BRAND MANAGEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN RUGBY: THE SUPER 12 CASE

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SUMMARY

Branding is a relatively new phenomenon in rugby, a sport that only recently became professional and commercialised in South Africa. Despite the importance of brands and consumer perceptions of brands, the Super 12 rugby franchises in South Africa have not yet used a measurement technique to assess spectators' perceptions of the rugby brands. If some understanding of spectators' perceptions of brands could be developed, rugby franchises in South Africa might be able to determine the brand equity of their sport teams. Brand equity provides a yardstick by which the management of brands can be assessed.

By ascertaining spectators' awareness, the associations they make about rugby brands, as well as brand loyalty and the perceived quality of the South African Super 12 rugby brands, it would be possible to determine the brand equity of these teams. The aim of this study was to investigate the brand management of South African rugby, by focusing on the brand equity of the respective South African Super 12 rugby brands.

1 INTRODUCTION

According to Williams (2004), South Africa's international isolation from the 1970s to the early 1990s led to South African sport organisations missing out on a generation of global sports development, on and off the field. When South African rugby became professional in 1995 (Basson 2003), leadership, governance and management were often primitive, and while the top nations were evolving professional structures, brand management and appropriate legal and medical relationships, South African sport was stagnating (Williams 2004). Hence South African sports brands are still catching up and have a way to go before reaching the earnings levels of the top sports brands in the world (Hasenfuss 2001).

This paper focuses on the brand management in South African rugby, with specific focus on the South African Super 12 rugby brands, and therefore, branding will be discussed next.

1.1 Branding

A *brand* is a name, symbol, design or some combination, which identifies the product of a particular organisation as having a sustainable differential advantage (Baker & Hart 1999; Tybout & Calkins 2005). In this paper therefore, any reference to a name, symbol and/or design will refer to a brand.

Brand identity includes all elements through which a brand communicates with the world around it (Kohli & Leuthesser 2001), and helps consumers to identify the various attributes and characteristics of the brand, its values and supporting behaviours (Clifton & Simmons 2003). It could thus be said that branding is much more than attaching a name to a product or service, it is about making a promise about delivering a fulfilling experience (Tybout & Calkins 2005).

The way consumers perceive brands is a key determinant of long-term business-consumer relationships (Louw & Lamb 2000). Brands are created trough a wide range of touch points, and every time consumers interact with a brand they form associations (Tybout & Calkins 2005). A brand is a promise made to consumers about the product or service they are purchasing. The promise is not immediately credible but is instead reinforced over time as the relationship between an organisation and its consumers is forged (Gregg 2003). Recognition of the value of brands has increased the demand for effective management of the brand asset (Clifton & Simmons 2003) and is better known as brand equity.

1.2 Brand equity

According to Aaker (1998), *brand equity* refers to a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand's name and symbol that add to or subtract from the value provided by a product or service to an organisation and/or that organisation's customer and can be determined by considering consumers' awareness of, associations with, brand loyalty to and perceived quality of brands (Gregg 2003; Aaker 1998). Brand equity is thus like a reputation which cannot be bought or sold and is often one of the most important intangible factors in an organisation (Clifton & Simmons, 2003).

The term "*brand equity*" is used to describe the value added to a product because of the brand associated with that product or the value of the branded product less its value as an unbranded product (Gregg 2003). Often marketers confuse *brand equity* with *brand valuation*. *Brand valuation* includes an analysis of a brand's performance in different market segments, financial analysis, an assessment of intangible earnings that can be attributed to the brands in each market segment and a detailed assessment of the brand strength in the market (Interbrand *s.a.*). Brand valuation is still a relatively new concept (Trevillion & Perrier 1999) and in order to value brands, marketers need detailed information on the performance thereof. It is thus evident that brand valuation cannot be calculated without determining the strength or equity of a brand (Haigh 2003; Sampson 2004).

Various methods can be used to measure brand equity (Keller 2003; Tybout & Calkins 2005). According to Gregg (2003), methods range from consumer-driven brand diagnostic tools (loyalty, repeat purchase intent, etc) to financially driven brand valuation techniques (net present value of future cash flows derived from the brand, comparable brands that have been sold, etc), and although there are a number of ways to measure brand equity in goods and services marketing (Aaker 1996; Duffy 2003; Gregg 2003), there have been few attempts to study the brand equity of sports teams (Shank 2002). Hence, for purposes of this study, the brand equity of the South African Super 12 rugby brands was determined by applying Aaker's Brand Equity Ten Model (see sec 5).

According to Kelly, Hoffman and Carter (1999), aspects of sports marketing can be viewed as a special case of marketing a brand. Branding is a relatively new phenomenon in South African rugby. After rugby became professional in 1995, the game as well as the players became saleable commodities, and since then, the industry has generated millions (Vice 2001). The South African sports merchandising industry is believed to be worth about $16 million per annum at retail level in 2002, of which South African rugby brands sell 30 times more than the second largest sporting merchandise brand seller (Van der Berg 2003). It was estimated that the South African rugby industry was worth approximately $55 million by the end of 2000 (Vice 2001).

During 2001, South African Super 12 clothing generated 50% more in sponsorship than the national Springbok brand test gear, and is the leading event in the southern hemisphere rugby calendar (Van der Berg 2001). In 2006 the Super 12 rugby tournament was enlarged to the

Super 14 and the Cheetahs were included (Smith 2004). This study, however, focuses on the brand management of rugby in South Africa, with specific focus on the South African Super 12 rugby brands.

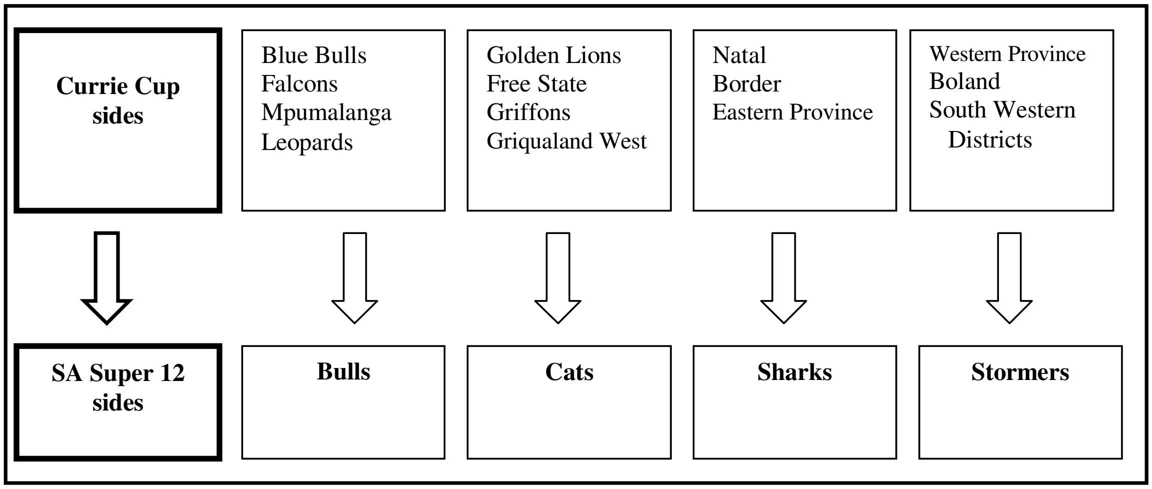
2 THE SUPER 12 RUGBY TOURNAMENT

In the Super 12, five regional rugby teams from New Zealand, three from Australia and four from South Africa compete on a round robin basis, which culminates semifinals and a final (Claassen 2001). Vodacom is the official event sponsor of the Super 12, and the total South African sponsorship of the Super 12 being about $7 million per annum (Van der Berg 2001). The Super 12 is contested over a period of three months of preliminary rugby games and two weeks for the semifinals and final (Rugimbana & Nwankwo 2003).

In terms of the Super 12 agreement, various rugby franchises in the three countries were established (*SAIL* 2001). New Zealand's Super 12 franchises consisted of five regional teams covering the whole country, namely the Auckland Blues (Auckland), Canterbury Crusaders (Canterbury), Highlanders (Otago), Chiefs (Waikato) and Hurricanes (Wellington). The Australian teams' brands are Queensland Reds (Queensland), ACT Brumbies (Australian Capital Territory), and New South Wales Waratahs (New South Wales).

Initially South Africa fielded the four top provinces from its 1995 Currie Cup competition. (There are 14 provincial rugby teams in South Africa, as illustrated in figure 1, which compete annually on a strength versus strength basis for the Currie Cup). In 1998 the South African provincial teams were compelled to unite and form four new regional teams with new identities (Hendriks 1997), and the four new regional sides were formed – the Bulls, Cats, Sharks and Stormers (*Super 12* 2000).

Figure 1 Arrangement of the South African Super 12 teams



2.1 The Bulls

The Bulls' brand has experienced various identity changes since its introduction in 1995. They competed as the Northern Transvaal Province in 1996. In 1998 four rugby unions, namely the Blue Bulls Rugby Union, the Falcons Rugby Union, the Mpumalanga Rugby Union and the Leopards Rugby Union joined forces to form one regional team (Gilbert 2000), with their home stadium at Securicor Loftus in Pretoria (Colquhoun 2004). The team was known as the Blue Bulls in 1997, but their name was changed to the Northern Bulls in 1998. They finished eleventh in the Super 12 competition that year. In 1999 the Bulls finished twelfth and in 2000 eleventh. The Bulls hold many of the worst records in the Super 12 tournament (Tarik 2002). In 2000, the Bulls played in white and green jerseys with blue shorts (Colquhoun 2001), but their uniform was changed to sky blue jerseys and socks and navy blue shorts in 2001 (Colquhoun 2002). In the same year, they changed their name to the Bulls. The brand of the Bulls is illustrated in figure 2.

Figure 2 The Bulls' brand

Source: Adapted from Colquhoun (2004)

2.2 The Cats

The Cats have also experienced many identity changes since the commencement of the Super 12 in 1995. Originally the team competed as Transvaal Province and finished tenth in the tournament in 1996. In 1998, the Free State Rugby Union, the Golden Lions Rugby Union, the Griqualand West Rugby Union and the Griffons Rugby Union joined forces and became the Gauteng Lions (Gilbert 2000). They only managed to finish fifth in the Super 12 competition that year. In 1998, they changed their name to the Golden Cats and finished twelfth. Since 2000 they have been operating as the Cats (Tarik 2002), playing in navy blue jerseys with red shoulders (Colquhoun 2001). In 2001 they again changed their jerseys to white and navy, with navy shorts and socks (Colquhoun 2002). Their jerseys were changed yet again in 2002 to white jerseys and socks and navy shorts (Colquhoun 2003). The Cats' home stadiums are Ellis Park in Johannesburg and Vodacom Park in Bloemfontein (Colquhoun 2004) and their brand is illustrated in figure 3.

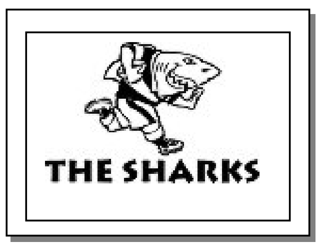
Figure 3 The Cats' brand

Source: Adapted from Colquhoun (2004)

2.3 The Sharks

The Sharks' brand was introduced in 1996. In 1998, the Natal Rugby Union, Border Rugby Union and Eastern Province Rugby Union united and formed The Sharks (Gilbert 2000). The team played in black and white jerseys with red and brown bands in 2000 (Colquhoun 2001). In 2001, they played in black and white jerseys and black shorts and socks (Colquhoun 2002) and changed again in 2002 to black, grey and white jerseys and black shorts (Colquhoun 2003). The Sharks' home stadium is ABSA Stadium in Durban (Colquhoun 2004) and they were the first Super 12 franchise to draw their one millionth spectator in 2001 (Tarik 2002). The major revenue generator of this franchise is ticket sales (Lamberti 2001). The Sharks' brand is illustrated in figure 4.

Figure 4 The Sharks' brand



Source: Adapted from Colquhoun (2004)

2.4 The Stormers

The Stormers' franchise is based in Cape Town. It has made irregular appearances in the Super 12 owing to the fact that, during the 1996 Super 12, Western Province finished eleventh. Then in 1997, because of the nature of the South African system of selecting the top four teams of the Currie Cup, they were dropped for the Free State Cheetahs. In 1998, the Western Province Rugby Union, South Westerns Districts Rugby Football Union and Boland Rugby Union joined forces (Gilbert 2000) and the team was called the Western Stormers, but only finished ninth in the Super 12 tournament that year. Only in 1999 did the team start operating as the Stormers (Tarik 2002). The Stormers have been marketing themselves as the "Men in Black" (Van der Berg 2001), and in 2000 played in black jerseys and shorts and white socks (Colquhoun 2001). Since 2001, they have played in black jerseys, shorts and socks (Colquhoun 2002). The Stormers' brand is illustrated in figure 5.

Figure 5 The Stormers' brand

Source: Adapted from Colquhoun (2004)

Since the introduction of the Super 12 in 1996, the tournament has matured in terms of viewership, incoming finance and sponsorship. Approximately 103 million viewers watch the 69 Super 12 rugby games annually (Van der Berg 2001). The average attendance figures for 2000 to 2003 for the various South African home games are illustrated in table 1. Stadium tickets sell for an average of $10 a game.

Table 1 Average attendance figures for the South African Super 12 home games (2000 to 2003)

South African Super 12 team	**Average attendance figures (2000 to 2003)**
Bulls	21 141
Cats	23 161
Sharks	31 180
Stromers	35 962

In 2006 the Super 12 was enlarged to the Super 14. This compelled the various South African Super 12 teams to change again to accommodate a fifth South African regional team (*SA Rugby approves franchises* 2005). The fifth franchise for the Super 14 rugby tournament was controversially awarded to a central region consisting of the Free State, Griqualand West and Griffons Rugby Unions (Du Plessis 2005).

According to Moodie (2003), the management structure of South African rugby is of the opinion that it is impossible to value the South African rugby brands because of the emotions vested in rugby teams. However, Adam and Adam (2002) maintain that it is possible to measure the value of sports brands. Manchester United, the glamorous British soccer team, is the most valuable sports brand in Europe with a value estimated at $259 million (Garrett 2001).

3 REASON FOR THE STUDY

Through the application of marketing principles and practice, sport marketers should anticipate, manage and satisfy sport consumers' wants and needs when marketing sport. Sport marketers should strive to create and build awareness of a specific sport team, which should ultimately lead to loyal supporters. Sport teams' brand should in principle then be emphasised and marketed on a continuous basis.

The brand-related marketing activities of sport teams should first focus on building awareness of the sport team's brand (Kelly et al. 1999). However, despite the importance of brands and consumer perceptions of them, rugby franchises in South Africa have not been consistent in their brand management strategies of the South African Super 12 rugby brands (Louw & Lamb 2000). If some method of measuring the brand equity of the South African Super 12 rugby brands could be developed, rugby franchises might be able to determine and measure spectators' perception of the various brands. By ascertaining spectators' awareness of, associations with, loyalty to and perceived quality of the respective Super 12 brands of South Africa, it would be possible to determine the brand equity of these teams which could be a valuable benchmark and management tool.

4 FORMULATION OF THE PROBLEM

Recognition of the value of brands has increased the demand for effective management of brand assets (Clifton & Simmons 2003) and is better known as brand equity. As mentioned before, brand equity is the total value of a brand as a separable asset. It is a measure of the strength of consumers' attachment to a brand, as well as a description of the associations and beliefs the consumer has about the brand (Wood 2000). Despite the importance of brands and consumer perceptions of them, the South African Super 12 rugby franchises have not used a consistent definition or measurement technique to assess consumer' attachment to and perceptions of the South African Super 12 rugby brands. The primary reason for conducting this study was namely to consider the brand management of the South African Super 12 rugby teams, by developing a measurement tool for the brand equity of the various South African Super 12 rugby brands.

5 RESEARCH QUESTION AND OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To achieve the objective the study, this paper focuses on the following research question and objective: what is the brand equity of the South African Super 12 rugby brands? The objective of this question was to determine the brand awareness, the associations with, the loyalty to and the perceived quality of the South African Super 12 rugby brands.

6 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Telkom telephone directories of the town or city headquarters of the 14 rugby provinces served as a sample frame for the population. This database consists of the names, addresses and contact details of potential rugby supporters by provinces. The sample elements (respondents) or target population of this research include all rugby supporters in South Africa. Only adults aged 16 years and older were included in the research.

For the purposes of this study, the Bayesian approach to sample size determination was used. This approach provides a formal procedure for selecting the sample size that maximises the difference between the expected payoff of sample information and the estimated cost of sampling (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch 2002). Using this approach, a total sample of 50 respondents each in Durban, Pretoria, Cape Town and Johannesburg and 30 respondents in each of the other smaller cities and towns (Potchefstroom, Port Elizabeth, Wellington, Witbank, Springs, East London, Bloemfontein, Kimberly, George and Welkom) were ultimately included in the study (n=500). Probability sampling was used to select respondents, more specifically a multistage sampling technique was applied to finally select the sample elements (respondents), consisting of the following three steps:

- ***Stage 1***

  Because the target population was rugby supporters located across South Africa, it was decided that a total random selection of respondents might result in some of the 14 towns or cities (being the headquarters of the 14 rugby unions under survey) not being included or not being adequately represented in the sample. Therefore, during stage one, South Africa was geographically divided into the 14 rugby provinces and the town or city in which the specific rugby union was based (ie the headquarter) was chosen as a stratum. The rugby unions based in each town or city were then listed.

- ***Stage 2***

The potential sample units (households) per union were listed. For this purpose, local telephone directories were initially used to systematically select at least 30 sample units per rugby union. According to systematic sampling, sample units are selected at regular intervals. A sample interval was calculated by applying the formula $^{N}/_{n}$, where N = total population and n = sample size (n = 50 in four largest cities, and n = 30 in smaller towns and cities). This approach allowed each sample unit an equal chance of being selected. Within each of the strata, the respondents were randomly selected by means of systematic random selection where one name from every n^{th} page of the telephone directory was chosen. The selection of the pages from the directories differed for each stratum because it was calculated by dividing the total number of pages by the sample size for that stratum. For example, the Pretoria telephone directory has 712 pages, divided by 50, equals 14. This implies that every 14^{th} page in the telephone directory was selected. The household on each of these pages was randomly selected, by folding the selected pages in half and then choosing the name in the middle of the page in the first column.

- ***Stage 3***

In the final stage the sample elements (respondents) were finally selected by random chance. Once a sample unit (household) was contacted, any rugby supporter (fulfilling the requirements of being 16 years or older) in the household was selected for interviewing purposes.

6.1 Determination of brand equity

There are a number of ways to measure brand equity (Aaker 1996; Duffy 2003; Walker 2002). Since SA Rugby was reluctant to divulge financial information (ie net cash flow, expected future cash flows, etc) on their rugby brands for the purposes of this study (Bloom 2004), Aaker's Brand Equity Ten Model was used to determine the brand equity of the South African Super 12 rugby brands.

Aaker's Brand Equity Ten Model attempts to measure brand equity by grouping various brand equity measures into five categories (see fig 6). The first four categories represent customers' perceptions of the brand along the four dimensions of brand equity (ie brand awareness, brand association, brand loyalty and perceived quality), while the fifth category includes two sets of market behaviour measures (Aaker 1996). For this study each component was deemed equally important. Therefore, each component was allocated a weight of ten points, totalling 100 points.

Figure 6 Aaker's Brand Equity Ten Model

Brand loyalty measures

1. Price premium
2. Satisfaction/loyalty

Perceived quality

3. Perceived quality
4. Leadership/popularity

Associations/differentiation measures

5. Perceived value
6. Brand personality
7. Organisational associations

Awareness measures

8. Brand awareness

Market behaviour measures

9. Market share
10. Market price

Thus:

$$\textbf{Brand equity} = \sum x$$

where

$x \in \{x_1, x_2, \ldots, x_{10}\}$

and

x_1 = Price premium. The relative amount supporters are willing to pay for a rugby ticket[1].

x_2 = Loyalty. Likelihood of supporters still supporting their team in two years' time.

x_3 = Perceived quality. The level of trust and confidence that supporters have in the various rugby teams.

x_4 = Popularity. Level of support of each team.

x_5 = Perceived value. Level to which supporters will recommend their team to someone else to support.

x_6 = Brand personality. Level to which each team is most admired.

x_7 = Organisational associations. Level to which supporters are proud to be a South African rugby supporter.

x_8 = Brand awareness. Level of unaided awareness of supporters.

x_9 = Market share. Ticket sales of rugby teams for the 2003 rugby season.

x_{10} = Market price. Relative price of a ticket[2].

A questionnaire was designed to measure the above-mentioned components. The questionnaire was based on the questionnaire used in the Markinor Top Brands Survey. This annual survey investigates the top South African brands by investigating consumers' awareness of, loyalty to, associations of and perceived quality of various South African companies (Brauer 2003). For purposes of this study the Markinor questionnaire was adapted to focus more on South African rugby brands.

All scale questions in this study were measured on a five point scale, where 1=strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. The internal consistency reliability method was used to determine the reliability of the data, by determining the coefficient alpha. In this study, the

[1] Prices calculated as a proportion of the highest price supporters are willing to pay.
[2] Prices calculated as a proportion of the price of the highest ticket.

coefficient alpha value across the entire set of scale questions was 0,72, which indicates an acceptably high internal reliability consistency.

7 RESULTS

The sample in this study consisted of 65% males and 35% females, with 25% of the respondents older than 50 years. The majority of rugby supporters (68,7%) who participated in the study considered themselves to be extreme rugby supporters ($\bar{x} = 4,5$).

Most of the respondents (33%) mentioned the Stormers the most when asked which Super 12 team they were aware of. The Sharks were also mentioned frequently (22%). The Bulls were the third most mentioned team (19%) and the Cats had the fourth most mentions (12%). However, it was clear that supporters were confused, because teams which are actually provincial or national teams, were referred to as Super 12 teams.

Most of the respondents (23%) supported the Stormers (and have done so for 16 years, on average). Following from that, supporters supported the Sharks (19% for, on average, 17 years), the Bulls (15% and 24 years of support) and the Cats (10%, and an average of 15 years of support). This study also indicated that the most admired team in South Africa was the Stormers (27%), followed by the Sharks (23%) and the Bulls (22%). Only one percent of the respondents indicated that they thought the Cats to be the most admired team in South Africa.

Overall, the respondents in this study indicated that were proud to support South African rugby ($\bar{x} = 4,1$). The Bulls' supporters in this study proved to be the most loyal supporters ($\bar{x} = 4,8$), Stormers' and Sharks supporters followed with an average of 4,6 and the Cats' supporters averaged 4,1. The Bulls' supporters also indicated with an average of 4,5 that they would recommend their team to someone else to support. The averages of the Sharks' and Stormers' supporters were both 4,4 and the Cats' supporters had the lowest average to which they would recommend their team to someone else to support of 4,1). Bulls' supporters in this study were also willing to pay the most on average ($17) to see their team play live. The Cats' supporters followed with $14, and the Sharks' supporters with $11. The Stormers' supporters indicated the lowest price to see their team play ($10).

Sharks' supporters in this study indicated that they had the most trust and confidence in their team ($\bar{x}$=4,3), followed by the Stormers' supporters ($\bar{x}$=4) and Bulls' supporters ($\bar{x}$=3,3). The Cats' supporters had the lowest level of trust and confidence in their team ($\bar{x}$=2,1).

As mentioned before, Aaker's Brand Equity Ten Model was used to calculate a brand equity score for each of the South African Super 12 rugby brands. Therefore, percentages and averages obtained for the variables in the model were calculated as a score out of ten. A summary of the brand equity scores of each team is provided in table 2.

Table 2 Brand equity scores of the South African Super 12 rugby teams

	Bulls	**Cats**	**Sharks**	**Stormers**
Price premium	10,0	8,2	6,5	5,9
Loyalty	9,6	8,2	9,2	9,2
Perceived quality	6,6	4,2	8,6	8,0
Popularity	1,5	1,0	1,9	2,3
Perceived value	9,0	8,2	8,8	8,8
Brand personality	2,2	0,1	2,3	2,7
Organisational associations	8,2	8,2	8,2	8,2
Brand awareness	1,9	1,2	2,2	3,3
Market share	2,8	3,1	4,1	10,0
Market price	10,0	10,0	10,0	10,0
Total	61,8	52,4	61,8	68,4

From table 2 it becomes evident that the Stormers' brand scored 68,4 out of a possible 100 points. Interesting is that the Sharks' and Bulls' brands scored equally 61,8. The Cats brand scored the lowest, namely 52,4.

8 MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Since the rugby supporters in this study indicated that they are extreme rugby supporters, rugby marketers in South Africa should keep in mind that South African rugby supporters are past the initial stage of fan identification. These supporters can be classified as optimal internalisation fans, which implies that they have a higher level of connection with their rugby teams and therefore have distinct and exclusive preferences for a specific team (Kolbe 2002). They have formed a personal commitment to, have a deep personal empathy with their respective rugby teams, and are also resistant to any short-term changes made to a team. They are also convinced that their team is the best compared with other teams or other forms of entertainment (Kelly et al. 1999). They are well informed, to such an extent, that they think they are experts (Goff & Spence 2003). Marketers should also note that there is no difference between the level of support of male and female supporters.

The Stormers have the most popular rugby brand in South Africa, because they are most supported and the admired by respondents. The Sharks and the Bulls are the second most popular team, followed by the Cats. However, although supporters classified these teams as Super 12 teams, the average time they have supported these teams is more than 10 years. The Super 12 teams only originated in 1996, and one may therefore conclude that the South African rugby supporters associate the Super 12 teams with the Currie Cup teams. Furthermore, since the respondents were asked to mention which team they personally support, it became evident that most of them mentioned regional teams, although they in fact meant provincial rugby teams. This does not, however, imply that rugby supporters in South Africa do not support the national team (ie the Springboks), but it could be concluded that the supporters think about their provincial teams first – hence, supporting the claims of provincialism in South Africa.

9 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to determine the brand equity of the South African Super 12 rugby brands. After winning the World Cup in 1995, a solid foundation was laid for South Africa to build strong rugby brands for their national, regional and provincial teams. Unfortunately this did not happen, because of, for example, inconsistency in the changes of team colours, names and brand marks. Although South African rugby has a proud tradition and is well known and respected in the rugby world, the management of the sport in South Africa has led to brand confusion. It is clear from this study that long-term planning was neglected by the management of South African rugby, and that the South African Super 12 rugby teams have cannibalised value from the well-known, well-established brands of the provincial rugby teams. SA Rugby should differentiate these teams to ensure that supporters perceive them differently from the Currie Cup teams.

Furthermore, the South African teams have not performed well since the introduction of the Super 12. The traditions of and associations with the provincial teams in South Africa are so strong that even rugby supporters struggle to associate with the regional teams - in their minds, the regional teams are the provincial teams. The Cats scored extremely low on brand equity compared with the other Super 12 teams, because they consist of the major provincial brands, namely the Golden Lions (Golden Lions Rugby Union) and Cheetahs (Free State Rugby Union). The decision to award the fifth franchise to the Free State, Griqualand West and Griffons Rugby Unions was thus, from a branding point of view, advantageous to both the Golden Lions and Cheetahs.

One may conclude that part of the reason for South Africa's sub par performance in the Super 12 tournament is because teams do not have their own identities and traditions (Host, 2002). SARU has reviewed the format of the South African Super 12 tournament to include a fifth South African team for the Super 14. Hopefully the rearrangement of the various existing franchises will grant franchises the opportunity to differentiate their regional teams from the provincial (Currie Cup) teams, so that own identities and traditions can be build. If there is no improvement, they should reconsider South Africa's involvement in the entire tournament, because South African teams' performance detracts from South Africa's rugby image as a whole.

The management of South African rugby should address these issues to ensure that the South African Super 14 rugby brands establish themselves and develop into strong brands in world rugby as was their potential at the outset in 1995.

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