destinations home to such entities. In highlighting the use of these assets the study elevates the concept of tourism leverage beyond the veil of theory into the domain of practice. Weed (2009) argued that the investigation of emerging ideas point to a dynamic and healthy state of affairs in tourism enquiry that reflect the demands of an ever changing world. This study considers contemporary phenomena whose place in that world is prominent and noteworthy, to the extent that perhaps the most remarkable element associated with this work rests in its uniqueness within the field of scholarly enquiry.

In combining subject matter that until now has avoided the attention of scholars, this thesis exemplifies the transdisciplinary nature inherent to tourism research, as suggested by Bricker and Donohoe (2015). Stakeholder theory, whilst owing its origins to disciplines outside the traditional realm of tourism studies, is seen as eminently relevant in tourism research and of vital importance to DMOs, whose roles are often defined by their aptitude for eliciting collaboration in cooperative marketing initiatives involving multiple actors. The use of a multiple case study design incorporating a mixed methods approach, based on pragmatism, accommodated the investigation of the real-life phenomena covered by this study. It is a methodologically sound approach that allows for transparency in terms of the procedures employed in gathering, analysing and storing of data, as suggested by Xiao and Smith (2006), The cases provide for what Yin (2009) describes as theoretical replication (contrasting results) that underpins the development of the framework for sports franchise leverage.

The destinations selected, within the multiple case study format, face different challenges. Amsterdam seeks to mitigate the more negative aspects associated with over-tourism by dispersing visitors more evenly throughout the city and stimulating growth in its lesser-known neighbourhoods. Manchester's challenges lie in sustaining its tourism development. The researcher contends that each location's renowned football clubs are perfectly placed to facilitate in these endeavours. Indeed, the research illustrates current practice in this regard, but also builds on this in providing a template to harness the still largely untapped potential of these sports franchises more effectively.

During the period covered by this thesis much has changed in the world and in the cities that acted as its focal points. Amsterdam has transformed from a city riding a wave of tourism induced euphoria into one where tourism became a contentious social and political issue that has authorities reassessing its practice. Manchester has gone from a tourism backwater to being second, only to London, as England's top tourist destination. It has experienced change at almost breathtaking pace with the moniker "Manhattan" trending on social media platforms, attesting to the dramatic transformation of the city's skyline over the past few years. Many of the newer buildings host large hotels illustrating the dramatic growth of Manchester's hospitality sector.

The success of tourism in both locations has been reflected elsewhere where tourism and travel increased at exponential rates. All of this came to an abrupt halt in early 2020 with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic that has reshaped the world. Its impact

on tourism has been especially harsh with many businesses struggling to survive. The nature of the pandemic will potentially define the public attitude towards travel (and tourism) for the foreseeable future; a future that until recently was generally based on optimistic predictions. The tourism landscape that unfolds might be quite different from the one preceding it. The foresight of *A&P* in developing long-term strategies for tourism in Amsterdam holds it in good stead to meet the many challenges head-on. Football and its popularity, even during the pandemic with teams playing to huge TV audiences in eerily empty stadiums, makes for an even more compelling case of leverage in Manchester if it is to reemerge as a city worthy of Urry's (2002) "tourism gaze."

The study was conducted in accordance with the highest ethical principles and the transparency of the research process allows for others to replicate the work, and corroborate its findings. In considering emerging themes that had not previously been investigated in such a format, the impact or usefulness of the work's contributions might only become apparent over time. The research deepens the understanding of leverage for tourism ends as a concept warranting the attention of both scholars and practitioners. In highlighting its use or potential relating to sports franchises, the study opens up an exciting research agenda that is currently underserved.

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Appendix One: Visitor Survey Templates

Amsterdam Visitor Survey

1.) Which of the following information sources did you consult before coming to Amsterdam (tick all that apply)?

Tourist board website (IAmsterdam.com)..... Word-of-mouth..... Travel agent.....

Internet search engine (Google etc.)..... (which specific websites?) Television advert....

Print advert..... Tripadvisor or similar review site..... Social media.... Travel guide....

Other..... N/A.....

2.) Please list the first 3 words that come to mind when you think of the city of Amsterdam:

.....

3.) On a scale of 1 to 7 please indicate how much influence each of the following elements had in your decision to visit Amsterdam (7 being 'A Huge Influence' and 1 being 'No Influence')?

Art galleries and Museums..... Ajax football Club..... Nightlife.....

Canals..... Shopping..... The Local People..... Architecture.....

History of the city..... Red light District....

4.) On this trip do you intend to visit (or have you already visited) the Ajax Football Stadium/Museum?

Yes... No...

5.) Have you seen any promotional information relating to the Ajax Football stadium/museum either before you arrived or during your visit?

Yes... No....

6.) If yes please indicate where you saw this?

.....

Gender....

Age....

Nationality.....

Manchester Visitor Survey

1.) Which of the following information sources did you consult before coming to Manchester (tick all that apply)?

- Tourist board website (visitmanchester.com)..... Word-of-mouth..... Travel agent.....
- Internet search engine (Google etc.)..... Television advert....
- Print advert..... Tripadvisor or similar review site..... Social media... Travel guide....
- Other..... N/A.....

2.) Please list the first 3 words that come to mind when you think of the city of Manchester:

.....

3.) On a scale of 1 to 7 please indicate how much influence each of the following elements had in your decision to visit Manchester (7 being 'A Huge Influence' and 1 being 'No Influence')?

- Art galleries and Museums..... Manchester United FC..... Nightlife.....
- Manchester City FC..... Shopping..... The Local People..... Architecture.....
- History of the city..... Music.... Coronation Street.....

4.) On this trip do you intend to visit (or have you already visited) the Manchester United Football Stadium/Museum?

Yes... No...

5.) On this trip do you intend to visit (or have already visited) the Manchester City football stadium/museum?

Yes... No...

6.) Have you seen any promotional information relating to the either the Old Trafford or Etihad football stadium/museum either before you arrived or during your visit?

Yes...

No...

7.) If yes please indicate where you saw this?

.....

Gender.....

Age.....

Nationality.....

Appendix Two: Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol Form

Participant:

Interviewer:

Date & Location:

Introductory Protocol

To facilitate note-taking, we would like to audio record our conversation today. Only this researcher will be privy to the recordings which will be deleted once transcribed. We would also ask that you to sign a form that meets with our human subject and ethical requirements. This document states that: (1) all information will be held confidential, (2) your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time, (3) you understand that we intend to inflict no harm.

The interview should take no more than one hour of participant's time.

Introduction

You have been selected to speak with us today as you have been identified as someone who possesses knowledge in one or many of the following fields:

- Destination marketing
- Tourism and/or sports tourism
- Football administration
- Hospitality management
- Tourism research

- Place marketing
- Tourist experience

The objective of the study is to discern whether globally recognised football clubs can or should be used for their potential tourism leverage by Destination Marketing Organisations (DMOs) in the cities where they are located. This work specifically does not espouse the actual promotion of said sports clubs but the manner in which their worldwide reach and visibility can be used for the benefit of all stakeholders in a given destination.

Interview checklist and topics to be covered (depending on participant certain elements can be overlooked):

All interview questions are open and are developed as themes around the study's research questions.

- Gather some background information as to the interviewee's role in his/her organisation (if any). Ask whether the subject has an interest in football.
- What is interviewee's current read on the performance of the tourism sector in Amsterdam/Manchester and expanded to the Netherlands/UK in a wider context?
- Determine how the interviewee sees the role of the DMO in the respective city.
- Solicit information as to what elements constitute perception and image of a destination from interviewee perspective.

- Determine interviewee's views and/or knowledge of the issue of leverage in the tourism domain. (Example?)
- To what extent does the interviewee see Ajax/MUFC/MCFC as being representative of the city?
- How do they perceive the image that Ajax/MUFC/MCFC portrays of Amsterdam/Manchester?
- Has the interviewee noticed or would he/she be in favour of DMOs incorporating Ajax/MUFC/MCFC into their promotional efforts? (Why etc.?)
- Does the interviewee see any benefits or negatives in leveraging the tourism potential of Ajax/MUFC/MCFC in a city such as Amsterdam/Manchester?
- Does the interviewee have any other comments regarding tourism in Amsterdam/Manchester or the subjects dealt with previously?

Thank interviewee and reiterate that the audio recording will be deleted once the interview has been transcribed.

Appendix Three: Interview Transcript Sample

DMO Executive Marketing Manchester – Subject I. (r – researcher, s – Subject/participant)

Manchester 11 December 2018

R: Yesterday the eyes of the world were on Manchester due to the derby between United and City. This study looks at how such ‘brand’ awareness might be leveraged by DMOs in a tourism context. Can I ask you to tell me a bit about yourself and your role here in this organisation, the Growth Company.

S: I am (name provided). I am a marketing manager in Marketing Manchester. Marketing Manchester is one of the divisions within the Growth Company. It has been around for longer than the Growth company. Our role is international and to promote tourism to Manchester. I sit in the marketing team. I am one of three marketing managers. One has responsibility for the US and European markets, one has the responsibility for domestic markets, day visits etc and I have responsibility for China and the GCC. That is the Gulf Cooperation Council which are the six richest countries in the area; Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, UAE etc.

R: That must be quite a task. I would imagine there was a huge interest in the city yesterday looking at football.

S: Absolutely yes. So for us in Marketing Manchester those are the markets that we focus on. We work very closely with all of our stakeholders. One of our major stakeholders is Manchester airport so Manchester airport together with us define what our target markets will be. Those markets are defined by economic impact of the visit

and that helps us to choose the appropriate markets to target. If we were to go on numbers we would stick all our marketing to Ireland as they make up the biggest visitor numbers.

R: How do you relate then to VisitManchester? Is that a different organisation?

S: No, it is the same thing it is just a different brand. So MM (Marketing Manchester) is our internal brand or business brand in terms of dealing with consumers.

R: Are you a football fan?

S: I am a football fan. I am a happy football fan (Manchester City fan) and there are a lot of sad football fans today (Manchester United fans whose team lost the 'derby' 2-1 the previous day), probably like the rest of country (Ireland, referring to the number of Irish MUFC fans).

R: Could I have your current 'take' on the performance of the tourism sector in Manchester?

S: Manchester is the third biggest market in the UK for international. If I just talk about international visitors because that is my area really. London is obviously in a different sphere as it is a global city really. So London is obviously number one, Edinburgh is number two and Manchester is number three. In terms of our third biggest city there are a number of cities somewhat close such as Birmingham, Glasgow and coming up also there are places like Liverpool, Newcastle to a lesser extent. Certainly, we are big. Manchester is growing. The events of the past year have had an impact but not necessarily a long-term impact. And there are already signs of recovery from that.

R: Do you find if there is any impact around the whole Brexit issue?

S: Not that I know of. There is lots of talk in the industry and media in that Brexit will provide quite a boost for the UK. Well the biggest impact from the vote was the collapse of the currency which meant suddenly that the UK, particularly for Chinese and gulf visitors, began a really cheap place to come which helped us in competition with some of the European markets. Every time there is a bomb somewhere another location feels the benefit so when Paris happened we suddenly saw increases. Brussels the same thing. London and Manchester happens and people look somewhere else. The long term trajectory, I don't know how the figures stack up, but it is good. Essentially Manchester has a number of things going for it. One of which is the airport. It is the biggest airport outside of London and they are our biggest stakeholder, our biggest partner. We essentially operate as Manchester airport's inbound marketing agency. So the airport does its own marketing in terms of UK passengers outbound but they pay us to do their inbound marketing.

R: What would you describe as the major attractions in Manchester?

S: For my markets in terms of China and the GCC football is the biggest selling point so we market on the football very heavily. But we always use the football in the way of 'come and see the football but there's more than football'. I think it's dangerous to only use the football when we have lots more to offer. Shopping is the second biggest selling attraction. We market the fact that we have two Selfridges whereas London has only got one. We've got the Trafford centre on the doorstep. We've got Cheshire Oaks which is a huge attraction as the biggest designer outlet in the country. This is a huge attraction for the Chinese market particularly. And then we have the countryside. So the way we market Manchester is by calling it 'the gateway to Northern England'. This particularly comes from the influence of our major stakeholder, Manchester airport. They simply want people flying into Manchester and from a solely selfish point of

view it does not matter to them whether people stay in Manchester just overnight or go straight off to the lake district or anywhere else. So we actually in terms of China and the GCC and likely will develop our activity in India soon over the next year, we pull together a consortium of northern England partners and market ourselves as the gateway to the north. And market the lake district, the peak district, Liverpool, Leeds and York, even the north east of England as well.

R: Is there a seasonal aspect to tourism here?

S: Hugely, yes. The city has two different types of tourism businesses. So hugely busy with BVE (Business visits and events) market. I don't work on that side but Manchester central is another huge stakeholder. It is one of the biggest convention centres in the country. So for the winter it is a really big business destination and of course football takes place in the winter so that is really important. For the Chinese market it is more of a summer thing. The Chinese don't like to travel in the winter. They don't like the cold. The GCC don't really like the cold. For those markets march to September tend to be the peak times. So in terms of football it's the museums we are often advertising and the city as a footballing 'place' rather than specifically a match. But the football looks brilliant because it enables us to promote ourselves as a year round destination as well.

R: (Explained about my own experiences in travelling and the role that football and MUFC appear to be synonymous with the city) What immediately comes out when you travel and people become aware that you are from Manchester?

S: Manchester United is the first thing they say. It is always football. It is the first thing they mention. (recalls an anecdote as an example on his travels that is omitted due to

being confidential). Everywhere you go in the world they mention United and football and we market on that because we would be crazy not to.

R: In marketing based on the global brand of the likes of Manchester United is there a conflict or an issue here in Manchester of you doing this (since obviously there are people here who don't like MUFC)?

S: We don't market necessarily on Manchester United but rather on football but with the knowledge there is a higher recognition of United than any other club. I did a campaign in China before where we used a football stadium (mock-up) and the colour used was more red than blue for certain reasons but in general we would never do a campaign based around just one of the clubs. In our city that would not be done.

R: Is there an issue with using images of clubs and players in promotional material (copyrights etc.)?

S: Yes, but we are in the fortunate position that the clubs work really closely with us. They will tell us what issues there are and what we need to do. So they are very open about this. For example Aeroflot, a Man United sponsor. All of the people at United dislike the fact that they are associated with a dubious Russian airline. We work with Hainan airlines and China and Emirates and Etihad of course so when it comes to do with football we have to be really careful about how it's organised. I have been to the Etihad office in Abu Dhabi where they have a City (MCFC) shop in the office and a little museum and they absolutely go for it really.

R: Do you have any relationship with VisitBritain or the national DMO?

S: Yes, the way it works in terms of our relationship is as follows: We are a not-for-profit company that is owned by the ten local authorities that make up Greater Manchester. So, our board is made up of the chief executives of these local authorities.

Our funding comes through our members. Each of our big tourism organisations in Manchester pay a certain amount of money. There are football clubs, the big hotels, museums, the bigger restaurants etc. Some pay a lot of money some pay a little bit. So we go right down from MUFC to an individual tour guide. Altogether there are about 400 businesses who pay to be members which gives us a certain amount of money. Manchester airport gives us a certain amount of money and then another third comes from the money that we bid for from the national DMO. We don't get any core funding from them but we regularly are funded. For example we just started a project which is to develop a more bookable product across the north of England. That's 1 million pounds from Visit England. It's called the 'discover England' fund. That's a big part of money we are getting. We are a secondary with London on another VisitEngland project which is about promoting twin centre holidays where you may fly into London and out of Manchester. This is particularly interesting for GCC visitors. That's 1.2 million pounds. It's roughly about a third each, from members, Manchester airport and the national DMO funding.

R: Do you find that there might be an issue of under-funding given your various activities? Are local politics involved in this?

S: As for the local authorities Manchester gives a big chunk of money whereas the other 9 not so much but it's a relatively small portion of our overall income so we are quite unique and distinct as a DMO because of the airport and because of the fact that we have a number of relatively healthy business for example we have more hotel stock than any other regional English city. We have the two football clubs. We have a range of businesses that are quite wealthy. Of course they watch their own budgets but still contribute substantially. The local authority is slightly lower down our list whereas many DMOs would normally get a great proportion of their funding from such sources

which in today's climate (cutbacks/austerity) it's probably not a good position to be in. Also our role is completely focused on economic development so we don't have a role in keeping the local population 'happy'. Other DMOs within a local authority structure may find themselves attached to the community department or adult welfare or all sorts of different areas where suddenly they have many different jobs to do and hats to wear separate from their core purpose. For us it's just about delivering economic development into Manchester and we can focus on that.

R: How did Manchester transform itself from a depressed post-industrial city and a major tourism destination?

S: Two reasons. We talk about this quite a lot (at Marketing Manchester). The first one is political stability. Because Manchester is a one-party state essentially. Currently in Manchester if you exclude the other boroughs. Manchester is where the power is. Currently on the city council there are 99 Labour party councillors and 1 Lib-Dem. There was a time during the Iraq war where the Lib-Dems got up to 20. I can't remember when we last had a councillor from the Conservative party. So essentially we have had the same leadership on the city council since the early 1990s. The Chief executive and the leader of the council are close to retiring. They have been in their posts for over 20 years. When I see other large cities such as Liverpool, Leeds and Newcastle they have often been sitting a pretty precarious position politically. It could be that the boundaries take in rural areas and the council swings backwards and forwards between parties and there is no long-term planning. Manchester has always had a long-term plan almost like a socialist state (laughs). It has been based on investment and strategic planning.

The second thing and the regeneration of Manchester with the thinking surrounding it proceeded as the plans were already in place. The great spur was the bomb in 1996 when much of the city centre was destroyed. That gave the chance to make a new plan on how the city should develop and grow. How the areas affected would be regenerated and how that would feed out or spread throughout the city. All of this was very well planned.

R: At that time did you find that the success of the likes of MUFC along with the presence of SKY and the renowned music scene had a role in shaping the image of the city?

S: I was going to deal with that before as we talked about football and shopping being important but also culture and by extension the music scene is important for certain markets. Museums are also very important. Manchester has a fantastic museum and gallery offering but people talked about Liverpool's museums and galleries which have always had so much investment due to being nationalised in the 1980s/90s when Derek Hatton was in power in Liverpool. We have changed this around and people are more aware of this high end cultural offering in Manchester which is very well organised. The Manchester nightlife scene is also a huge pull particularly for the Scandinavians, the Germans and Americans. The gay village in Manchester is huge and this attracts a lot of these people. This doesn't play out in my markets (China and GCC) but the restaurants would play a role for them. So you have high end culture side-by-side with street culture. That has created an environment that makes Manchester such a 'happening' place. If you go out on the weekends you will see so many Scandinavians and others about and not just for the football. Many come for the gay scene and the drinking and partying.

R: Could you elaborate on the relationship your organisation has with the football clubs (United and City)?

S: It is a close relationship however the closest element in that relationship is normally with the club museum. The museum and stadium tour is the closest point of our collaboration. I talk with the people involved every week, or even more often. These will be the main contacts we have at the clubs via our membership system. The clubs will usually have a marketing department with whom we deal. There will be other individuals at the clubs that develop and are responsible for more high-end products such as VIP tours or 'out of hours' special experiences. They will come to us and we will engage with them. So each club will pay a fee to be a member and they will buy into various campaigns. For my China campaign they wanted to be profiled so it was important for them in that market. For MCFC for example we work with them on the stadium and museum tour. Then we will work with them related to matchday tickets. We will also collaborate on VIP matchday tickets and hospitality. We might also work with them on special VIP experiences. They have just introduced the 'first team experience' where (when city playing away) and for 100 pounds the visitor gets to see things that are not covered in the normal museum tour (explanation provided of this product which is not necessarily high-end but focused on a more authentic look behind the scenes in terms of the player's routine experience).

R: That sounds very fan-friendly from MCFC. Are there similar experiences at MUFC or do they come across differently as a club in this respect?

S: Yes they do but in one respect when I am talking about these two clubs we know that United is the bigger brand and is the one that people will go to if given the choice of either or. I have been working with city in advising them that they need to work on

a point of difference and offering something unique. Also the quality of the facilities play a role. At United the facilities are a bit outdated with a lot of cramming people into an older stadium whereas at city it is all purpose built. They are able (City) to offer a higher quality experience and can build on that. But I haven't found United difficult. City have got tickets to sell so they can be more supportive if, for example, I have a big group of Chinese travel agents. I will be able to organise things for them when MCFC are playing at home because they will be able to supply the tickets (MUFC might struggle due to stadium always selling out). City for example have a hospitality room called the 92nd minute where we'll get the groups in. But United can't guarantee me match tickets except sometimes for midweek European or other games. Saying that the hospitality staff at United are fantastic. They also use the cricket ground to host packages. (Goes on to explain enthusiastically about some of the MUFC 'out-of-hours' packages which again focus on selling authenticity).

R: The premise of my entire study is built around the concept of leverage and both United and City appear, from what you say, to be very much on board for this. Would it be true to say that this leveraging in a tourism context is already happening in Manchester?

S: This is already happening, definitely. It has also improved over the past few years. From what I have heard the clubs had a tendency to keep themselves somewhat removed. We had good links with their museums but less so with the club per se. One of the major factors here is that we did a major campaign surrounding the Manchester derby that was to take place in Beijing. This was on the pre-season where the aim is marketing and money making invariably taking them to China or the USA. On this occasion in 2016 they were to play the first ever 'derby' in Beijing. (It was subsequently cancelled due to pitch and weather issues). (Subject talks about campaign

the essentials of which involved obtaining money from a fund that allowed them to travel with 250 business people from Manchester to China on a de facto trade mission whose theme was enhanced by the 'derby' to be played thus an act of leverage in itself. It was called the Manchester Summit and included workshops on regeneration...including the former player Gary Neville..who is also a big real estate developer. Subject includes quite a bit of detailed description of this event but certainly a major example of leverage in action).

As a DMO and generally speaking we work pretty closely with the clubs and enjoy a good relationship. (In reference to differences in the relationship between the DMO and clubs in other cities the subject gives a very Mancunian quote from Tony Wilson ' We do things differently around here'.)

R: Do you see any negatives to this element of leveraging the football club(s)?

S: It's interesting because we had a Chinese film crew come over recently where we didn't get involved too much in terms of content. They had gone around some very dodgy places hunting for some old hooligans. It surprised us and is an issue that we are aware of since it can result in a negative story and publicity. I think the real issue is that we try to ensure that football does not take over because we have some many other amazing things from architecture, culture and the surrounding countryside etc. A lot of visitors from the GCC and China want to see the green countryside so we talk a lot about the peak district, the lake district. We don't claim it (lake district) as part of Manchester but state that it is nearby. So, basically we leverage football to its maximum whilst trying to avoid being seen as a one story city. Our idea is to use football and United/City as a door opener.

I haven't got the figures on this but anecdotally I can refer to some studies in the past and say that the actual visitors who come just for football spend very little in the city. Those who visit because this is the home of football will do the stadium tour as part of the must-do activities will spend far more. The actual football visitors will be much more discerning in how and on what they spend their money and will stay in the cheapest accommodation etc. We want people who will come and inject money into the economy. (Some general talk about how important the impact is of football on the local economy as being equivalent to holding the Olympics every year plus an anecdote of the teams from marketing Manchester pitching for one-off events to take place in the city, often to which the quip is that similar 'events' take place each weekend when United and City play at home in front of 75,000 spectators).