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스포츠 매니지먼트 석사 학위논문

# **Branding Kazakhstan Through Sport**

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## **Abstract**

# Branding Kazakhstan Through Sport

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Nowadays every country in the global competition, wants to take over the high bar in the promotion of the attractiveness of its territory through the establishment of its own brand, through major sporting events, which will be strongly associated with their country. Sports branding can give the country a future platform for building their own brand of the state. Moreover, the positive effects of sport-branding will be extended automatically on a variety of aspects of the state: the political system in the country, policy makers, business, the general population, tourism, etc. The main opportunity that makes the sports branding for government officials - is improving the image of an entire country and its leaders, with all its consequences through winning athlete, team or country, and most importantly through the formation of large (branded) sporting event on its territory.

Through the literature review, the idea and importance of brand management and nation brand management, especially in relation with Kazakhstan's sport, has been proven. In this study the role and potential sport has in nation branding has been shown through various examples. And, current and desired brand Kazakhstan has been reviewed.

To investigate brand strategy of Kazakhstan and analyze implemented projects I conducted semi-structured interviews with independent branding expert from Kyrgyzstan and experts, who are involved in sport projects of Kazakhstan.

The research concluded that Kazakhstan is in the process of brand formation, but it is too early to assume the existence of the comprehensive brand of the country. Research also provides recommendations on how to make brand campaign more efficient

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**Keywords:** Branding, Nation Brand, Sports, Kazakhstan.

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# **I. Introduction**

## **1. Background**

”In recent years, the Olympic Games have developed into one of the most significant mega-international sporting events” (Roche, 2000). The number of cities who bid for hosting an Olympic Games and also financial support invested within are increasing significantly. This growth suggest that nations’ leaders apprehend the importance of hosting such event as a chance to develop economic and social aspects of a host city or region through the concentration of capital invested which actuated by hosting the Games. In consequence, for the past two decades, the interest on the by-product of hosting an Olympic Games which are the socio-economic, political and cultural impact on the host city, region or country; also show a substantial surge (IOC).

Almost all inhabitable location has respected attainments. Every nation owns an image or a brand that represent each respective country in international level (Anholt, 2007). Brand of the country is not simply a slogan or short term campaign tricks. A brand should be perceived as a national concept of the country, an intellectual property (Anholt, 2005). It consists of several elements, such as:

thoughts, feelings, associations, and ideas; compiled into one and it becomes of a tenet on what an individual thinks of when one sees or hears the name of a country or a simple act of buying products manufactured by a certain country. Such features of a nation as well GDP nomination, political system adopted, cultural traits are becoming important elements of brand marketing (Anholt, 2007).

Government often used events with high selling values in order to enhance its national image towards global public (Manheim, 1989). An Olympic Games has been proven as its newsworthy values as it is a great platform for a nation to project a positive image globally. For example, IOC stated that on 2004 Athens Olympic Games managed to attract the attention of 3.9 billion viewers from 220 nations. Admittedly electronic media contributed by broadcasting the Games to all four corners of the world. This makes the Olympic Games as the ideal platform to display the host country in international level. At 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games, Japan exploit the Games to rebuild its image in which had been tarnished due to its role during the World War II. On the 24<sup>th</sup> Olympic Games 1988, hosted by Seoul, South Korea, it became the encouragement the country needed for the abandonment of autocratic government style (Walkosz & Foss, 2009).

Kazakhstan can exploit sports as one of her successful dimensions for national brand. At the end of 2012, Samruk-Kazyna funded the Astana President's Club in order to bring together the best Kazakh's sports club, such as: Pro Team Astana, a professional and world class level cycling team, Barys Hockey Club, and also a number of basketball and football clubs too. The clubs also jointed by boxers from Astana Arlans, Astana Dakar Team and also the national water polo teams. The Club functions as a development project for the struggling national Kazakhstan Barys. Not only sports clubs, the Club also has athletes for its members, for example: Kazakhstan's two time Olympic medalists, Weightlifter Iliya Ilyin; Denis Ten – a figure skating world champion winner, and Gennady Golovkin boxing world champion.

The Club itself is established by Nursultan Nazarbayev on 2012 with the main purpose of developing Astana as a brand which also the capital city. The second purpose is to be a vessel in order of supporting Kazakhstan's sports teams and athletes in international event. In accordance with the latest fashion in for management area, PSK Astana is consider as an advanced form dedicated to reinforce public support for sport and also to amplify Kazakhstan's positive image in international world. There are similar clubs which also successful in achieving

their purpose internationally, just to name a few: Real Madrid, Barcelona, Bavaria or CSKA Moscow.

Almaty and Astana had the privileged to host the 2011 Asian Winter Games and for a full week, athletes from all over Asia come to Kazakhstan to compete. Astana was chosen to host the Opening Ceremony, skating and men's ice hockey. Meanwhile, Almaty had the honor to host the Closing Ceremony, skiing, bandy, and the women's ice hockey. The Games was deemed to be a successful one, although the preparations period has a more intriguing story. Kazakhstan won the bid for hosting the Games at 2006 but construction only started two years later, the government began constructing and renovating – Medeo and the Shymbulak Ski Resort – as one unique winter sport complex.

In summer Olympic Games, Kazakhstan sportsmen have considerable achievements. They are really good at wrestling, weightlifting and boxing. On the last Olympic, Kazakhstan managed to add their medal collections from triple jump and cycling. During the first week of the Games, they managed to stay on top ten of medal tally then finished off on the 12<sup>th</sup> at the end of the Games. The summer Olympic achievements were not yet followed by the Winter Games. In their medals collection, they have one gold and two silvers from Lillehammer in 1994,

two bronzes from Nagano in 1998 and one bronze from Vancouver in 2010. This proves that Kazakhstan is a rising nation that needs to be accounted as a competitor and an emerging sport center.

Kazakhstan is excited in welcoming 2017, Almaty will have the opportunity again to host the 28<sup>th</sup> Winter Universiade Games, it has bigger scale compare to Asian Winter Games. Participants will come from Universities students all over the world. This will be Kazakhstan's first time hosting Universiade and it is a good timing considering Kazan hosted the 2013 Summer Universiade Games. Preparations phase for the Universiade will be better than Asian Winter Games, it will use the infrastructure built and renovated for Asian Winter Games. The expenditure will be directed towards maintaining, improving, and promotion of the Universiade.

Kazakhstan is an emerging economic power house and the only way for it to go is to keep developing. This is proven by Kazakhstan hosting the winter games and several other global events. On 2017, World Expo will take place in Astana; this event put Kazakhstan on the sport light in international world. This means a lot for Kazakhstan, as the international world responded with the upmost respect by favoring Kazakhstan to host the World Expo. Almaty too is not a

stranger in terms of hosting an international event. The 2011 Asian Winter Games had been managed successfully in a short period of time. Almaty managed to build world class facilities to cater the Games, this led Almaty to host the Winter Universiade Games in 2017 and the Games will certainly bring more nations and participants to Kazakhstan. From financial side, it is more cost effective as predicted by the media to host the Universiade. Kazakhstan already set a new target for the next event to be host, the one event that all nations want to host and it will be a privilege to host it at least once, the Olympic Games. The Winter Olympic Games on 2022 will provide a rare opportunity for Kazakhstan to shift the focus of international media and broadcast to itself. For three full week's exposure through media, this is a great opportunity to present the world Kazakhstan's new image that project the actual values and identity of our nation.

Using the Olympic Movement as one of the foundation used, this study is carried out pertaining to the importance of nation branding through and for sports. The research conducted for this study will show the current status of brand Kazakhstan and provide guidance on what should be focus on and how everything can be acquire through the Olympic Movement.

## **2. Purpose of study**

This research serves a variety of purposes. First, this study seeks to understand the importance of using sports to brand nations. Next, it will help identify current nation branding situation in the sports field. As the pioneer research, this can set the direction for Kazakhstan's national image pursuance. Lastly, it uses sports to establish a collaborative nation branding strategy.

## **3. Overview of thesis**

This research will address the possibility of building brand Kazakhstan by using sports as branding mechanism. The thesis will begin with an overview of the related environment in Kazakhstan. It is followed by a review of literature on brand managements, nation branding, and the Olympic brand with the focus on utilizing all of above said to develop brand Kazakhstan.

A list of research methods are detailed in the next chapter, explaining how data were collected from different sources. From the information collected, following shall be used to summarize nation branding: organization's strategy, nation branding through sport, current and desired image of Kazakhstan. Findings of the research will be presented and analyzed accordingly, while suggestions to

strategize nation branding through sport will conclude the thesis.

## **II. Literature review**

### **1. Place marketing**

Duffy (1995) advocated that the global marketing is a big task in marketing world and even the big multinationals having specialized department work to the maximum resources to manage this task. When it comes to places, cities, communities and nations, which all fall under the public organizations domain; it even becomes more difficult and hard to deal issue.

Kotler (1998) argued that there is a general agreement on the suitability of places, cities, communities and nations in marketing world and it is considered vital that same efforts should be exerted to market them as used by firms to market their products and services. The marketing world is opinionated that Its time for places, cities, communities and nations to begin taking benefits through private market practices.

The marketing of place, cities, communities and nations means designing and marketing one's self in such a manner that it offers satisfaction of needs of target consumer as Kotler (2002) mentioned "It succeeds when citizens and businesses are pleased with their community, and the expectations of visitors and

investors are met”.

The success of place marketing is highly dependent on the strategic decision made to design a systematic approach. This is vital because without sufficient resources and organizational capacity it is impossible to implement the marketing activity successfully. One should note carefully that in cities and countries different communities adopt their individual practicing for marketing and one method may not fit all so planning should be done in flexible manner so that it accommodates the view of majority. Rainisto, (2003) suggested that the goals must be decided in such a manner that they should not be conflicting with the already prevalent strategies in practice in these locations

Kotler & Gertner (2002) contested that exerting importance in fulfilling the needs of place product consumer is vital as the final targets can only be achieved if the needs and requirements of targeted consumers and market is met efficiently and completely. Moreover they also recommended that, in order to take competitive advantage over the competitor, efforts should be made in placing and defining the features of product and differentiating the product from the rest. They identified that segmentation as core assignment in the place marketing to decide about the targeted consumers.

Kotler, Asplund, Rein & Haider, (1999) identified that the categories of resident & employees, visitors, export market and business & industry form the four main target markets of place marketing.

Business visitors and the exploration or nonbusiness or recreational visitors form the two broader and basic groups of visitor's market. One should very carefully prioritize the strategies to meet the needs of these groups as they within themselves have some subgroups.

Places, cities, communities and nations often do not set or define their target marketing group unlike the profession business industry and the financial investment groups, who have adopted this practice since long. This is a big mistake on account of places, cities, communities and nations as without a vivid target group, it is impossible to focus on specific things which results in a marketing plan and message that lacks the attraction. The same concept has been advocated by Kotler et al., (1999) in his study.

Kotler et al, (1999) defined the capacity of a place meet the requirement of product/services of other places through producing more products and services that is in demand at other location as export market. The export image of place can be developed through initiating collaborative partnerships among public and

private entities as they can work together in more productive manner to produce product and services that are in demand at international level, hence can contribute in developing and strengthening the image of a place as export market. Kotler et al. (1990) called this as cobranding. It was also mentioned that a place can only attract investment and big multinational corporations to invest through showing its readiness with exciting investment opportunities and ready business possibilities besides offering business friendly legislations from the government.

### **1.1. Place branding**

Kotler et al., (1999); Keller, (1998); Killingbeck & Trueman, (2002); Hankinson, (2001) advocated that service and product branding strategies are equally applicable for branding of places. The notion place branding actually means increasing the attraction of subject place/location for investment by utilizing the marketing concepts and strategies. It is pertinent to mention that Hankinson, (2001). in literature there is no universally accepted definition of place branding and only few factors closely related to place branding that have been investigated so far are retail marketing, urban planning and marketing tourism.

Rainisto, (2001) described the process of marketing through which a place propagates its attractiveness for consumers is branding and when the epic center is building of image of place, it can be called as place brand identity building.

Keller, (1998) suggest another definition when he stated that the branding of places like services and products and the brand name is actually the name of geographical location, it is called place branding. Shimp, (2000) argued that through branding a place, the consumers/targeted groups are informed or made aware of the suitability of place for them as it is in alignment with the objectives and requirements set by them. There are many attributes of places i.e. name, reputation, symbols and packaging. Hankinson, (2001) studied the branding practices of twelve European cities and reached to the conclusion that there is no proof to propose that the place branding is impossible. The finding of his study suggested that although the concept of place branding was always seen relevant, but it was not properly understood most of the time and it was not applied effectively.

Aaker & Joachimsthaler, (2000) emphasized that in modern era marketing the concept of branding has become the integral central part as it joins the strategic elements in such a manner that it forms into successful formula. In

modern era brands are proving as the base for long term success for several firms and organizations.

Aaker, (1996) suggested that it is necessary for brands to have vivid identity and long term consist positioning strategy to be considered as strong brand in the market and its take consistent efforts to build brand through product branding campaigns. The key for successful branding or brand positioning is in the hand of the organization and the branding itself is a key to success of product. Keller, (1998) stated that to build measures and manage brand equity the organizations involved in branding business should plan strategically and the strategic brand management process should involve the designing and implementing marketing programs.

Aaker, (1996) advocated that understanding on the concepts of brand identity development, brand differentiation and brand portfolio plays vital role in successful branding. He further argued that differentiating the values of two identically similar brands is very difficult to achieve. His arguments were supported by the study conducted by Weilbacher, (1993) when he established that in corporate world the brands are considers replaceable with each other by most of the consumers as well as the marketing experts and usually products are not

considered or seen as totally different from each other.

Joachimsthaler & Aaker (1997) in their study that focused on approaches to build brand image without using mass media found out that the core identity of a successful must be knotted with the three principles that are 1) involving of the senior management in branding efforts wisely, 2) the significance of illuminating the fundamental brand identity, and 3) all efforts to obtain prominence must be knotted to the fundamental identity. Fundamental identity is also a significant motivating power in place branding, including the main factors of place desirability (Keller, 1998).

**Table 1. Place marketing campaigns and slogans**

<b>Place marketing campaigns and slogans</b>	
Stockholm: Inspired in Stockholm	Chicago: Business Capital of America
Singapore: Live it up Singapore!	Glasgow: An Arts Capital of Europe
Hannover: The City of International Fairs	Budapest: a City with a Thousand Faces
Scotland: Silicon Glen	Amsterdam: Capital of Inspiration
Helsinki-Region: Europe's Magnetic North	Spain: Everything Under The Sun
Berlin: Capital of The New Europe	Copenhagen: Wonderful Copenhagen
St. Petersburg: Gateway to the West/East	Hong Kong: City of Life/Asia's World City
Seoul: Soul of Asia	Kazakhstan: Heart of Eurasia

In the worldwide market, more goods are presented with a clear place-brand origin. An appropriate place brand makes the merchandise more

recognizable for the place buyer, and brings added value. A cobranding approach is regularly used in corporate marketing (e.g. Bacardi & Coca-Cola), as well as in places. Examples of such place origins are “Swiss quality watches”, “German cars”, “Italian leather goods”, “Genevan Rolex”, “Dublin Guinness beer”, “Paris Chanel perfume”, and “Swedish Absolut vodka”. Some nations have a strong export-driven image like the Netherlands, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden. Some regions create their image on the basis of images of particular companies and products.

## **2. Brand management**

### **2.1.1. Brand and branding**

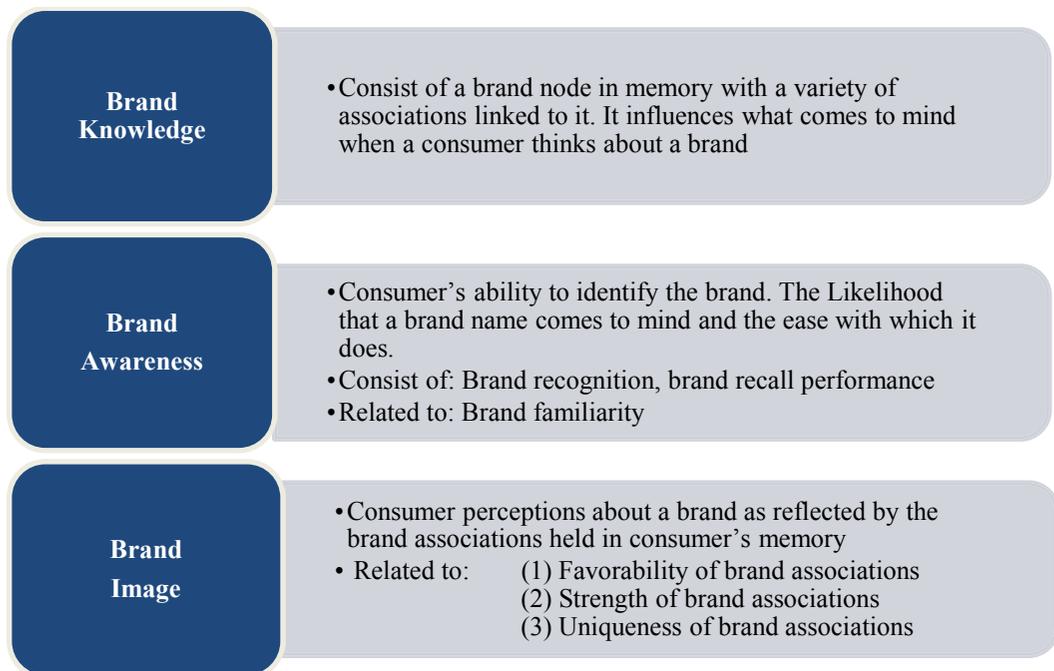
A successful brand is a name, symbol, design, or some combination, which identifies the ‘product’ of a particular organisation as having a sustainable differential advantage (Doyle, 1992). The American marketing offers a comparable meaning of a brand as an issue ‘name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition. A marginally wealthier meaning of a brand, in that it includes a customer rather than mostly

manufacturer perception, is given by Macrae, Parkinson and Sheerman (1995), who hypothesize that a brand signifies a sole mixture of features and additional values, both practical and non-practical, which have taken on a related meaning that is inseparably associated to the brand, consciousness of which might be aware or instinctive. A similar perception is presented by Lynch and de Chernatony (2004), who state brands as clusters of functional and emotional values that promise a unique and welcome experience between a buyer and a seller.

Brands obviously don't exist in a vacuum, and to be fruitful, they should coincide successfully with the predominating zeitgeist. Mainstream culture and patterns in the community drive and effect solid brands (Roll, 2006).

On the other hand, brand building has encountered a vivid movement through the previous years and the reason as the recognizing chunk of a product has been abandoned (Montana, Guzman, & Moll, 2007). Brand has turn into long term advantage for numerous institutions and it remains over the products or services that they "help identify". Brands are corporations' long term plan podiums for cooperating with their consumers (Urde, 1999). In Knox & Bickerton's research (2003), a corporate brand can be defined as the visual, verbal and behavioral expression of an organization's unique business model. Customer-based

brand equity is formally defined as the differential effect that brand's brand knowledge has on consumer response to the marketing of that brand (Keller, 1991).



**Figure 1. Terms from Customer-based Brand Equity Model by Keller (1991)**

## **2.2. Importance of brand management**

Brands considered one of the greatest valued impalpable properties that organizations have (Keller, 2006). Evidence of the significance of brands is clear in the reported economic importance of most important brands and in the sums that solid brands get when it is sold in the mergers and acquisitions market

(M'zungu, Merrilees & Miller, 2010). The main goal of branding is to build customer-based brand equity (Supphellen, 2000). Establishing and creating a solid brand with incredible equity gives a host of possible advantages to a corporation, for instance (1) improved perceptions of product performance, (2) greater customer loyalty, (3) less vulnerability to competitive marketing actions or marketing crises, (4) larger margins, (5) more favorable customer response to price increases and decreases, (6) greater trader or intermediary cooperation and support, (7) increased marketing communication effectiveness, (8) possible licensing opportunities and (9) additional brand extension opportunities (Keller, 2003).

By other words, when administrators fail to understand the complete extent and complexity of the relations people have for their brands, their grasping of consumer brand opinions and the method that brands are placed relative to competitors in the mind of consumers will be prejudiced. This could be a reason for ineffective communication, failure in finding of negative development in positioning, and loss chances solid brand with excellent equity gives a host of potential profits to a corporation (Kim, 2011).

The importance to marketers of brand equity as a principle eventually can be determined on how they utilize it (Keller, 1991). In modern marketing, branding is

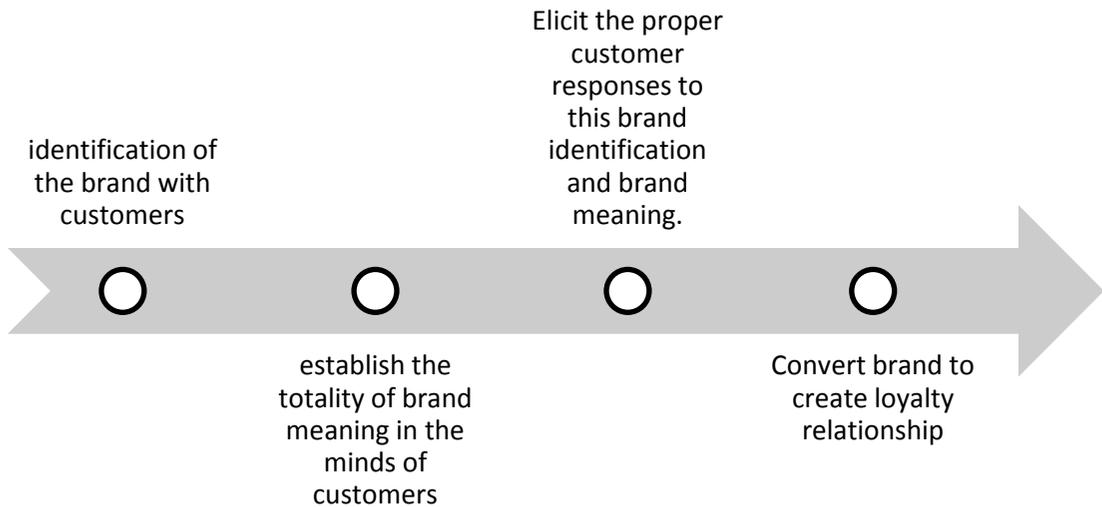
vital, as it mixes all the strategic components into one successful equation. Brands in common and corporate brands particularly are considered as the foundation for the strategic achievement of corporates and institutions (Aaker, 1996).

On the other hand, even though experts and scholars give much a lot of effort to theorizing brand equity, less effort has been given to how the brand ought to be handled and provided to the consumers with the intention of creating and maintaining brand equity (M'zungu et al., 2010).

### **2.3. Strategic brand management**

For surviving in the competitive environment, the brand needs to reflect the vital vision of the corporate. Previous studies recommend that strategic brand management depend on having a brand positioning mindset and possessing inter marketing and branding and brand conveyance capacities (M'zungu et al., 2010).

In Keller's customer-based brand equity model (2003), building a solid brand can be understood as a series of phases, as exhibit in the figure below.



**Figure 2. Sequence of steps to build a strong brand**

Others things to think about branding are that brand knowledge is an essential for building brand equity, because it generates the differential effect that drives brand equity (Keller, 1991). And, making sure of the consistent delivery of the brand must be a main key of a strategic brand management process for building and maintaining brand equity (M'zungu et al., 2010). A effective brand management strategy also needs a proper frame which adopts obviously well-defined organizational arrangements and good communications (Kanter, 1989). Following the steps and considering the mentioned points, a brand can be strategically and successfully managed.

### **3. Nation brand**

#### 3.1. Nation brand and national image

Dinnie has defined Nation Brand as “the unique, multi-dimensional blend of elements that provide the nation with culturally grounded differentiation and relevance for all of its target audiences” (2008, p. 15). It is significant to mention this definition of nation branding pertaining to the fact that it puts emphasis on the social dimensions of a nation as a brand. Another distinctive feature of the definition is that every nation as a brand has numerous clusters of spectators to plea to and thus the national image created for one target spectator may differ from the image fundamentals established to plea to a new audience. Holt considered that the ‘cultural branding’ methodology is the best suitable for nation branding which takes responsibility of integrating cultural and social tendencies for the expansion of a brand image (Dinnie, 2008). Anholt has a dissimilar view and proposes that the main feature of nation brand is reputation, talking about to corporate standing as one of the significant fundamental of corporate brand. He compared brand worth with ... “competitive identity, because it has to do more with national identity and the politics and economics of competitiveness than with branding as it usually understood in the commercial sector” (Dinnie, 2008).

Anholt emphasized on public diplomacy to be the most vital area in building nation brand (Danayeva, 2005). As it can be seen from the presented perspectives on nation brand, experts place emphasis on either cultural or political aspects of nation as a brand.

Gertner, (2002); Porter, (1998) belong to other cluster of sports marketing and branding group that advocated that emphasis of place branding should be on developing a brand of a nation for promotion of place as tourism destination & export destination, and therefore, they put extra attention on the promotion of natural landscape for tourism industry promotion as well as advantageous business circumstances and worthy products produced by the nation.

A progressive and influential appearance of nation brand can turn out to be one of the competitive advantages for the country as a nation. Porter (1998) has highlighted the matter of national image significance for the national economy and the development of export activities for companies originating from a specific country in the book “Competitive Advantage of Nations”. He underlined that national dissimilarities can become the key reasons for construction of competitive advantages and related that to the national image i.e. country-of-origin effect as one of the important components of national brand when considering the

attractiveness of products and services manufactured in the country and their view by foreign consumers. It is valuable to discuss that national brand is significant for the attraction of tourists and an inflow of investors and entrepreneurs to the country.

The use of branding practices to nations is a comparatively new phenomena, but the one that has grown at rapid pace and is giving increasingly universal competition that nations now face in both their local and international markets. Nations are making progressively cognizant struggles to perfect their country branding in acknowledgement of the requirement to accomplish three major objectives: to attract tourists, to stimulate inward investment and to boost exports.

An additional objective for many nations is talent attraction, whereby countries compete to attract higher education students, and skilled workers. A broader set of possible rewards to be grown through nation branding has been projected by Temporal (2006), who suggests that in addition to the key goals of attracting tourists, encouraging inward investment and enhancing exports, nation branding can also rise currency stability; help reestablish global trustworthiness and investor sureness; reverse international ratings downgrades; increase international political influence; encourage robust global partnerships and improve

nation building (by nurturing confidence, pride, harmony, ambition, national resolve).

Szondi, ( 2007) described that a supplementary objective that may be aimed at transitional countries such as those in Central and Eastern Europe may be the detachment the countries from the long-standing economic and political structures that were before changeover.

The accomplishment of such objectives necessitates countries to embrace sensible branding if they are to contend efficiently on the worldwide stage, an understanding also communicated by Olins (2003), who emphasizes that “within few years, identity management will be seen as a key way of contributing to the nation’s brand”. It has also been advocated that the unbranded state has a difficult time attracting financial and political devotion, and that appearance and status are becoming critical parts of the state’s tactical equity. A dominant and constructive nation-brand can deliver vital competitive advantage in today’s globalized economy. In his landmark text, *The Competitive Advantage of Nations*, Michael Porter highlights that nations and national character remain of prime importance, even in the age of globalization:

In this concept emphasize and highlights the significance of dissimilarities

in nations and of dissimilarities in national personality. Current dialogues of international rivalry emphasize worldwide homogenization and shrank role for brand nations. However, in reality, national dissimilarities are at the soul of rivalry success.

### 3.2. Importance of nation brand management

In a world that has been largely globalized, the image of a country and its promotion assume an ever larger importance economically, politically, socially and culturally. Nation branding emerged as countries turn to brand management techniques in order to compete effectively on the world stage. A powerful and positive nation-brand can provide crucial competitive advantage in today's globalized economy (Dinnie, 2008). In an increasingly globalized economy, the challenge of distinguishing their product offerings from those of the competition has assumed critical importance for nations competing for both domestic and foreign consumers. Porter's theory (1998) highlights and reinforces the importance of differences in nations and of differences in national character. Many contemporary discussions of international competition stress global homogenization and a diminished role for nations. But, in truth, national differences are at the heart of competitive success.

Nations are making increasingly conscious efforts to hone their country branding in recognition of the need to fulfill three major objectives- to attract tourists, to stimulate inward investments and to boost exports. A further objective for many nations is talent attraction (Dinnie, 2008). It was claimed that a strong nation brand will benefit the country with (1) stability of currency, (2) international credibility and gain of investor's trust, (3) improvement of international credibility rate, (4) stronger international political influence, (5) growth of branded product and service, (6) increase of foreign tourists and investment, (7) tighter bond in international cooperation, (8) recovery in national pride, (9) settlement of negative perspective on environmental and human rights issues, (10) eradication of controversy on corruption and unfairness, (11) easier access to international market, and (12) better capability in protecting domestic market and repulse international competitors. Another positive effect of nation brand management is Country-of-Origin effect so called COO effect. The relation between place and product is called COO effect. The COO effect can influence attitude and behavior towards brands, whether products, services or whole nations. This indicates that the purpose of place-marketing strategy should also take into account the improvement of national image in order to sell products in

international markets. For these reasons, nation brand management should be treated with great interest. Unbranded geographical location has difficult time attracting economic and political attention, and that image and reputation are becoming essential parts of the destination's strategic equity. And if a nation-brand decays over time, then a brand revitalization program will need to be put in place. Nation brand must also segment their different audiences in order to understand existing nation-brand images and to develop targeted communications to counter negative perceptions and to reinforce positive perceptions (Dinnie, 2008).

### 3.3. Examples of nation branding

“Different countries have adopted different strategies in order to confront the specific challenges they face. More and more countries around the world are embracing nation branding in order to differentiate themselves on the world stage and to strengthen their economic performance, primarily in terms of exporting, inward investment and tourism” (Kotler, 1999).

Jaffe and Nebenzahl recount how in 1999 ZDF, the German television network, approached identity consultant Wolff Olins to create a national brand for Germany. Although this was not an official campaign, the brand strategy

suggested for Germany generated much public interest and debate within Germany. The campaign's main objective was to change consumer perceptions of Germany from what was found to be a nation of 'mechanical perfection', which lacks creativity, to a country that is also 'exciting and surprising'. The perception of Germany as cold and unemotional was attributed partly to German manufacturers such as Audi, whose famous slogan 'Vorsprung durch Technik' extolled German engineering prowess but lacked warmth and emotional depth.

The website of identity consultant Wolff Olins gives details of the approach taken to fashioning a brand for Germany. The basis of their approach was founded upon the belief that "Germany is the economic dynamo of Europe, but for historical reasons, it is often perceived in ways that are negative, even hostile". Wolff Olins suggested six practical steps to the German government and its agencies should they wish to address the issue of branding Germany: (1) Set up a national brand steering committee under the leadership of the Chancellor or President of the Republic; (2) Create a research and development team responsible for reporting to the steering committee; (3) Begin a process of national consultation involving representatives of all the Lander as well as national figures in industry, commerce, education, media, culture and the arts; (4)

Commission extensive research into perceptions of Germany overseas, benchmarking these studies against data on perceptions of other nations; (5) Carry out a thorough review of how and where the national brand could appropriately be utilized; (6) Draw up and submit for Bundestag approval a programme of implementation for the brand options adopted by the national steering committee.

For South Korea, a huge amount of attention was trained on it through its co-hosting of the 2002 FIFA World Cup. Anholt (2003) describes how, in an attempt to cash in on the publicity that would be generated by the co-hosting of the World Cup, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Energy announced an ambitious plan to raise the international recognition (and thereby boost the exports) of Korean brand-name products. Five strategies were worked out by the government – to internationalize Korean brand names; strengthen corporate brand management; reinforce electronic brand marketing; expand the infrastructure for brand marketing; and raise the nation's image abroad. To achieve the strategic objectives, a well-funded and coherent approach was adopted. The government announced that it would create a 100 billion won venture fund to help exporters improve the designs of their products and that it would also open 'industrial design

renovation centers' in ten cities nationwide to help small- and medium-sized companies improve the design of their products as part of an integrated effort to boost the value and recognition of Korean brands.

Perhaps most visionary in the long term, according to Anholt, was the Korean government's plan to build up the nation's brand infrastructure by opening a 'Brand Academy' to train about 500 specialists every year in brand management, character design and industrial packaging. The internal education aspect of nation branding thus appears to have been grasped exceptionally well by Korea compared with the efforts of other nations.

Spain is often held up as an example of successful nation branding. Preston, for instance, claims that Spain is among the best examples of modern, successful nation branding because it keeps on building on what truly exists and its branding efforts incorporate, absorb and embrace a wide variety of activities under one graphic identity to form and project a multifaceted yet coherent, interlocking and mutually supportive whole. The repositioning of Spain as a vibrant modern democracy throwing off the negative connotations of its recent past is also hailed as an exemplar in nation branding by Gilmore, who states that the core of a country's brand must capture the spirit of its people and how it can be developed

into a brand positioning after consideration of four essential factors – macro-trends, target groups, competitors and core competencies. The positioning derived from such considerations should, according to Gilmore, be rich enough to translate into sub-positionings to target diverse groups, and it should also be substantiated in terms of what the country can actually offer.

### **3.4. Role of sport in nation brand building**

Sport engenders high levels of passion and may be considered to be a central contributing factor to a sense of national identity. For example, Brandley (1995) cites Spain as a country in which, although there are other important conduits of regional and ethnic identity, football remains symptomatic of the major diversities that exist within society. More than ever before, clubs such as Barcelona, Athletic Bilbao and Real Madrid are the symbols and the focus, as well as the open vehicles for the expression of ethnic, cultural and nationalistic identities and differences within Spanish society.

Whereas, in some countries, the dominant sport contributing to a sense of national identity is football, in other countries different sports fulfill the same function. In New Zealand, for instance, the All Blacks rugby team is a symbol of

national pride. With the advent of professional rugby in the mid-1990s, the New Zealand rugby union (NZRU) employed Saatchi and Saatchi in order to identify a constellation of 'brand values' for the All Blacks, the national rugby team. Collectively, as a team, the All Blacks were deemed by Saatchi and Saatchi to represent the values of New Zealand, including values such as excellence, humility, teamwork and tradition (Motion & Brodie, 2003).

A similar study investigating the relationship between rugby union and national identity, in the context of England, was conducted by images to describe the exploits of the English media employed numerous images to describe the exploits of the English national rugby team, evoking particularly strong invented traditions and well-established symbols of traditional Englishness such as bulldog spirit and Anglo-Saxon temperament. Another example of sport's role in identity-building comes from the Caribbean, where during the late 1950s and early 1960s cricket became a powerful expression of Caribbean progress and nationhood with links identifies between cricket, black nationalism, Caribbean identity and anti-colonial struggle (James,1963).

The hosting of international sports events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup have been effectively used to favorably publicized and re-

image a place on a global scale (Jun & Lee, 2007). It has been suggested that incorporating sports into the nation-branding mix is a relatively under-used positioning tool (Rein & Shields, 2007).

#### **4. Brand Kazakhstan**

##### **4.1. “Stan like no other”**

In competitiveness ranking published by International Institute of Management Development in 2010, Kazakhstan climbed up three places to 33rd leaving Spain and Russia quit far ahead. In the meantime, for government efficiency category, Kazakhstan managed to stay at 20th from 58 nations and for sound fiscal policy it ranked 12th and 16th for public finance policy. Kazakhstan also positioned itself in the 29th on business efficiency and 8th in labor market efficiency. The reason behind Kazakhstan’s high ranking in different categories is its flexibility on policies which sets wages and employment and firing procedure. All the achievements prove that Kazakhstan’s government policies are a success effort in developing its national brand.

In a recent ranking of the International Organization Future Brand (a division marketing company McCann World group) Tomorrow's Leading

Country Brands Kazakhstan ranked in the top 15, finishing in 14th place.

Strong among its neighbors and eager to grow, Kazakhstan is making strides towards a promising tomorrow (Future brand, 2013).

Kazakhstan is a part of what might be called the "third wave" of states that gained independence during the twentieth century. In the wake of the Great War, the demise of the Ottoman, Habsburg, and Romanov empires launched a host of new nations onto the world stage, including Iraq, Czechoslovakia, and Latvia. After World War II, decolonization nearly doubled the number of internationally recognized states adding Ghana, Algeria, and Indonesia among others. Most recently, the dissolution of the USSR and Yugoslavia in 1991 produced twenty-one new countries, including Slovenia, Turkmenistan, and Belarus. As Vladimir Lebedenko notes, "most of these newly independent states were faced with the need for self-identification and assertion of their image in the international arena" (2004). These countries debuted at a complicated juncture in history, one in which deterritorialized communication is ubiquitous, economic interdependence and cultural interconnections are the norm, and the tools of public relations, advertising, and branding are integral components of statecraft.<sup>25</sup> Given such changes, the community of nations has, in many ways,

come to function as a marketplace. This phenomenon acutely affects the newest countries of the world. As one of five new "Stans" created by the breakup of the USSR, Kazakhstan's situation is further complicated by brand confusion in the international marketplace.

Every nation in the world has its own elements of image, its face. The face is consisting of perceived brands, both positives and negatives. For example, United States of America is always associated with dollar, democracy and McDonald's. Meanwhile Russia is linked with gas, Gorbachev, Putin, Matreshka and winter. Afghanistan on the other hand, is known for drugs, Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

So what are the events, persons or products that built the image of Kazakhstan? The table below shows a list of ten fundamental image producing factors for Kazakhstan by Vlast Magazine.

**Table 2. Key image-making factors of Kazakhstan**

<b>Image-making factor</b>	<b>Description</b>
Oil	Currently the annual oil production stands at around 81 million tons in Kazakhstan.
Baikonur	First and the largest cosmodome in the world
Nursultan Nazarbayev	First and the only president of the country
Chairman of OSCE and the OSCE Summit in Astana	In 2010 Kazakhstan was the first CIS country to chair the OSCE
Pro Team Astana cycling team	Winner of Tour de France and Giro d'Italia
Nevada-Semipalatinsk	Anti-nuclear movement
Borat	Comedy movie
Congress of the Leaders of World and Traditional Religions	Participation by 87 delegations from different religious confessions of the world.
Asian Winter Games	First mega event of Kazakhstan
Club of the Funny and Inventive team	Funniest brand of Kazakhstan

#### **4.2. Influence of the movie Borat**

In 2005, Sacha Baron Cohen released a movie “Borat: Cultural Learnings of America for Make Benefit Glorious Nation of Kazakhstan” that offense the people of Kazakhstan. The movie portrayed Kazakhstan as a racist, sexist and uncivilized nation. The People of Kazakhstan was so outraged by the movie; they threatened to sue Sasha Baron Cohen. They even prohibit the movie to be shown all over the country.

It is not a surprise for Baron Cohen, the creator of Borat character – Borat Sagdiyev – to receive an enormous backlash for his work. He managed to touch the raw nerve of Kazakhstan as well as depicting its people as intellectually and morally ignorant. Baron Cohen’s career also rose to stardom after Borat hit the theatres. The movie portrayal of the Central Asian Republic beyond propriety, it showed Kazakhstan as a backward and populated by rapist and anti-Semites. On the contrary, Kazakhstan is a twenty-first century nation with its skyscrapers decorates its skylines, sophisticated and technology literate people, and a large number of ethnic groups living harmoniously. Borat is a distorted and pretentious representation of Kazakhstan and its people. The movie has provided the country with a free publication, an abrupt increase of its global profile although not a really good one.

The “mockumentary” Borat debuted with a boisterous reviews and huge appeal on North America and Europe in November 2006. In its first weekend, Borat took £6.2 million (US\$12 million) in the United Kingdom and over \$26 million in the US, with an ultimate worldwide box office gross in excess of \$250 million. The film’s premiere signaled the high-water mark in the “battle over Borat”. The feud dates back to 2000, when the Kazakh diplomat Talgat Kaliyev

first chastised Borat's depiction of his country: "We can take a joke like anyone else. But this has gone too far-it's a form of racism. We want Borat banned (Harris, 2006). At the time, this reaction was widely viewed as a laughable overreaction, but as Baron Cohen increased his use of the Central Asian republic to advance his own fame, it became clear that the comedian was profiting from his slander of Kazakhstanis, though I argue that the country will reap the benefits of Borat long after Sacha Baron Cohen has exited the stage (Saunders, 2008).

In the contrary, the debacles cause by the controversy of Borat, help promote tourism to Kazakhstan. This is something that the government, economically, have dreamt about and millions expenditures in making it come true, especially for Astana and Almaty. Many western youngsters understand that Borat somewhat just a plot to accommodate Baron Cohen's bizarre sense of humor and they wish to know more about the real Kazakhstan. United Kingdom's embassy for Kazakhstan had reported an increase in visa applications after MTV Movie Awards took place, the embassy's staff reportedly said that this phenomenon is attributed by Borat's burlesque.

"More people are applying for visas to Kazakhstan than ever. ... It seems that many are intrigued by Borat and he's introduced them to the country,"

(Saunders, 2008).

In his mention of "propaganda," Borat made reference to Kazakhstan's ongoing multimillion-dollar "Heart of Eurasia" advertising campaign. Some members of the western press cynically characterized the campaign as a response to the Boratistan parody, but the new program was simply an expansion of Kazakhstan's public diplomacy efforts in the United States, United Kingdom, Russia, and China (Vassilenko, 2007). Since 2001, Kazakhstan has regularly placed ads in the Washington Post, but beginning in 2006 an attempt was made to branch out to a larger pool of opinion leaders in the United States. This shift reflected a deepening relationship between the United States and Kazakhstan and coincided with Vice President Dick Cheney's springtime visit to Kazakhstan and President Nazarbayev's autumnal trip to the United States. The campaign included advertisements on local Washington, D.C., television stations and informational inserts in the New York Times, Foreign Affairs, Newsweek, and Fortune. The messaging focused on the following themes: 1) tolerance and efforts to spread such policies across the region; 2) energy production and stability; 3) Kazakhstan as a friend and partner to the United States in the "war on terror"; and 4) Kazakhstan as a modern country. While Borat's antidiplomacy may have had

some impact on the tone of the advertisements, he does not deserve the lion's share of credit for the campaign itself. Vassilenko confirmed, though, that forthcoming programs will take the "Borat effect" into account explaining, "We plan to reorient our branding campaign to a younger audience. We will be focusing less on heavy political issues and more on culture and tourism" (2007).

“No regrets. Perhaps the only one is that we have not done more to capitalize on the opportunity. Baron Cohen helped us do our job. The original condemnation of Borat prompted more questions from the media, which in turn led to further opportunities to discuss Kazakhstan. If we had laughed it off or ignored it, we wouldn't be anywhere near where we are today in terms of recognition and public visibility. Many countries ignore negative portrayals. You can afford to do this only if you have the advantage of a national brand which is already established. Our brand is in its infancy It was important to protest and use every wave of interest created by the protests to maximize our opportunities,” (Vassilenko, 2007).

#### **4.3. Summary of the current status of brand Kazakhstan**

Lacking a historically well-defined image beyond its borders, the Kazakh

government has worked hard to set a unique, recognizable, and credible national brand. Both its elites and masses see Kazakhstan differently in a category from its troubled associates of the Stans from the south (Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan), and both groups are predictably uncomfortable with their country being grouped together with Afghanistan, which possesses an entirely different history and socio-economic character. According to Roman Vassilenko, Kazakhstan's embassy spokesman in the United States, "it is frustrating when we are lumped together with a country where girls were prevented from going to school for a decade and where the burqa is worn. The confusion with countries like Pakistan is also annoying," (2007).

Kazakhstan's quiddity is based on being a resourceful, cultural melting pot, and stable outpost apart from the troubled region of the globe. Uncomfortable with the "Central Asian" stereotype that combines Soviet and Islamic legacies of autocracy and authoritarianism, the Kazakh government has sought numerous venues to present a positive image to the world (Kotkin, 2002). These include hosting the 2011 Asian Winter Games, close cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and expansion of the Baikonur Cosmodrome. As Vassilenko states: "We are not a typical Stan because of our ethnic diversity, our

role as bridge to Europe, and a different mentality from our southern neighbors ... we don't fit the stereotype of a Central Asian country." (Vasilenko, 2007).

## **5. Role of sport in building brand Kazakhstan**

### **5.1. Hosting sport events**

Hosting a mega-sport event such as the Olympic game brings positive effect to the hosting country's image (Kotler, 2002). Various researches proves that sport event like the Olympics boost the hosting nation's economy and also improves the awareness and image of the nation (Kim, 2006; Oh, 2002). The Olympics elevates the host country or region's international status, brings more opportunity of international trade, and improves the image of the hosting country. Improvement of the host nation's image is one of the crucial reasons underdeveloped countries desire to host the Olympic Games (SERI Report 2000 & 2004).

Kazakhstan has in last years worked hard to plan a global image of an up-and-coming nation. Hosting prestigious international sport events provides it the stage to sell itself to the world.

In 2017, the World Winter Universiade opens in Almaty - the largest city in

Kazakhstan. The formal decision on the 28th Universiade in Almaty was taken during voting at the meeting of the International University Sports Federation (FISU) Nov 29, 2011.

Carrying the World Student Games in Almaty sports will be another step to strengthen the authority of Kazakhstan in the international arena, in accordance with the Strategic Plan of Development of Kazakhstan till 2050. Built for the Asian Games sports facilities will be serve as the basis for infrastructure preparation for the Universiade 2017. The successful hosting of the Universiade in 2017, and first of all, preparation for it will greatly enhance Kazakhstan' chances to host the Winter Olympics in 2022.

Since 2011, the National Olympic Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan has been considering a bid for the 2022 Winter Olympic Games in Almaty, the former capital city and still the largest city and financial center of the country. The decision, rendered in July by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), says that Almaty is one of three finalists still competing to host the 2022 Winter Olympics.

Olympics - is a unique opportunity to change the perception of Kazakhstan in the world. With the exception of Russia, none of the countries of the former

Soviet Union have not had the honor of hosting the competition of this magnitude. Kazakhstan already has some international prestige as a rapidly developing country with high growth prospects.

Hosting the Olympic Games will improve awareness and tourist appeal of our entire state. For the city of Almaty will be essential activities related to improving the environment and the development of tourism infrastructure. Recently, quite a lot of talk about the development of tourism and the transformation of the southern capital of Kazakhstan in the international tourist center, really for this there are all conditions. Modern metropolis has quite well-developed infrastructure, located right at the foot of the magnificent mountains, which allow to develop a ski and mountaineering tourism.

Due to the high authority of Kazakhstan Boxing Federation in the international sporting arena Kazakhstan won the right to host the World Boxing Championships. This event is perfect information occasion to promote Kazakhstan's boxing and Kazakhstan on the world stage. In this regard, Kazakhstan Boxing Federation started realization PR-strategy within the World Boxing Championships.

One of the components of this strategy is PR-Global communication

campaign on the platform of BBC World News. Goal of advertising campaign was tell the world about the upcoming sports event, invite to Kazakhstan all boxing fans and tourists.

BBC World News has made a 30-second promotional video, representing the country of - Kazakhstan. Broadcast video in the global network of channel BBC World News has started on May 13 and has finished on the final day of the championship - 26 October. In total it has aired on BBC World News 1,272 times.

Along with the competition Kazakhstan successfully conducting international sports conferences, seminars and congresses. The XXXVIII Ordinary UEFA Congress took place in Astana. The Congress, which is the UEFA supreme body, is attended by representatives of all 54 national associations.

## **5.2. PPSC Astana**

A vision to promote a positive image of Kazakhstan has been launched through the Astana Presidential Professional Sports Club.

Founded In December 2012 under the direct patronage of Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, the Club brings together eight professional sports clubs and two individual athletes in an effort to raise Kazakhstan's sporting

image and strengthen public support for sport nationwide.

Estimated to cost more than US\$100 million each year, the Club is backed by Kazakhstan's Sovereign Wealth Fund, Samruk-Kazyna. Ilya Ilyin, double Olympic weightlifting champion, and Sochi 2014 bronze medallist in figure skating, Denis Ten, the first Kazak skater to win an Olympic medal, are also incorporated in the club, in which former International Olympic Committee (IOC) marketing director Michael Payne is helping promote as chief strategic advisor.

The “Astana” Presidential Club combines the best Kazakhstan sports teams. Professional cycling team “Pro Team Astana,” the same name basketball and football clubs, hockey team “Barys,” “Astana Dakar Team,” boxers from “Astana Arlans,” the team of water and horse polo, as well as the project for development of the national wrestling “Kazakhstan Barysy” are among them. Ilya Ilyin, double Olympic weightlifting champion, and Sochi 2014 bronze medallist in figure skating, Denis Ten, the first Kazak skater to win an Olympic medal, are also incorporated in the Club, in which former International Olympic Committee (IOC) marketing director Michael Payne is helping promote as chief strategic advisor.

“Astana is a light tower of Kazakhstan’s development,” Nazarbayev said.

“Our country has achieved significant results not only in the economy but in the sports as well. Seven gold medals and the 12th team place at the Olympic Games in London testify to that. Kazakhstan has to become a world class sports power. We have got a constellation of brilliant athletes who have glorified our country with their victories. But we do not intend to stop; we need to enter a highly professional level of sports management. Kazakhstan should be known as the nation of winners. After the Universiade in Almaty [in 2017], we want to bid for the Winter Olympics in the southern capital [in 2022]. All conditions have been created for this already, and there is hope for support from the international sports community” (2012)

Gennady Golovkin becomes Kazakh brand of strength and quality. Gennady Golovkin, the most talked-about import from Kazakhstan since Borat, Middleweight WBA and IBO Champion Gennady Golovkin has been named one of the most entertaining boxers. ESPN and many other sport commentators have called Golovkin the Tyson of the middleweight category

Formula 1 team, Force India unveiled their 2014 challenger, Aside from a change to a black base color, Astana logos are found on the side of the new front

wing, which is an organization that was founded to promote the capital city of Kazakhstan. The partnership is designed to boost tourism and the local economy within the rapidly expanding and improving city.



**Figure 3 Astana logo on Force India F1 team bolide.**

(Source: <http://www.ausmotive.com/>)

### **5.3. Participation of Kazakhs in international sport events**

During development of the Olympic Games and popularity and relevance

grew, winning medals also became important and a substance of national and political prestige. Despite the denial of the International Olympic Committee on the recognition of countries ranking medals, medal table is updated constantly and plays a dominant role in the media and the public interest (Rathke & Woitek, 2007).

The participation of Kazakh athletes in the Olympic Games should be divided into two parts: within USSR team, and then, after independence, under flag of Kazakhstan. The first Olympic medal won by an athlete - a native of Kazakhstan, dated 1952, the year of the first Olympics with the Soviet Union. At the 1980 Olympics in Moscow, the first Kazakh Olympic champion, already directly representing Kazakhstan, was wrestler Zhaksylyk Ushkempirov. Olympic Games in Seoul have become the most fruitful for athletes from Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan athletes won 19 medals - 10 gold, three silver and six bronze.

New history of Kazakh sports have begun in 1994 at the Winter Olympics in Lillehammer. It was the first time when Kazakhstan made a team under its national flag, and it was first anthem of the country to commemorate the victory of Vladimir Smirnov in 50-kilometer ski track.

Before London Olympic, President Nursultan Nazarbayev made clear to the national Olympic team that their country wanted them to do as well this year. He told them that the Olympics are more than just a sports competition – the country’s image and reputation was at stake. The President expressed high hopes for the athletes’ performance, noting that much attention and resources have been devoted to sports development in Kazakhstan. “This is your opportunity to show that it is not in vain that your country has been supporting you, and that you have not been training in vain either” (today.kz, 2012).

The total amount of medals won by Kazakhstan athletes in official sports events such as World Championships, World Cups, and Asian championship approached one thousand. In summer Olympic Games, Kazakhstan sportsmen have considerable achievements. They are really good at wrestling, weightlifting and boxing. On the last Olympic, Kazakhstan managed to add their medal collections from triple jump and cycling. During the first week of the Games, they managed to stay on top ten of medal tally then finished off on the 12<sup>th</sup> at the end of the Games. The summer Olympic achievements were not yet followed by the Winter Games. In their medals collection, they have one gold and two silvers from Lillehammer in 1994, two bronzes from Nagano in 1998 and one bronze from

Vancouver in 2010. This proves that Kazakhstan is a rising nation that needs to be accounted as a competitor and an emerging sport center.

## **6. Research questions**

Pertinent marketing ideas on branding were examined earlier in this chapter. It highlights how countries are increasingly turning to nation branding to raise its profile on the domestic and international stages.

Three research questions are derived from the objectives listed in the previous chapters. A combination of the current situation and literature reviewed in earlier provided guidelines in which these research questions are drafted.

RQ1: What is the current and desired image of brand Kazakhstan?

RQ2: What nation branding benefits Kazakhstan could obtain through sports?

RQ3: How can Kazakhstan obtain the desired image of nation branding?

### **III. Method**

The objective of this section is to explain the research methodology used in this research. The basic information on the research method, interviewees, and questionnaire are provided in this chapter.

#### **1. Overview of research method**

My study can be classified as qualitative, so methods of qualitative evaluation of research were used. Qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative, is focused not just on statistical measurements, but relies upon the understanding, explanation and interpretation of empirical data. Simply speaking, it does not respond to the question "How much?" but to the questions "what?", "how?" and "why" (Murray & Brubaker, 2008).

The research used interview as a research tool out of the available tools. Interview technique was deemed the most appropriate method for this research pertaining to the fact that developing an understanding on the approaches and ideas on nation branding could best be achieved through direct interaction with the experts working in the field.

Secondary documentations were used to acquire background knowledge on the research topic, which gave me flexibility and confidence in asking questions and directing interview. The researcher used different knowledge sources for all chapters in this study, some of which mentioned below.

**Table 3. Books and reports**

Description of book/report
“Nation branding: Concepts, Issues, Practice”, Dinnie Keith
“Marketing Places”, Philip Kotler
“Impacts of Olympic games” Barry Houlihan
“Kazakhstan 2050”, Nursultan Nazarbayev
IMPACT Report: How Winter Asian Games 2011 influences the economy of Kazakhstan

Having background knowledge from the above mentioned sources, the researcher was able to prepare an interview plan and also prepare himself with appropriate knowledge to carry out the interviews.

## **2. Selection of interviewees**

For understanding the insider and outsider view on utilization of sports for branding a nation, six interviews were conducted. Selection of the subject

interviews were made by following a criteria that required the subjects to be either currently working for nation branding through sports or have minimum five years' experience as managers in a national sports organization.

Out of the six interview conducted, three interviewed personnel were selected from national organizations responsible for branding Kazakhstan and remaining three were selected based upon their experience as sports managers/administrators. It is pertinent to mention that these subjects had minimum six year experience in their respective industries at managerial level.

The Presidential Professional Sport Club Astana (PPSC Astana) was chosen as it was the main organization responsible for the professional sports clubs with good global potential. As the head of the public relations department, my interview subject is the key personnel in building the nation's brand on the global stage. The next interview subject is from the Combat and Strength Sports Confederation. He helms the international relation division, thus he has in-depth knowledge of the current situation of the sports arena in Kazakhstan.

As the marketing manager of World Taekwondo Federation, my third interviewee works with Kazakhstan on certain events. His experience in the sport provides a unique perspective on the situation. For my next interview subject, the

vice minister of culture, information and tourism of Kyrgyz Republic was chosen due to his vast experience as a branding expert. Aside from being a politician, he also has work experience in Kazakhstan.

With so many interview subjects who have experience in branding, my next interviewee provides a different view as his focus is mainly on strategic planning. Moreover, he is able to paint a picture from the eyes of an outsider. Lastly, a national athlete from the taekwondo federation of Kazakhstan was consulted. As an Olympic medalist, he has a unique perspective on Kazakhstan on the international stage. It is this reason that he was chosen as my interview subject.

The table below shows the information about the interview subjects for this research.

**Table 4. Summary of interviewees**

<b>Organization</b>	<b>Department</b>
PPSC Astana	Public Relations
Combat and strength sports confederation	International Relation Division
World Taekwondo Federation	Marketing
Ministry of Culture, Information and Tourism of Kyrgyz Republic	Vice-Minister
Pakistan NOC	Strategic Planning
Taekwondo Federation of Kazakhstan	National athlete

### **3. Preparation of interview**

In order to ensure that maximum information was collected through the interviews opportunity, the researcher devised the questions for interview into three groups keeping in view the information requirement. In addition, interviews were planned in semi structure manner to ensure that no prior restrictions limit the findings of this research. The two sub sections given below explain the interview preparation and questions.

#### **3.1. Interview questions**

The first group of questions devised was focused on collecting information about the current image of Kazakhstan to develop and understanding on the currently associated images with brand Kazakhstan. Following questions were asked to develop an understanding.

1. If you hear 'Kazakhstan' what is the first symbol/thing that comes to your mind?
2. Why such an associations? How do you come to know Kazakhstan?
3. Have you ever visited Kazakhstan? If no why you never visited Kazakhstan?
4. How do you perceive Kazakhstan as a country? Negative? Positive? (What is the image of Kazakhstan in your mind?)

5. What could motivate you to visit Kazakhstan?

The second group of questions was devised to develop an understanding about the respondents' view of using sports for branding and their knowledge about sports and Kazakhstan branding. In addition some questions related to future sports events planned to be hosted in Kazakhstan were asked to develop an understanding how these events would help build brand Kazakhstan. Following questions were asked.

1. Do sport events attract you? If yes, why? If not, maybe in different events?
2. Do you know where Winter Asian Games 2011 were held?
3. How do you come to know about this Winter Asian Games 2011? (media, newspapers, friends)
4. Did you see any promotional campaign, adds about Winter Asian Games 2011 in Kazakhstan?
5. If yes, what do you think about the campaign? First impression? Did it make you want to go to Kazakhstan?
6. Do you have any information about the mega events that will be held in Kazakhstan?
7. If yes, what do you think, how these events will contribute in building image of

Kazakhstan?

8. Do you think branding a nation through sports is good idea? If no why? If yes why?

The third and final group of questions devised for this interview was focused on understanding how the interviewee organization is handling national branding and what kind of strategy is being applied by them to achieve branding goals besides asking them about the difference between the desired and current image. In addition, the group of questions was focused to develop the understanding about the kind of human resource required for effectively managing branding operations. The interview finished by asking the opinion of interviewee about Olympic brand and how this brand can benefit brand Kazakhstan in development. Following questions were asked in third group.

1. What are the Vision, Mission, & Strategy for branding of your Organization?
2. If none, please mention organization strategy or PR strategy
3. Does your organization have a strategy for nation branding?
4. Which Attribute do you consider significant in improving Brand Image?
5. What is the difference between the current and desired Brand Image?
6. What is the difference between the current and desired nation branding?

7. What are the resources (Funds, Human Resource) available to your organization in this regard?

Questions on Olympic image were asked to gauge their understanding on the topic.

1. Is it necessary to link the Olympic brand in branding Kazakhstan?
2. How can the Olympic image benefit brand Kazakhstan?

### **3.2. Interview plan**

During the interviews semi-structured method for conducting interview was used, where there was room for additional questions some unplanned question were asked. The order of asking question was made by natural flow of interview; semi-structured approach leave space for interviewer to decide what to ask and in which moment of the interview.

I tried to not make any suggestion in a way of answering on a question, since I was interested in true explanation of opinion, not in the confirmation of my mind. Although, this interview takes usually longer time than structured interviews, where no space for additional questions is besides from planned, I wanted to give this comfort to my interviewees, so they could express their thoughts and feeling

with no time pressure.

I tried my best to keep my personal bias out of the research when interpreting the findings; I conducted the interviews and made interpretations of the data, based on gained knowledge influenced by academically recognized literature that is publically available for everybody, so it makes my research valid.

### **3.3. Interview procedure**

The interviews were conducted using one-on-one/person-to-person interviewing strategy and supplemented by phone email when deemed necessary. Primarily researcher himself conducted the interviews.

The questionnaires for interview were sent out to subject personnel before actual interview through email or post. Once the subject individual confirmed receiving of questionnaire and his availability then the interview were scheduled and conducted at the choice and convenience of interviewed personnel.

The interviewee were requested that he should arrange some documents concerning the topic covered in the interview so he/she may be in a better position to support his opinion through quoting ready references.

## **IV. Findings**

The goal of this chapter is to present the findings from the research. Information gathered through the interview and content analysis is summarized in this section. Interesting points for strategy establishment and implementation are also provided. Initially in the interview questions were divided into several groups, which helped me to conduct coding of the material. First, I asked about the current image of Kazakhstan. The answers to these questions gave me understanding of current Kazakhstan image among foreign responders and the view of Kazakhstan's image among Kazakh interviewees.

### **1. Current and desired image of brand Kazakhstan (RQ1)**

#### **1.1. Current image of brand Kazakhstan**

All six interviewees offered different views on the current image of the brand Kazakhstan. Thus processes the information which I received from the interviews about the current image of Kazakhstan is summarized in the following table.

**Table 5. Current image of Kazakhstan**

Subject	Vision	Current image	Description
Branding expert	A better cultural country, High-class Kazakhstan	Borat, oil and gas	There must be adequate in accordance with the laws of PR-technologies Kazakhstan respond to this fact and catch the moment. This was done. Kazakhstan with even greater energy began their advance on the world stage, showing its potential and power.
PPSC Astana	A victory shared, enjoyed, and built together, by the athletes and the people	Nazarbayev, Famous athletes	Many events have taken place mainly through the President of Kazakhstan, his exceptional gift to put forward creative and ambitious ideas in the creation and implementation of event management, the development of strategic programs for the development of certain aspects of the state.
Pakistan NOC	Best ever Winter Olympic Games 2022	Natural resources, big country	Nowadays Astana Kazakhstan positioned as a brand or one of the brands in Kazakhstan.
WTF	Country with a strong taekwondo	Big country, Chilmanov	First Kazakh athlete who got bronze medal in taekwondo. Member of WTF family.
Famous athlete	New world sport center	Nazarbayev, Asian winter games.	The 2011 Asian Winter Games was held in Astana and Almaty. It was the first time Kazakhstan hosted such a large event.
CSSC	To create a caring nation loved by all	Astana city, Success in OG	Nowadays Astana is positioned as a brand or one of the brands in Kazakhstan.

From the above table few common themes emerged such as a country with lots of potential to grow as brand but needs to address the direction of growth. The most common image that emerged is either Nazarbayev, a country blessed with oil

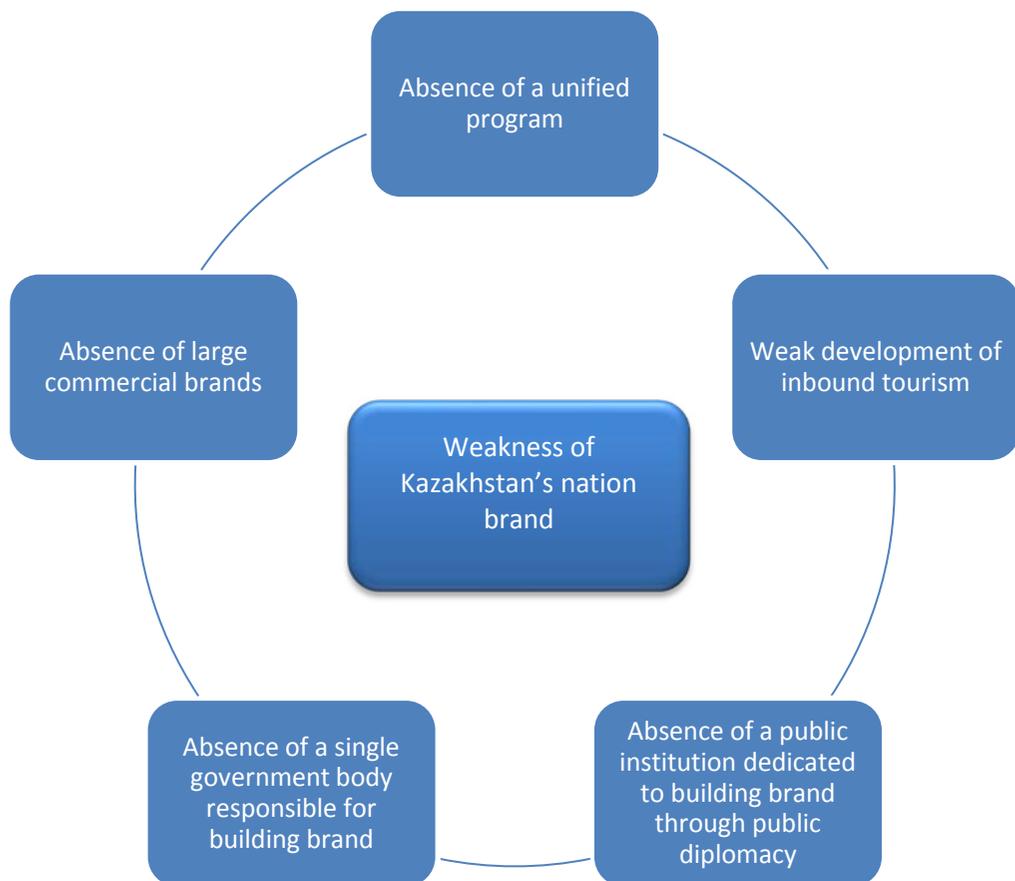
and gas resources or a country that is blessed with so many talented athletes and newly developed sports infrastructure.

The lack of a clear direction to go and trying out too many different strategies are actually not taking Kazakhstan to desired image and the brand Kazakhstan is suffering in the similar manner as other brands from central Asia.

As it is a well-known fact that none of the Central Asian countries have any brand image and currently there are negative stereotypes that are imposed or attached on them by Western media. Even the countries within central Asia do not usually have realistic view about the nearest neighbours as media has influenced the population views. Having screened a lot of articles on the Internet, I was amazed to know that the formation of our "stan" image belonged to the publications about Afghanistan and Pakistan. What do they think about us, simple citizens of America, Africa or Australia? Tajikistan - drug trafficking, Kyrgyzstan - revolution and unrest, Kazakhstan - Borat, Uzbekistan - the dictatorship, Turkmenistan - the second North Korea. No social and industrial progress of the Central Asian mill until it can completely drown out the negative colour of the word "stan." There were numerous attempts of the Central Asian countries to change this state of affairs. Most of all tried Kazakhstan. But neither "Altyn Adam" or "Heart of

Eurasia", even a film about Kazakhstan fossils on BBC could not beat incompetent but brilliant "Borat" from Akhat Bakiev.

The figure shown above exhibits the identified five core dimensions that are considered as the core reasons behind slow development of none development



of brand Kazakhstan by the interviewed personnel.

**Figure 4. Obstacles of nation branding**

The first and the far most reason could be attributed to the lack of unified program to develop brand Kazakhstan, it is obvious from the comments of interviewees that having a unified program is necessary to develop national brand as putting efforts here and there may get results on short run but on the long run no image is associated with the country and a lot of resources are wasted but trying out multiple options. It would serve most appropriate if resources are allocated in one direction so that the program is implemented in most befitting manner.

The second reason identified was the lack of inbound tourism, though Kazakhstan is blessed with lots of beautiful locations and has developed many facilities that could attract a lot of tourism, but without proper promotion program and with the attachment of negative media stereotypes, the tourism industry in the country has never lived to its potential, so the brand Kazakhstan is suffering.

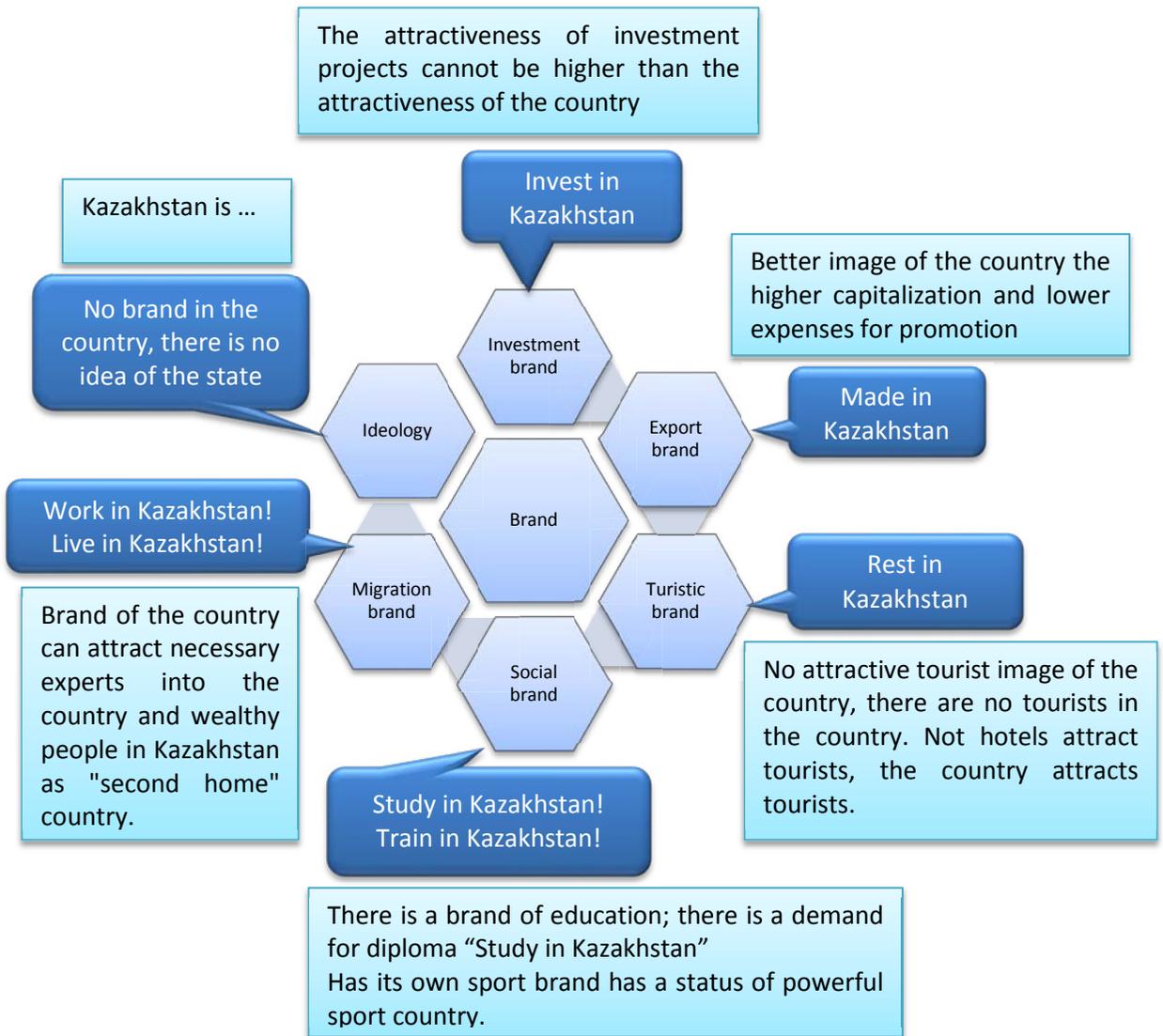
With no dedicated department to deal with branding of the country and public diplomacy, the branding is heading nowhere as everything is managed according to the understanding of person, who is responsible to carry out certain activity as no guiding policy exists and there is no evaluation and monitoring system is in place.

Another contributing factor could be the lack of big brands in Kazakhstan,

which means that currently no options are available to anchor brand Kazakhstan with any other establish brand to propagate the image to the world.

### **1.2. Desired image of brand Kazakhstan**

The figure below exhibits a list brand images that are on the desire list of brand Kazakhstan. The first desired brand image is investment destination for investors from around the world, the core reason behind this desired image is that with vast land available to Kazakhstan and with oil and gas availability, the country could afford to offer investor friendly policies to setup big industry in the country. The action that needs to be taken by government of Kazakhstan is to develop and establish policy and subsidies to attract investor from other parts of the world to invest Kazakhstan through establishing industries, this would help in developing the economy of the country on one hand and also send soft image of the country on the other hand.



**Figure 5. Desired brand image of Kazakhstan**

The second desired image is Export brand image which is actually” Made

in Kazakhstan”; this could be achieved only through attracting high tech industry to Kazakhstan through making government policies industry friendly so that they would consider Kazakhstan as a destination for establishing there industries. Through attracting these industries, the wish of becoming export brand could be achieved as the product of these high tech industries will be exported to across the global and brand Kazakhstan will be recognized everywhere in the world.

Another desired image is touristic destination as per the above shown figure, this actually means that developing the natural tourism sites and then using proper promotion campaigns to promote these locations among the global community to attract them to visit these sites. Through promoting the tourism sites and recreational locations, a soft and friendly image of Kazakhstan could be promoted to the world.

Some of the other possible desired images shown in the above exhibit social brand and migration brand; by these two desired images the government of Kazakhstan and the branding agencies are actually interested in promoting and propagating a message to the world that Kazakhstan has developed enough to accommodate labor from other markets and also the educational institutions have also developed enough to offer study and research opportunities to the other

nations. In addition this also means that the sports facilities and the coaching and training staff currently available to Kazakhstan as nation is equipped to offer its services to other developing and developed countries as they have achieve excellence.

The most important message exhibited in the above picture is that without ideology it is impossible to develop any brand image so Kazakhstan could take away the message from the following initiatives to develop its own ideology.

Place branding in many developed countries has already become one of the effective tools for the development of city, regions and country. Branding tool not only solves the issues of attracting investments and tourists, but also social issues - culture, sport, migration, education, and others. In the CIS countries the principle of territorial branding began to use relatively recently, particularly in Central Asia, where the notion of regional branding is only the beginning log in to the marketing of these countries, but until the system state. Control of Central Asia is not ready yet to apply the technology of place branding.

Indeed, in the interview with Bakiev, he commented that Kazakhstan is experiencing one of the most important periods in its history as it once again drew global attention.

”But, so far, to the status of sports power is still far. The country will have a gap of several decades to prove their worth in the sport. You must conquer at least another couple of Olympics and Championships to firmly stand for the country's image and association sports power,” (personal communications, October, 2014).

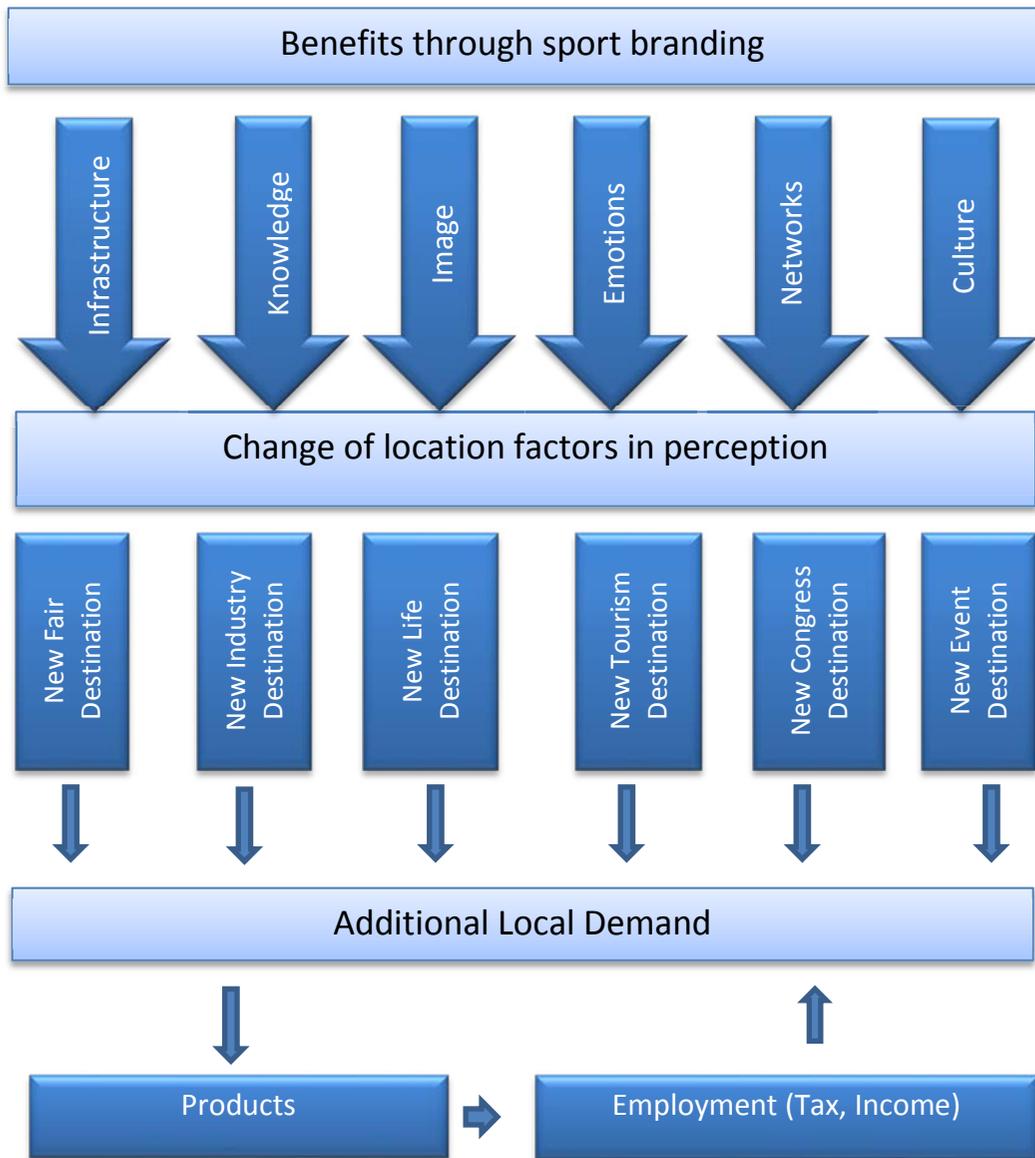
Bakiev cautioned that it was easier to win a title than it was to retain one. On that note, he argued that sports can be a good tool to build a brand.

## **2. Benefits through sport (RQ2)**

Nation branding through sport can give the country a future platform for building own brand of the state. Moreover, the positive effects of sport-branding will be extended automatically on a variety of aspects of the state: the political system in the country, policy makers, business, the general population, tourism, etc. The main feature that makes the sports branding for government officials - is improving the image of an entire country and its leaders, with all its consequences through winning athlete, team or country.

“Hosting of major international events give a strong image component for the country. Such activities are brands of countries working to improve the

reputation of the host country in the eyes of the world community: investors, business, tourism, organizers of major sporting events and media” from CSSC ((personal communication, October, 2014)



**Figure 6. Benefits through sport branding**

The figure shown above exhibits the benefits that could be achieved by using sports as tool to promote brand Kazakhstan. As from the above figure it is quite clear that through hosting a mega sports event or any international event the country benefits through not only developing sports infrastructure which could attract many countries for training on these venues later on but also help in developing knowledge to the human resource in the country and this become beneficial for the country in longer run.

In addition, hosting of this event also helps in promoting the image of the country in positive manner as mega sports event are widely followed across the globe and when an event is widely followed it also brings scrutiny from media and followers. So hosting of the event helps in actually showing the professionalism of the country.

Moreover these sports events brings a lot of tourism to the country as sports is part of culture in many societies and is being followed with utmost emotions, so it offers a great opportunity to develop close relations with many nations who participate in the games hosted by a country. Similarly having good experience with hosting nation also help in developing positive image of the country in the eyes and hearts of the visitors which is one of the best ways to promote positive

image of the country and builds the nation brand in most effective manner.

As hosting changes the perception of people about the host nation so it opens up many opportunities for the host national to excel as a new tourist destination, training destination, investment destination etc.

Although hosting a mega event is tricky business but one should be aware of the fact that sports with its importance in the modern society offers a platform that needs to be utilized rationally to take benefit from its deep roots to build a national brand. The benefits offered by sports are not limited to just hosting a mega event there are certain ways by which a developing brand or an initiated brand can benefit from anchoring itself with the sports brand, some of them are elaborated below in light of the finding of this research.

PPSC Astana showed that live television broadcasts serve as one of the most effective platform to showcase the image and essence of the host country, its investment and tourism potential and opportunities. “Bright scenes, unusual stories, scandalous facts, spectacular moments of the Games, teams, athletes gives the most powerful emotional outburst and interest in sports, which in turn guarantees the attention of not only fans, but also investors, tourists and business” (personal communication, October, 2014).

According to PPSC Astana, the brand of these activities provides a powerful multiplier effect within the country. Oftentimes, the host country's citizens are able to see firsthand the strength of its brand and its standing in the international community.

CSSC echoed the sentiments, stating that "possession of such a brand enables leadership and influence in certain regions and sectors of global importance. For example, Kazakhstan has proven its leadership in the Central Asian region, having such a large project as Asiad".

For Bakiev, the training, performance athletes and teams of the country should include a powerful PR support of athletes, teams and countries, as sporting events is both a branding and PR business; participating countries are making huge bets on attracting investors and foreign businesses and tourists to the country.

"International competitions [Olympic Games, World Cup soccer and hockey], to a much greater extent contain emotional component, rather than simply flowing competition. Everyone is cheering for their favorite teams and athletes. They expect from them something unique, a high-skill, brilliant spectacle and, of course, wins," (personal communication, October, 2014).

"At this level events such as the Olympic Games or the World

Championships is a struggle, rivalry between countries. Having a strong team for various sports and, of course victory shows positive economic viability of the country. Remember the most powerful emotional outburst in Russia after the victory of the Russian hockey team at the World Championships in 2008? People took to the streets, shouting, driving in cars with flags ... The main reason for the joy of these people was the fact that Russia is ‘rising from its knees.’”

### **3. Ways to obtain the desired image of nation branding through sport (RQ3)**

In general, Kazakhstan has enough resources for international cultural, sports and recreational activities. And such events are held from time to time and need to organize these events to serve the cause of creating an attractive image of Kazakhstan in what area they would not have been carried out. In addition they must advertise to the world media, to attract a large number of participants and journalists. This will help to shape and, most importantly, to constantly maintain a positive image of the sport, which has recently is one of the main priorities for Kazakhstan in the development of tourism.

“The Olympic Games will improve recognition and tourist appeal of our entire country. For the city of Almaty it will be crucial events related to

environmental improvement and development of tourism infrastructure. Recently, quite a lot of talk about the development of tourism and the transformation of the southern capital of Kazakhstan in the international tourist center,” Bakiev said during the interview. Modern metropolis has quite well-developed infrastructure, located right at the foot of the magnificent mountains that allow to develop Ski and climbing tourism.”

Chilmanov also agreed that Kazakhstan’s tourism sector could benefit greatly from this. “Currently, for the mass of attracting tourists to our sports facilities, Almaty lacks international recognition. The Winter Olympics could open the city of Almaty for a wide range of winter sports enthusiasts,” (personal communication, October 2014).

Popularization of sports for all and involvement in their lessons as many citizens, have now become an important criterion indicates the level of development of the state. Hosting major international competitions such as the Olympic Games, Universiade, and World Championships contribute not only to the development of the infrastructure of the host region and raise the prestige of the state. For the right to host such competitions comes tough competition, and very often the representatives of Olympic committees and sports federations prefer

to countries and regions where the fact of holding such competitions will give a strong impetus to the development of mass sports.

**Table 6. Ways to brand nation through sport**

<b>Ways to brand nation through sport</b>	
Winter Olympic Games	Hosting Olympic Games.
World Championships	Hosting of World Championships, Gran-prix, and Regional Championships.
Sports clubs	Creation and development of world-class sport clubs (Real Madrid, Galatasaray, CSKA)
National teams	Preparation of world-class athletes.
New sport facilities	Building of world-class sports facilities. Training camps.
Traditional sports	World Ethno Games» Development and promotion of traditional sport games
Sponsorship	Sponsorship of famous international sports objects: competitions, stadiums, teams, athletes.

Table 6 above exhibited the possible ways of utilizing sports for nation branding; it is quite obvious that mega sports events attracts worldwide coverage, so hosting mega events would attract worldwide coverage of brand Kazakhstan. Another way to utilize sports for branding Kazakhstan is hosting a world renown sports club in one of the cities of Kazakhstan as home team which will definitely bring a wide fan following and coverage with it. In addition brand Kazakhstan

could also be developed through establishing world class training facilities to attract athletes for training. Through this initiative brand Kazakhstan can be promoted.

Kazakhstan has a history of hosting mega events. In 2011, the Asian Winter Games was held. In 2017, Almaty will host the Winter Universiade. It is a logical conclusion then, according to CSSC, for Kazakhstan to host the 2022 Winter Olympics.

CSSC saw it as a way to “raise the international prestige of our country”. “With the exception of Russia, none of the former Soviet Union countries has yet been awarded the honor of hosting the event of such magnitude. Kazakhstan already has some international prestige as a rapidly developing country with high growth prospect,” (personal communication, October 2014).

Another issue that CSSC addressed was the economic factor. Activities associated with the preparation and hosting of the Olympic Games, will create huge number of new jobs, and will open up and lift the whole industry, not previously developed in Kazakhstan. CSSC cited the example of the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics. “There's a set of activities related to the Olympics that literally changed the economy of the whole region. Even on the scale of such a vast country

as Russia, the preparation for the Games in Sochi has become a notable factor in increasing the number of jobs, the growth of entrepreneurial activity and other qualitative economic and social changes,” (personal communication, October 2014).

CSSC argued that national teams also are identified as a vehicle to increase the nation’s brand. He said: “Unlike other properties, the national team’s goal is not to make international fans. It is to give the impression of strength and excellence to other countries through good performance. It can also bring great awareness as it has great exposure to the world.”

To illustrate this, CSSC quoted Tony Jeffries, who said: “When most people think of Kazakhstan the first thing that comes to mind is Borat but now boxing fans will think of middleweight boxing sensation Gennady Golovkin too.”

## **V. Conclusion**

### **1. Summary of findings**

The study was designed to identify and compare the current and desired image of Kazakhstan with the focus on utilizing sports as platform to change the current image and achieve the desired image.

Through conducting interview, the researcher was able to find out that currently Kazakhstan has some images associated with it and it varies according to the geographical region for example in European region the brand Kazakhstan has “Borat” image which is drawn from a movie, similarly another brand image that has been associated with brand Kazakhstan is “stan” association and whenever an individual hears about Kazakhstan, the first image that comes to mind is Afghanistan or Pakistan. Additionally to other famous brand images that are associated with brand Kazakhstan are “oil and gas exporting country” and Nazarbayev’s country, who is president of Kazakhstan for last 26 years.

Based on the interviews conducted, the study identified that Kazakhstan being a developing country has the potential to associate brand image as immigration destination as with the availability of vast land and industrialization

plans, it can attract a lot of skilled labor to migrate to Kazakhstan and live and work here. In addition, the respondents also pointed out that another brand image that is desirable for Kazakhstan brand is investment image, this brand image is desirable pertaining to the fact that the government of Kazakhstan is in process of adopting and offering facilities that has the potential to attract investors from around the world.

Another desired brand image that could be considered as brand Kazakhstan is the tourist destination, this image could be the desired image of Kazakhstan due to beautiful natural locations, which would enable Kazakhstan to promote soft image of the country and promote hospitality culture of Kazakhstan to the world. In addition, it will pass the message to whole world that Kazakhstan is an open country.

It has been a proven fact that sports has the ability to serve social development purposes, Kazakhstan can benefit from using sports as tool to promote brand Kazakhstan in many ways. As sports have many established brands like the Olympic Games, Winter Olympic Games, Asian Games and World Championships etc, so in order to promote brand Kazakhstan in efficient and fast way than these well established brands are the easiest way to attract the attention

of world as these brands serve the purpose in more than one way, depending on the event that is being hosted the representatives of the countries come and experience the country brand and the media that follows these events carry your brand image to the world, so not only your superiority in infrastructure and facilities is propagated to the world, but it also sends the message that the brand that is developing in most professional manner is this one.

A lot of literature though suggest that it is an expensive business to host mega event, but for developing brand like Kazakhstan, which is interested in promoting itself as future destination for immigration, trainings, education, tourism and investment, these events could serve as the most effective in efficient platform as they are equally popular in both developed and developing nations and with higher media interest, the coverage these event brings to a new brand like Kazakhstan would be of immensely beneficial in long run.

## **2. Implications of study**

As the findings of this research identify that the current image of brand Kazakhstan is far different from the desired brand image and doesn't reflect the reality; sports mega events could serve as the platform to propagate the real brand

image of Kazakhstan to the world.

One should be aware of the fact that sports mega events could anchor new brand images with its already established brand image but there is a clear need to understand that a rational approach is required to utilize this platform for building brand image otherwise this could result also result in total chaos.

The buildup for sports mega events utilization as brand building strategy must first focus on starting from small events and finally proceeding to mega event which exposes the expertise of the host national to the world.

With the gradual growth in hosting mega sports events the exposure of brand Kazakhstan will always get the chance to learn from the hosting experience, so that when it matter the most they will be best prepared.

It is important to note that expecting results in short term is not idealistic as brand Kazakhstan will only be able to assess the benefits in long run as the effects of hosting mega event appears over a long period and best practice is to host these events in sequence instead of just hosting an event and expecting immediate benefits.

### **3. Limitations and future research direction**

My study was delimited by some objectives. This research is limited to only 2 branding experts who focused in the sport field. Other than these interviewees, there are also other stakeholders such as national federations, clubs, athletes, professional teams, etc.

My research was very limited by the time, so I presented only one small scope of research. Also, the restriction was that getting an interview was not so easy. All of my respondents were in Kazakhstan, even when I visited Kazakhstan I was not able to meet with them.

Significant obstacle was the lack of branding experts in the field of sport in Kazakhstan. Also, the absence of any scientific works on brand development in Kazakhstan was one of the big difficulties. Moreover in the process of working on my thesis, I found the absence of unified single state body that would be responsible for the brand of Kazakhstan.

The time of the interview was conducted before the decision on the 2022 Winter Olympic Games Host city. The interview was conducted under consideration that Kazakhstan wins the bid. However, actually being awarded the games might change the situation. There is the possibility of differences of

opinions.

As a qualitative study based on interview, there is a possibility of biased opinion from the selection on the interviewee of the interpretation on the interview. For the more objective and scientific analysis, conducting empirical study which shows objective results would be useful in the future.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Appendix A**

#### Question

Following is the questionnaire that will be used for the interview. It consists of 4 sections, 22 questions. The questionnaire will be slightly amended according to the interviewee.

Current image of Kazakhstan:

6. If you hear 'Kazakhstan' what is the first symbol/thing that comes to your mind?
7. Why such an associations? How do you come to know Kazakhstan?
8. Have you ever visited Kazakhstan? If no why you never visited Kazakhstan?
9. How do you perceive Kazakhstan as a country? Negative? Positive? (What is the image of Kazakhstan in your mind?)
10. What could motivate you to visit Kazakhstan?

Sports

9. Do sport events attract you? If yes, why? If not, maybe in different events?

10. Do you know where Winter Asian Games 2011 were held?
  11. How do you come to know about this Winter Asian Games 2011? (media, newspapers, friends)
  12. Did you see any promotional campaign, adds about Winter Asian Games 2011 in Kazakhstan?
  13. If yes, what do you think about the campaign? First impression? Did it make you want to go to Kazakhstan?
  14. Do you have any information about the mega events that will be held in Kazakhstan?
  15. If yes, what do you think, how these events will contribute in building image of Kazakhstan?
  16. Do you think branding a nation through sports is good idea? If no why? If yes why?
- Nation Branding Domains Organizations
8. What is the Vision, Mission, & Strategy for branding of your Organization?
  9. If none, please mention organization strategy or PR strategy
  10. Does your organization have a strategy for nation branding?
  11. Which Attribute do you consider significant in improving Brand Image?

12. What is the difference between the current and desired Brand Image?
13. What is the difference between the current and desired nation branding?
14. What are the resources (Funds, Human Resource) available to your organization in this regard?

#### Olympic Image

3. Is it necessary to link the Olympic brand in branding Kazakhstan?
4. How can the Olympic image benefit brand Kazakhstan?

## 국문 초록

# 스포츠를 통한 카자흐스탄 브랜드화

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요즘 국제적으로 국가 간의 경쟁이 심화되고 있으며 국가와 연계되어 있는 스포츠 이벤트를 통하여 국가만의 브랜드를 구축하여 매력적으로 만들기 위한 노력들이 나타나고 있다. 스포츠 브랜드화는 국가를 브랜드화 시키는데 미래의 플랫폼으로서 역할을 할 수 있다. 스포츠 브랜드화의 긍정적인 측면은 정치 시스템, 정책 위반자, 비즈니스, 국민 그리고 관광 등 다양한 분야에 영향을 미친다는 것이다. 스포츠 브랜드화를 통해 정부가 얻을 수 있는 혜택은 개인 선수, 팀 또는 국가가 우수한 성적을 거두었을 경우 국가 전체 및 통치자의 이미지 역시 상승시킬 수 있으며 궁극적으로 스포츠 이벤트를 통하여 국가를 브랜드화 할 수 있다.

기존 문헌을 통하여 브랜드 경영 및 국가 브랜드 경영이 중요하다는 것을 알 수 있으며 특히 카자흐스탄의 스포츠와 관련하여 중요하다는 것이 증명되었다. 본 연구에서는 다양한 사례를 통하여 국가 브랜드화 하는데 있어서 스포츠의 역할 및 잠재성을 파악하며 현재 및 희망하는 카자흐스탄의 브랜드를 살펴보는 것에 목적을 두고 있다.

카자흐스탄의 브랜드 전략을 조사하고 실행된 프로젝트를 분석하기 위하여 본 연구에서는 반구조화된 면담의 경우 카자흐스탄 스포츠 프로젝트에 참가한 키리키스탄 출신의 브랜드화 전문가와 진행하였다.

본 연구에서는 카자흐스탄이 브랜드 형성 과정에 있는 것으로 결론지었지만 아직은 카자흐스탄만의 명확한 브랜드가 구축되었다고 단정할 수 없다. 또한 브랜드 캠페인을 효과적으로 할 수 있는 방법을 제안하였다.

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**주요어:** 브랜드화, 국가 브랜드, 스포츠, 카자흐스탄

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