

Attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympic Games and visiting Brazil after the games[☆]



Claudio M. Rocha^{a,*}, Janet S. Fink^b

^a University of Sao Paulo, Brazil

^b University of Massachusetts, Amherst, United States

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ABSTRACT

Drawing on signaling theory and branding framework, the aim of this research was to describe the impacts of the interaction between, on the one hand, the brand images of the Olympic Games and Brazil (as a tourism destination), and on the other, attitudes toward attending the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and visiting the country after the event. A sample of American adults ($n = 722$), most (82.2%) with at least one international travel experience, was analyzed. Results showed that the interaction between the hospitality associated with the Olympic Games hospitality and that of Brazil positively affected attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games. None of the tested interactions affected attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympic Games. In the second part of the study, five focus groups with sport management graduate students ($n = 23$) indicated that the association with the Olympic brand might bring fewer gains to Brazilian tourism than the expected.

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1. Introduction

In the last 15 years, the International Olympic Committee (IOC) started to award the Olympic Games hosting rights to developing countries. China hosted the 2008 Games in Beijing, Russia hosted the 2014 Winter Games in Sochi, and Brazil hosted the 2016 Games in Rio de Janeiro.¹ One of most appealing reasons for the IOC to award the Olympic Games to developing countries is to strengthen the Olympic brand in as many markets as possible. One of the strongest motivations for developing countries to host such events is to build a positive international image in association with the Olympic brand to promote tourism (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Rein & Shields, 2007). While the Olympic brand has constantly been associated with positive attributes such as multiculturalism, global values, excellence, and fair competition (Madrigal, Bee, & LaBarge, 2005), many developing countries have historically struggled to be associated with positive attributes in international markets. Searching for strategies to build a positive international image, some developing countries have sought the hosting rights of the Olympic Games, which should work as a unique opportunity to improve their brand image via association with the positive attributes of the Games.

Image transfer between the Olympic brand and the host country brand has been reported in sport management (Florek, Breitbarth, & Conejo, 2008; Gibson, Qi, & Zhang, 2008) and tourism literature (Heslop, Nadeau, & O'Reilly, 2010; Qu, Kim, & Im, 2011). While this transfer can occur either from the Olympic Games to the host or in the reverse direction, previous investigations have shown that image transfer is more likely to happen from the sport event to the host place (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Xing & Chalip, 2006). The transfer direction indicates that a difference in the strength of the brands has existed between the Olympic Games and the hosts, when the host is a developing country. Mainstream marketing investigations have shown that in joint promotions involving a “weak” brand and a “strong” brand, the former benefits the most from the association, because it acquires positive characteristics associated with the latter (Dahlén & Lange, 2005; Keller & Lehmann, 2006). Therefore, in the context of the Olympic Games hosted by developing countries, the country brand image should benefit more from the association with the event than the opposite.

Country brand image has been defined as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (Dinnie, 2008, p. 15). Country branding increases investments and tourism activity by creating international awareness and positive attitudes toward the country (Fetscherin, 2010). Two groups of stakeholders are commonly targeted in the process of country branding: Potential investors and potential tourists. In the current research, we focused on strategies to increase international awareness and attract tourists to the host country of the 2016 Olympic Games, Brazil. Because of that, even more important than country brand image is the concept of *destination*

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* Corresponding author at: University of Sao Paulo, School of Physical Education and Sport of Ribeirao Preto, Ave Bandeirantes, 3900, Ribeirao Preto, SP 14040-907, Brazil.

E-mail address: rocha.7@buckeyemail.osu.edu (C.M. Rocha).

¹ As for developing countries, before this new trend, Mexico City hosted the 1968 Olympic Games.

brand image, which has been defined as “an attitudinal construct consisting of an individual’s mental representation or knowledge (beliefs), feelings, and global impression about an object or destination” (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999, p. 870). The end goal of destination branding is to promote a place as a tourism destination (Hankinson, 2005).

The destination brand image of Brazil as the host country of the 2016 Rio Olympic Games has been *interacting* with the Olympic brand image in the minds of potential international tourists around the world since it was chosen to host this event, because all marketing strategies to promote the event associate the Games with its host city and country. The process of interaction between brands is called *co-branding*, which was defined as “a form of cooperation of two or more brands with significant customer recognition” (Blackett & Boad, 1999, p. 7). Considering the strength differences between the brands, the assumption here is that Brazil can take advantage of co-branding with the Olympic Games mainly because the country is still little competitive as a tourism destination (Montanari, Giraldo, & Campello, 2014; Rezende-Parker, Morrison, & Ismail, 2003). In other words, co-branding can send positive signals about the quality of Brazil as tourism destination, based on the quality of the Olympic Games as a mega event. These signals should help the country to mitigate some possible negative attitudes that international tourists may have toward it. Therefore, the aim of this research was to describe the impacts of the interaction between the brand images of the Olympic Games and Brazil (as a tourism destination) on attitudes toward attending the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and visiting the country after the event.

2. Literature review

2.1. Signaling theory

Signaling (information asymmetry) theory posits that a typical transaction in the market is a two-sided transaction, where each side holds different information regarding the transaction (Spence, 1974). Rao and Ruekert (1994) noted that information asymmetry is a problem for “experience products” (e.g., tourism), whose quality is only observable after purchase and use. In this case, the seller knows more about the product than does the buyer, implying in information asymmetry. In such cases, brands function as “quality signals”, which decrease the asymmetry giving more information for the buyer about the product (Montgomery & Wernerfelt, 1992). Signals are described as “observable, alterable attributes that the business can invest in to communicate superior but unobservable or hidden ex-ante and complex attributes of the product being offered, which are primarily quality and the promise of customer satisfaction” (Smith & Font, 2014, p. 944).

Highly reputable brands help to mitigate information asymmetries by transmitting quality signals (Besharat, 2010). Hosting sport mega-events has been reported as a strategy of co-branding to promote tourism destinations, because the brand of such events transmits quality signals. Sport mega-events have developed strong brand images based on their global appeal, association with excellence and fair competition, and widespread free media attention (Madrigal et al., 2005; Rein & Shields, 2007). Meanwhile, developing countries have been reported as having weak brand images in the tourism market because of their lack of positive attributes and benefits for tourists (Manzenreiter, 2010; Rezende-Parker et al., 2003). Therefore, developing countries started to seek sport mega-events more aggressively, hoping to accrue the benefits of co-branding with a stronger brand.

Mainly in the last decade, developing host countries have created brand alliances with the Olympic Games to send a quality signal to potential international tourists (Gibson et al., 2008; Heslop et al., 2010). For example, China used the quality of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games to showcase the country as an open market and a culturally stimulating tourism destination (Heslop et al., 2010). Since 2008, when Beijing hosted the Games, China has experienced an increased awareness of its tourism destinations (Gibson et al., 2008). Russian

president Vladimir Putin openly declared that the most important legacy of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics would be to position the city as a world-class resort for international tourism (Müller, 2012). In co-branding the city with the Olympic Games, Russian authorities meant to send a quality signal about the new winter facilities and infrastructure to international tourists (Müller, 2012). In the Sochi case, clearly the event did not manage to improve the host image as tourism destination to the world (Müller, 2014). Interestingly, developed host countries have not focused on tourism development as a primary motivation to host the Games (e.g., the USA and Atlanta 1996, the UK and London 2012); rather, these countries have focused on other aspects such as urban regeneration and sport participation (Girginov & Hills, 2008; Grix & Carmichael, 2012). The reasoning behind this option is that London and the UK, for example, are already strong international tourism brands (Smith & Stevenson, 2009).

Brazil still does not have a highly reputable brand as a tourism destination (Montanari et al., 2014; Rezende-Parker et al., 2003), therefore, it needs associations with other (highly reputable) brands to become a much stronger competitor in the tourism market. Brazil strategically bid to host the 2016 Olympic Games to create a brand alliance with the strong Olympic brand (Grix, Brannagan, & Houlihan, 2015). This association should to some extent send a quality signal to potential international tourists, informing about Brazil positive characteristics as a tourism destination. As it happened in 2000 and 2008, when Sydney/Australia and Beijing/China respectively hosted the Games (Chalip, 2002; Gibson et al., 2008), not only the host city, but also the whole country should benefit from the alliance with the Olympic brand.

2.2. Co-branding sport event and host country

Co-branding implies that a cooperation between two brands exists and the name of both brands should be associated to one “product” (Besharat, 2010). The brand alliances between the Olympic Games and their hosts meet the three most common criteria to define an alliance as a co-branding strategy (Baumgarth, 2004; Besharat, 2010; Washburn, Till, & Priluck, 2000). First, the alliance should be based on a long-term agreement and cooperation. Any edition of the Olympic Games is granted to its host seven years before the event, which represents a long-term process of cooperation between the IOC, the guardian of the Olympic Games, and the host. While the host uses this time to prepare the city/country to receive tens of thousands of tourists, to build/remodel sport arenas, to improve infrastructure, and to handle the demands of a huge number of media personnel, the two brands constantly appear together in the media. Second, the name of both brands should be present on the product. In fact, co-branding is ubiquitous in the Olympic marketing strategies mainly because the name of the host is always associated with the name of the event. For example, we recently watched *the 2012 London Olympic Games* and *the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympic Games*. The product *Olympic Games* always comes along with the name of a host city associated to it, indicating a co-branding association between the event and the host. Third, an important objective of the alliance is to launch a “new” product in the market. Although we cannot say that the Olympic Games have ever introduced a new city/country to tourism market, the Games have definitely reshaped the competitive advantage of developing host cities/countries in the tourism market, creating a new perspective about some places as tourism destinations (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Gibson et al., 2008).

Previous studies have investigated the influences of sport events and destination brand images on intentions to attend events and to visit the host country (Gibson et al., 2008; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007). However, none of these previous studies have empirically measured influences of the *interaction* between the event and the destination brand images on visiting attitudes. For example, Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007) investigated the effects of the destination image on intentions to visit the host city of a bicycling event in the United States. They considered both the

destination brand image and the event brand image as predictors of respondents' intentions to visit the host city. As expected, they found that destination brand image had positive influences on intentions to visit the place. Additionally, they found that event brand image affected the destination image, but the opposite did not happen. Although their results are quite interesting, they did not consider how the two brands interact with each other (co-branding) to predict intentions of either attending the event or visiting the host place.

In the context of the Olympic Games, Gibson et al. (2008) found that China's destination brand image affected Americans' intentions to attend the 2008 Games and to visit the host country. Besides demographic variables, the only variable they considered as an antecedent of destination brand image was international travel experience. Once more, as expected, positive evaluations of destination brand image indicated more intentions to visit the place and to attend the event. However, these authors did not verify the role of the Olympic brand image in those intentions. Considering the strength of the Olympic brand, it is very plausible that some people would be willing to attend the Games because of the attributes and benefits of the event per se, even when brand image of the host is not so positive (Madrigal et al., 2005; Toohey & Veal, 2007). Omitting the event brand image, the authors were not able to control for it when testing the importance of destination brand image; nor were they able to test how the interaction between the Olympic Games and the destination brand images would affect people's attitudes toward the event and the host country. Investigating the same event, the 2008 Beijing Games, Heslop et al. (2010) compared national and international tourists in their perceptions about China (not only Beijing) as a vacation destination before and after the 2008 Games. However, like Kaplanidou and Vogt (2007), they did not consider that the brand images of China and the Games might have interacted with each other and affected tourists' perceptions of the place as a vacation destination. Instead, they have simply assumed that hosting the Olympics should somehow improve tourists' perceptions about China as a tourism destination. As their results showed, that was not case, mainly among international tourists.

Xing and Chalip (2006) proposed that the fit between a destination and a sport event should have influences on the event brand image, which should affect destination brand image, which in turn should affect intentions to visit the host city. They reported three main findings. First, the fit between destinations and events did not necessarily result in better evaluations of event and destination brand images. Second, sport events had some impact on destination brand image, but the reverse was not true. Third, destination brand image did affect intentions to visit the host region. Xing and Chalip did not empirically test the interaction between the sport event brand image and the destination brand image and how this interaction factor might have affected intentions to visit the host city.

Previous investigations on sport event and destination branding have contributed to the literature in two main aspects. First, those studies consistently reported that, although the image transfer may occur in both directions, it has routinely happened from the event to the host region, but not in the opposite direction (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Second, they systematically showed significant main effects of destination brand image and sport event brand image on attitudes (e.g., intentions to attend/visit) toward both sport events and host regions (Gibson et al., 2008; Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007; Xing & Chalip, 2006). Despite these important contributions, none of the previous studies have empirically tested how the interaction effect between the Olympic brand image and the host country brand image might affect tourists' attitudes toward attending the event and visiting the host country after the event. In this research, we fill this gap in the literature, by investigating how the Olympic brand image and the destination brand image of a host country interact to each other and how this interaction affects international tourists' attitudes toward attending the event – the 2016 Games – and visiting the host country – Brazil – after the Games.

2.3. A structural model

A structural model was framed within Keller's (1993) branding framework. According to Keller, brand images are associations held in consumers' memory; such associations depend on three dimensions: attributes, benefits, and attitudes. Attributes are “descriptive features” that consumers hold in mind when they think about a good or a service (Keller, 1993). Based on previous research (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gibson et al., 2008), we propose two types of attributes – attractions and hospitality – to represent the descriptive features of the destination and the Olympic Games brand images. Attractions of a tourism destination can vary, but they are usually summarized in the concepts of beautiful scenery, interesting natural and cultural attractions, and availability of entertainment (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). Attractions of the Olympic Games are naturally related to the sport contests per se; but cultural opportunities, festival atmosphere, and entertainment are also important attributes of such events (Heslop et al., 2010). Hospitality attributes are related to high quality infrastructure, suitable accommodations, perceptions of personal safety, and friendly local residents (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). These attributes can be associated to both the destination and the event. For example, suitable accommodations as an attribute of a tourism destination are usually related to the availability of rooms and the quality of hotels in the city; while as an attribute of sport events, they are frequently linked to the quality of sport facilities.

Benefits represent consumers' perceptions about what a product “can do for them” (Keller, 1993). Benefits can have a functional (useful to solve a problem or to address a need), an experiential (useful to satisfy a desire), and symbolic (useful to improve self-esteem, prestige, sense of exclusivity) dimension. Previous investigations have indicated that Olympic Games tourists are mainly seeking for symbolic benefits when they decide to attend the event. For example, tourists travel to attend the Olympic Games mainly because they are sport fans looking for once-in-a-lifetime experience (Neirotti, Bosetti, & Teed, 2001). Additionally, international tourists had expectations of personal and cultural growth, excitement, and uniqueness – all symbolic benefits – when reporting why they would attend the Games (Funk, Alexandris, & Ping, 2009).

Brand attitudes are “a function of the associate attributes and benefits that are salient for the brand” (Keller, 1993, p.4). Attitudes represent a “summary evaluation” of a brand, which depends on perceptions of attributes and benefits of the brand (Ajzen, 2001; Keller, 1993). Some authors have assumed that attributes and benefits are cognitive elements that trigger attitudes or affective evaluations of a brand image (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999; Gartner & Gartner, 1996). Based on Keller's framework, we proposed a model (Fig. 1) where attributes (attractions and hospitality) and benefits of the event (the Olympic Games) are antecedents of attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games. Likewise, attributes and benefits of Brazil as a tourism destination are antecedents of attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games. Innovative in this model is the proposition that attributes and benefits of the destination interact with attributes and benefits of the event, affecting both the attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games and attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games.

Attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games represent short-term tourism impacts, while *attitudes toward visiting Brazil after the Games* represent longer-term tourism impacts. The Olympic Games have been sufficient to attract a large number of tourists to the host country during the event (Hiller & Wanner, 2011), mainly because of the strong event brand image (Gibson et al., 2008; Neirotti et al., 2001; Séguin & O'Reilly, 2008). However, the image of Brazil as a tourism destination has not been strong enough to make it an important competitor in the tourism market (Montanari et al., 2014; Rezende-Parker et al., 2003). What we do not know is whether the brand alliance between the Olympics and Brazil can bring longer-term positive tourism impacts to the country. This research intends to take the first step to answer this question as it investigates the interaction effects of the Olympic brand image and the destination brand image on attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games.

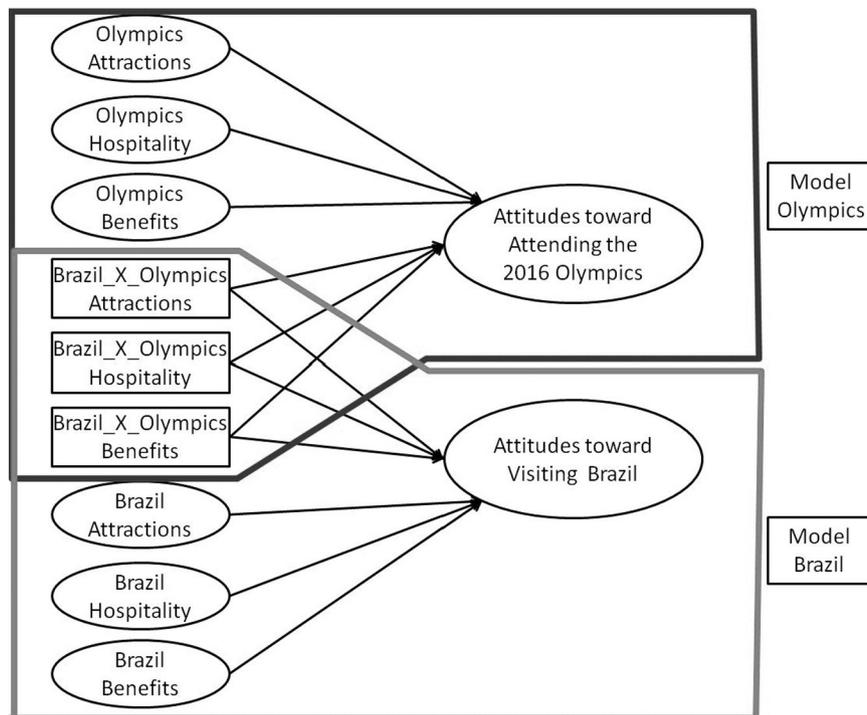


Fig. 1. Structural models to test the interaction between the destination brand image of Brazil and the Olympic brand image on attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games (Model Olympics) and visiting Brazil after the Games (Model Brazil).

3. Method

In the current investigation, we applied both quantitative and qualitative methods. First, we conducted a web-based survey to test the proposed model. Second, we carried out five focus groups with sport management graduate students to clarify some of the puzzling findings in the quantitative part. The literature has argued for the use of qualitative methods as a follow-up tool to assist the researchers in the interpretation of survey results (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998; Morgan, 1996). Moreover, the use of mixing methods created the opportunity of triangulation (quantitative–qualitative–literature), which is extremely useful to investigate a topic in depth (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). The following subsections describe the procedures in more details.

3.1. Quantitative procedure

3.1.1. Participants

We focused on American citizens for different reasons. First, Americans have been the largest crowd of international tourists in recent sport mega-events hosted by Brazil. For example, during the 2014 FIFA World Cup, 196,838 American tourists visited the host country, representing by far the largest group of international tourists during that event (Rodrigues & Lavinas, 2014). For the sake of comparison, a neighbor and soccer-fanatic country, Argentina sent 61,021 tourists to Brazil, representing the second largest crowd of international tourists attending the 2014 World Cup. In this sense, American tourists who visited the country might be interested in returning to the country for tourism after the sport mega-events and they might have positively advertised the country as a tourism destination to friends and relatives. Second, Brazil and the USA have well established diplomatic relationships, which facilitate the transit of international tourists between these two countries. Recently, Brazil offered a visa waiver for American tourists who visited the country during the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and this waiver has just been extended beyond that period (Lummertz, 2016). Third, although the number of Americans interested

in travelling to South America is still very low, Brazil is the favorite tourism destination in this continent (Rosenbloom, 2015).

We estimated our necessary sample size based on Bentler and Chou's (1987) suggestion that the ratio of sample size to free parameters should be between 5:1 and 10:1. We had 96 free parameters to be estimated in the measurement model, indicating that we need a sample between 480 and 960 respondents. To have a power of at least 0.99 to retain the null hypothesis for the test of close fit (H_0 : RMSEA \leq 0.05), we opted for a sample size of at least 700 subjects (MacCallum, Browne, & Sugawara, 1996; Preacher & Coffman, 2006). Considering the possibility of discarding some of the questionnaires, we recruited 725 American adults (aged 18 or older) through the MTurk web-based platform (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). Three questionnaires were discarded, creating a final sample of 722 usable questionnaires. The respondents were mostly female (54.8%), non-Latinos (87.3%), with some college degree (87.5%), with an average household income of \$53,860 ($SD =$ \$34,540), and with an average age of 33.2 years ($SD =$ 11.5 years).

To attract potential American tourists, we took two steps when preparing our MTurk questionnaire. First, in the description (invitation) of our questionnaire, we invited only those who are really interested in international tourism. The description read, "If you are really interested in international travel and tourism, please, take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire". Second, in the qualification requirement we set the option "location is US", which allowed only people located in the US to respond the questionnaire. Taking into account that most of the respondents (82.5%) reported that they have travelled abroad at least once in their lives, we consider that our attempt to attract potential tourists was successful. Additionally, some of the respondents have travelled to South America (22.2%) and/or to Brazil (6.8%) before. Few respondents (6.9%) reported that they have attended a previous edition of the Olympic Games.

3.1.2. Instrumentation

Factors, items, stems, and response format are on the two first columns of Table 1. The first section of questionnaire was composed by three scales: Attributes/attractions (four items), attributes/hospitality

(four items) and benefits (four items) of attending the Olympic Games. The items in both scales of attributes were adapted from [Heslop et al. \(2010\)](#), while the items in the subscale of benefits were adapted from [Funk et al. \(2009\)](#). The second section was composed by three scales: Attributes/attractions (four items), attributes/hospitality (four items) and benefits (four items) of Brazil as a tourism destination. The items in both scales of attributes were adapted from those of [Baloglu and McCleary \(1999\)](#), while the items in the subscale of benefits were adapted from [Funk et al. \(2009\)](#).

The third and the fourth section of the questionnaire were about attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympic Games and visiting Brazil

after the Games, respectively. Because of the affective nature of the construct, attitudes have been measured on semantic differential scales ([Baloglu & Mangalolu, 2001](#); [Kaplanidou & Vogt, 2007](#); [Lam & Hsu, 2006](#)). We followed [Lam and Hsu \(2006\)](#) and evaluated attitudes based on five semantic differential statements (see [Table 1](#)).

Based on the literature (e.g., [Gibson et al., 2008](#)), we believe that previous experiences with international travels and with the Olympic Games might influence respondents' perceptions about the constructions under investigation. Therefore, in the last section of the questionnaire, we included questions related to these points and demographic questions (age, sex, ethnicity, education, and household income).

Table 1
Factors, items, and descriptive statistics.

Factors and stems	Items	λ	AVE	α	ρ	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Section 1									
Olympic Games attractions									
Please, indicate your perception about the strength of the association between the Olympic Games and the following attributes: (1 - Extremely weak \rightarrow 7 - Extremely strong)	Festival environment	0.674	0.53	0.754	0.757	5.85	0.87	-0.70	0.35
	Interesting sport attractions	0.724				5.96	1.08		
	Interesting cultural attractions	0.730				6.01	1.09		
	Good entertainment	0.778				5.51	1.27		
Olympic Games hospitality									
Please, indicate your perception about the strength of the association between the Olympic Games and the following attributes: (1 - Extremely weak \rightarrow 7 - Extremely strong)	Suitable sport facilities	0.812	0.55	0.773	0.788	5.38	1.02	-0.49	0.34
	High quality infrastructure	0.730				5.94	1.16		
	Personal safety	0.615				5.31	1.39		
	Friendly people	0.796				4.82	1.46		
Olympic Games Benefits									
Attending an edition of the Olympic Games would be: (1 - Very strongly disagree \rightarrow 7 - Very strongly agree)	Once-in-a-lifetime experience	0.865	0.74	0.835	0.849	5.98	1.00	-1.08	1.39
	An opportunity for cultural growth	0.898				6.29	1.12		
	An opportunity for personal growth	0.849				5.76	1.28		
	A rare experience	0.838				5.58	1.36		
Section 2									
Brazil attractions									
Please, indicate your perception about the strength of the association between Brazil and the following attributes: (1 - Extremely weak \rightarrow 7 - Extremely strong)	Beautiful scenery	0.714	0.53	0.772	0.779	5.87	0.79	-0.70	0.64
	Interesting natural attractions	0.712				5.96	1.00		
	Interesting cultural attractions	0.782				5.91	0.98		
	Good entertainment	0.712				5.86	1.05		
Brazil hospitality									
Please, indicate your perception about the strength of the association between Brazil and the following attributes: (1 - Extremely weak \rightarrow 7 - Extremely strong)	Suitable hotel accommodations	0.704	0.55	0.783	0.795	4.33	1.02	0.21	-0.02
	High quality infrastructure	0.788				4.66	1.18		
	Personal safety	0.668				4.01	1.36		
	Friendly people	0.794				3.35	1.44		
Brazil benefits									
Travelling to Brazil would be: (1 - Very strongly disagree \rightarrow 7 - Very strongly agree)	Once-in-a-lifetime experience	0.831	0.71	0.856	0.855	5.93	0.94	-0.95	1.66
	An opportunity for cultural growth	0.917				5.96	1.17		
	An opportunity for personal growth	0.840				6.05	0.99		
	A rare experience	0.768				5.74	1.20		
Section 3									
Attitude toward attending the 2016 Games									
Taking into account all other things, I think attending the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro would be: (e.g., 1 - Unenjoyable-7 - Enjoyable)	Unenjoyable-Enjoyable	0.850	0.84	0.936	0.942	5.63	1.52	-1.27	0.90
	Negative-Positive	0.925				6.00	1.38		
	Boring-Fun	0.877				5.52	1.72		
	Unpleasant-Pleasant	0.953				5.70	1.83		
	Unfavorable-Favorable	0.966				5.44	1.75		
Section 4									
Attitude toward visiting Brazil									
Taking into account all other things, I think visiting Brazil as a tourist AFTER the 2016 Olympic Games would be: (e.g., 1 - Unenjoyable-7 - Enjoyable)	Unenjoyable-Enjoyable	0.870	0.85	0.951	0.955	5.49	1.46	-1.09	0.80
	Negative-Positive	0.952				5.69	1.47		
	Boring-Fun	0.920				5.40	1.61		
	Unpleasant-Pleasant	0.939				5.59	1.62		
	Unfavorable-Favorable	0.938				5.41	1.61		

3.1.3. Data analysis

First, we reported some descriptive statistics to check the normality and to describe the latent variables of the study. Second, we tested the reliability of the measures using Cronbach's alpha (internal constancy) and composite reliabilities (Raykov & Marcoulides, 2011). Then, we reported the fit indices for the measurement model, factor loadings, and average variance extracted (AVE) to verify the construct validity according to Fornell and Larcker's (1981) procedures. After testing the measurement model, we tested the proposed model using covariance-based structural equation modeling. To test the interaction effect, we computed Bayes factor scores estimates following the procedures described by Asparouhov and Muthén (2010), via Mplus 7.11. For the structural model analyses, the variables were centered on their means to facilitate the interpretation of conditional effects. Mean centering a variable implies subtracting its mean for all its values. To interpret conditional effects, mean centering is useful because, when verifying the effects of changing one single variable over another single variable, all other variables will be set to their means instead of to zero (which would make little theoretical sense).

3.2. Qualitative procedure

Five focus groups with sport management graduate students ($n = 23$) were conducted to clarify some of the findings of the study and to help the interpretation of the quantitative results. All participants were American citizens. Two focus groups with four students each were conducted in a Northeastern university, and three focus groups with five students each were conducted in a Midwestern university. A \$25 gift card was raffled among the participants after each focus group. The script for the focus groups approached basically three points: brand image of the Olympic Games, brand image of Brazil as a tourism destination, and the positive/negative aspects of the interaction between the two brands to improve the brand image of Brazil as a tourism destination. The principal investigator was the moderator, who was also responsible for recording the answers/opinions and transcribing them later. The moderator ensured that all participants had opportunity to talk and effectively gave their opinions. Data analysis involved describing convergent and divergent opinions and examining how these opinions vary among individuals and among groups (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998). Focus groups lasted an average of 23 min and were transcribed two weeks after the meetings.

4. Results

Skewness and kurtosis measures indicated univariate normality and a mesokurtic distribution of the data (Table 1). Means (M) and standard deviations (SD) showed that the respondents perceived the Olympic Games as a strong brand, based on its attractions, hospitality, and benefits; and they had a positive attitude toward attending the 2016 Games (all means are above five, in seven-point scales). At the same time, they perceived Brazil attractions and benefits as positive, they had a positive attitude toward visiting Brazil after the Games, but they had a neutral perception of Brazil's hospitality ($M = 4.33$; $SD = 1.02$). Three out of four indicators (items) of Brazil's hospitality were rated below five, indicating either neutral or negative perceptions about suitable hotel accommodations ($M = 4.66$; $SD = 1.18$), high quality infrastructure ($M = 4.01$; $SD = 1.36$), and personal safety ($M = 3.35$; $SD = 1.44$).

The values of the Cronbach's alphas (internal consistency measures) and composite reliability measures (ρ s) indicated good reliability of the measures (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). The AVE (average variance extracted) is a measure of convergent validity, which is obtained by summing each squared factor loading (λ in Table 1) and dividing it by the number of indicators (items) of a construct. The values of the AVE (Table 1) were all above 0.50, indicating convergent validity. In addition to that, all AVE were larger than the correlations of this construct with all others variables, indicating discriminant validity among constructs

(Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Constructs were moderately correlated and all were significant at $p < 0.001$ (Table 2).

The measurement model fit the data reasonably well (Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.964; Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.959; Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) [90% Confidence Interval] = 0.077 [0.074; 0.080]). Based on this model, each of the items loaded significantly high on their assigned factors, as represented by the factor loadings (Table 1). The structural model that used attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games as the endogenous variable (Model Olympics – Fig. 1) fit the data reasonably well (CFI = 0.955; TLI = 0.941; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.066 [0.056; 0.077]). The path coefficients indicated that none of the interactions were significant in this model (Table 3). Considering that we have interactions in the model, the unstandardized coefficients represent conditional effects instead of main effects. The conditional effects for *Olympic attractions* and *Olympic hospitality* were significant. The results showed that one unit change in perceptions of Olympic attractions implies in an increase of 0.695 in positive attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games, when all other variables are set to their means (or to the reference group for the dummy-coded control variables). Similarly, one unit change in perceptions of positive Olympic hospitality implies in an increase of 0.262 in positive attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games, when all other variables are set to their means (or to the reference group for the dummy-coded control variables).

The structural model that used attitudes toward visiting Brazil after the Games as the endogenous variable (Model Brazil – Fig. 1) fit the data closely (CFI = 0.969; TLI = 0.959; RMSEA [90% CI] = 0.054 [0.045; 0.064]). The interaction between *Brazil hospitality* and *Olympic hospitality* was significant (Table 3). The negative coefficient indicated that for every unit that Olympic hospitality increases, the slope of attitudes toward travelling to Brazil after the Games on Brazil hospitality is predicted to decrease by 0.316 units. Additionally, the conditional effects of *Brazil hospitality* and *Brazil benefits* were significant. The results showed that one unit change in perceptions of Brazil hospitality implies in an increase of 0.595 in positive attitudes toward visiting the country after the 2016 Games, when all other variables are set to their means (or to the reference group for the dummy-coded control variables). Further, one unit change in perceptions of Brazil benefits implies in an increase of 0.405 in positive attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games, when all other variables are set to their means (or to the reference group for the dummy-coded control variables).

4.1. Focus groups results

In the focus groups, we had a close number of males ($n = 13$) and females ($n = 10$). Most of the participants ($n = 18$; 78.3%) reported previous international travels, but just one female participant had been in South America and Brazil before. In all five groups, they used the terms "soccer", "beaches", and "warm weather" to describe Brazil. Overall, the participants expressed some issues about the current way the Olympic Games have been conducted, but in all groups, there is an agreement that the event still holds a positive brand image. Meanwhile,

Table 2
Correlations among constructs.

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
(1) Brazil attractions	1							
(2) Brazil hospitality	0.441	1						
(3) Brazil benefits	0.560	0.319	1					
(4) Brazil attitude	0.351	0.331	0.362	1				
(5) Olympics attractions	0.534	0.308	0.460	0.234	1			
(6) Olympics hospitality	0.363	0.403	0.298	0.160	0.622	1		
(7) Olympics benefits	0.398	0.239	0.543	0.127	0.524	0.364	1	
(8) Olympics attitude	0.280	0.246	0.304	0.666	0.252	0.200	0.283	1

Note. All correlations were significant at $p < 0.01$.

Table 3

Fit indices and unstandardized path coefficients for the structural models.

Attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympics					Attitudes toward Brazil as a tourism destination				
Fit indices					Fit indices				
χ^2/df	3.75				χ^2/df	2.81			
CFI	0.955				CFI	0.969			
TLI	0.941				TLI	0.959			
RMSEA [90% CI]	0.066 [0.056; 0.077]				RMSEA [90% CI]	0.054 [0.045; 0.064]			
Indicator	Estimate	SE	Est./SE	p	Indicator	Estimate	SE	Est./SE	p
Olympic attractions	0.695	0.047	14.807	<0.001	Brazil attractions	0.018	0.134	0.132	0.895
Olympic hospitality	0.262	0.123	2.119	0.034	Brazil hospitality	0.594	0.099	5.985	<0.001
Olympic benefits	-0.107	0.102	-1.050	0.294	Brazil benefits	0.405	0.092	4.394	<0.001
Brazil attractions × Olympic attractions	-0.081	0.049	-1.648	0.099	Brazil × Olympic attractions	0.125	0.140	0.891	0.373
Brazil hospitality × Olympic hospitality	-0.031	0.073	-0.430	0.667	Brazil × Olympic hospitality	-0.316	0.102	-3.095	0.002
Brazil benefits × Olympic benefits	0.019	0.051	0.380	0.704	Brazil × Olympic benefits	-0.042	0.080	-0.523	0.601
Age	0.017	0.035	0.504	0.614	Age	-0.005	0.004	-1.265	0.206
Sex (male = 0; female = 1)	-0.106	0.103	-1.035	0.300	Sex (male = 0; female = 1)	0.141	0.085	1.661	0.097
Latino (no = 0; yes = 1)	-0.008	0.002	-3.657	0.001	Latino (no = 0; yes = 1)	0.175	0.149	1.169	0.242
Education (no college = 0; college = 1)	-0.009	0.052	-0.171	0.864	Education (no college = 0; college = 1)	0.099	0.136	0.732	0.464
Household income	0.022	0.095	0.232	0.817	Household income	0.001	0.001	0.873	0.383
Travel abroad	-0.022	0.064	-0.353	0.724	Travel abroad	0.002	0.006	0.294	0.769
Attended previous Olympics	-0.011	0.014	-0.790	0.429	Travel to South America	-0.016	0.024	-0.644	0.519
					Travel to Brazil	0.059	0.052	1.131	0.258

the participants expressed some concerns about going to Brazil for tourism, mainly because of personal safety and communication issues. Regarding the use of the Olympic Games image to improve the brand image of Brazil as a tourism destination, there was no consensus among groups. In two groups, participants believed that the interaction with the Olympic brand would be positive for Brazil. In two other groups, participants understood that Brazil did not need the Olympics, because they saw the country as a well-established tourism destination. In one group, participants were more neutral, but they still did not see large benefits from the association. More details about the focus groups results are presented in the next section, where we use triangulation to discuss our results.

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to describe the impacts of the interaction between the brand images of the Olympic Games and Brazil (as a tourism destination) on attitudes toward attending the 2016 Rio Olympic Games and on visiting the country after the event. Drawing on signaling theory and applying Keller's (1993) branding framework, we proposed to test the effects of the interactions between Olympic Games' and Brazil's attributes (attractions and hospitality) and benefits on attitudes. The literature has reported the Olympic Games as a strong brand (Gibson et al., 2008; Madrigal et al., 2005; Neirotti et al., 2001; Rein & Shields, 2007). On the other hand, Brazil as a tourism destination has been reported as a weak brand (Montanari et al., 2014; Rezende-Parker et al., 2003). Therefore, in associating these two brands, the image transfer was more likely to happen from the Olympic Games to Brazil and affect attitudes toward visiting the country than from Brazil to the Olympic Games and affect attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Xing & Chalip, 2006).

Results showed that the interaction effects on attitudes toward attending the Olympic Games were non-significant. This result ratifies previous investigations (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Xing & Chalip, 2006) that found that image transfers are more likely to happen from the sport event to the host region. Bodet and Lacassagne (2012), for example, reported that a clear image transfer occurred from the Olympic Games to China as the host place of the 2008 Games. However, their results failed to demonstrate transfers in the other direction, that is, from the host to the event. Heslop et al. (2010) asserted that human rights violation and environmental issues were frequently associated with China during the 2008 Games, mainly via mass media. However, such negative

aspects of the host country were apparently not enough to harm the Olympic Games brand image (Bodet & Lacassagne, 2012; Heslop et al., 2010). In the current study with Brazil, positive attitudes toward attending the 2016 Olympic Games were affected by attributes (attractions and hospitality) of the Games; but the same attitudes were not affected either by the interactions between attributes, or by the interactions between benefits of the host country and the event. The brand image of the Olympic Games seems to be strong enough to guarantee positive attitudes toward the event and consequently to pull people to the event (Ajzen, 2001; Uysal & Jurowski, 1994), with no interaction with the host country being necessary.

The fact that the Olympic Games hold a strong brand was confirmed in the focus groups. In all five meetings, the participants expressed criticisms related to some social and economic issues of the contemporary Olympics. They mentioned that in being in a sport management program "has opened their eyes" about problems such as corruption, social abuse of workers, discrimination (usually citing Sochi 2014 as an example), and bad use of public money. However, in four out of the five groups at least one participant used the sentence "I love the Olympics". Additionally, in all groups, participants expressed that despite the above-mentioned issues, the Olympics still have a lot of credibility because of its positive characteristics such as globalization, high-level competition, and cultural integration. For example, one of the participants said that, "The good part [of the Olympic Games] though..., I mean, there is good competition, the unity, I mean, the competition in general and everything about sport is great. You know, breaking barriers. It is awesome to bring people together from different cultures, different languages, different backgrounds, different ways of life coming together over a sport event – this is great".

On the other hand, the interaction between Brazil's hospitality and Olympic Games hospitality significantly affected attitudes toward visiting the country after the Games. This result only partially supported the assumption that Brazil as a tourism destination would benefit from the association with the Olympics' brand image, because the interaction between attractions and benefits were *not* significant. These findings may indicate that gains from the association with the Olympics can be fewer than the expected, because only one, out of three possible interactions, was significant to explain variance on intentions to visit the host country after the Games. These are new findings because previous studies (e.g., Gibson et al., 2008; Heslop et al., 2010) have not empirically tested how interactions between the Olympic brand and the host country brand images might affect tourists' attitudes toward visiting the host

country after the event. The current investigation extended previous findings also by showing that the conditional effects of hospitality and benefits of the host country were significant predictors of attitudes toward visiting Brazil after the 2016 Games.

The focus groups' results gave support for the idea that the association with the Olympic brand might bring fewer gains to Brazil than the expected. When asked about the image of Brazil as a tourism destination, and the positive or negative effects of the interaction with the Olympic Games brand, participants of three focus groups indicated that Brazil might not need this association to promote itself as a tourism destination. Referring to this point, a participant asserted that, "I am little bit skeptical. I think if it was a less well-known country or a less well-known city, there would be potential for more benefit of being associate with the Olympics". A participant from another group asked, "Does Brazil really need all that to boost tourism? I mean, I never thought Brazil is hosting the event to improve tourism. [...] When I think about tourism in South America, the first place I think is Brazil". Another participant from a different group summarized the point by saying, "I think Brazil can benefit from the brand association, but I think it is almost minimal. [...] If I go to Brazil, it won't be because it hosted the Olympics, it won't be because I want to see the venues of the Olympics. It would be because I want to see the country. It can be a nice add-on, but it cannot by itself be enough [to attract me as a tourist]".

Based on the quantitative results, Brazil's hospitality attributes seem to benefit from the association with the Olympics because potential tourists have concerns about aspects such as hotel accommodations, infrastructure, and personal safety. The negative significant interaction effect indicates that the slope of attitudes toward travelling to Brazil after the Games on Brazil hospitality decreases, while Olympic hospitality increases. The interaction between the two brands was particularly important to increase positive attitudes toward visiting Brazil for those with low perceptions of Brazil's hospitality. At low values of Brazil's hospitality, higher perceptions of the Olympic hospitality promoted higher attitudes toward visiting the country. On the other hand, at high values of Brazil's hospitality, the association with the Olympic brand does not bring any extra benefit to the country.

Checking the descriptive statistics, one can see that three out of four indicators of Brazil's hospitality were rated below five, indicating low perceptions about this attribute. Additionally, participants of the focus groups confirmed that American people have low perceptions about Brazil's hospitality. Problems with hotel accommodations and infrastructure were mentioned by different participants in three focus groups. A participant used a recent negative example to show his concerns about accommodations. He said, "You know, when Russia hosted the [2014 Sochi Winter] Olympics and they had issues with hotels, it is easy for people to assume it happens to all hotels. I think there is such a huge opportunity to create a positive brand from an international event, but there is such a huge opportunity to create a negative brand as well". Being more specific about Brazil, another participant from a different group mentioned that, "The big thing about the Olympics being hosted in Brazil is the infrastructure itself, [...] that would be the first [concern] to come to my mind". Some participants mentioned hotel accommodations and infrastructure, but many of them mentioned safety as a constant concern in all five groups. A participant was direct and said, "I think I would be specifically concerned about safety issues going to Brazil". Interestingly the participants associated the problem with the place and not with the event. For example, a participant expressed that, "it [the 2016 Olympic Games] can either enhance or deplete the stereotypes and connotations of being a dangerous area [...]. So, I think, depending on how successful running the Olympics will be, it can be a foreteller for what happens. I think if there are more stories about fans being pin pocketed and things like that, it can bring out, [...] it seems like Brazil is doing nothing specifically to deal with that and it can cause a negative effect". The simple association with the Olympics will not create a sense of safety among international tourists. Even a safe event, without major safety problems and negative publicity, might

not be enough to improve perceptions of safety, as pointed by another participant who asserted that, "I think safety can play a detrimental role if it does not happen [during the 2016 Games], but it is not going to be super-positive if it happens". In other words, people expect to be safe when attending a mega-event such as the Olympic Games; however, this expectation does not necessarily transfer to the host place when the event is gone.

Results of the current research cast some doubts on the benefits of co-branding a developing country along with the Olympic Games. Based on previous findings, the uniqueness of the association (Jago, Chalip, Brown, Mules, & Ali, 2003) and the dissimilarity between Brazil and the Olympics should have produced better results in terms of image transfer (Brown, Chalip, Jago, & Mules, 2004). None of the interaction terms significantly affected intentions to attend the 2016 Games in Rio. In terms of short-term tourism, this should not be a problem because the brand of the Olympic Games is strong enough to pull tourists to the event. On the other hand, in terms of longer-term tourism development, this should be a problem if the country does not have other strategies to leverage the tourism after the Games. Based on the results, we suggest that Brazil should focus more on improving and publicizing the attributes of its hospitality, which had low evaluations and significantly affected the attitudes toward visiting the country after the event.

One of the limitations of the current study is that we do not know if positive attitudes toward visiting the country after the 2016 Games will convert in actual behaviors. We tested attitudes in the pre-event stage when actual behaviors could not be measured. However, it did not belittle the importance of the study because positive attitudes have been consistently reported as predictors of positive behaviors toward brands (Ajzen, 1991; Baldinger & Rubinson, 1996; Mahony, Madrigal, & Howard, 2000) and as predictors of actual visits to tourism destinations (Quintal, Lee, & Soutar, 2010). In fact, the current study should be considered as the first step to better understand the benefits host countries can accrue from the association with the Olympic Games in terms of tourism. For future studies, we should consider two additional steps. First, we should try to describe attitudes toward the Olympic brand, the host country, and the interaction in a post-event moment. This would be useful to describe the changes in attitudes based on different aspects of the success/lack of success of the Games. Second, we should try to investigate actual tourists coming to the country after 2016, and check if the association between Brazil and the Olympics has affected their option for this country as a tourism destination. This second additional step should tackle the second limitation of the current study – the use of a sample of potential tourists, instead of actual tourists. Additionally, we should mention as a limitation the convenience sample, which does not permit extrapolations to the population.

Although we have tested attitudes toward attending the 2016 Games, we have been more concerned about what happens when the event, the excitement, and the media interest were gone. The focus of the current investigation was on attitudes toward the host country of the 2016 Olympic Games as a tourism destination *after* the Games. To improve chances of longer-term effects, the most important practical implication of the current study was that Brazilian tourism managers should use the media attention brought by the Olympic Games to market Brazil attributes. Specifically, hospitality and the questions of safety should be emphasized in any marketing campaign. An association with the Olympic brand by itself can be not enough to improve attitudes toward the country as a tourism destination and consequently can fail to boost tourism after the Games.

In leveraging the tourism legacies of the Games, the association with the Olympic Games can be a starting point, but should not define the government programs in terms of longer-term tourism development (Chalip, 2002). Minnaert (2012) highlighted that an important parcel of the legacy of the Olympic Games is delivered in the pre-event stages, because usually funding to leverage strategies wanes after the event. In this sense, three practical points might be helpful for Brazil and other developing countries hosting the event in the future. First, authorities

of Brazilian tourism should not rely exclusively on the association with the Olympics to promote the country as a tourism destination. Second, Brazil should not have waited until the Olympic Games were gone to deliver tourism programs that would help it to increase the attractiveness of the country in the international market. Third, many tourists during the event do not guarantee a long-term tourism impact for the country. To promote long-term impact, a practical suggestion would be to focus less in the association and more on the attributes of the country, which should improve attitudes toward Brazil as a tourism destination before and after the Games.

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Claudio M. Rocha is an assistant professor at School of Physical Education and Sport of Ribeirao Preto, University of Sao Paulo, Brazil. His research interests are in sport mega-events and international sport tourism. Dr. Rocha was a Fulbright Scholar during his Ph.D. at Ohio State University.



Janet S. Fink is a professor and chair of the Mark H McCormack Sport Management Department, Isenberg School of Management, University of Massachusetts, Amherst. Her research interests are in sport consumer behaviors, diversity, and gender issues in sports.