

MMBA 532 BUSINESS RESEARCH PROJECT

RESEARCH REPORT

Measuring the impact of 'leadership, context, the nature of the event and induced event experience' on brand creation for the Sevens Wellington Rugby Tournament.

"How do we conceptualise and measure the brand of a recurring international sports event?"



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Abstract

Although recurring sports events are held more frequently and by a larger number of cities than one-off events, little research has examined the branding process within large international recurring sports events, nor specifically within the New Zealand context. The research is based off Parent et al.'s (2012) model of brand creation in the context of the Sevens Wellington rugby tournament, which is held at Waitangi weekend in February each year in New Zealand.

The research seeks to understand the broader issue of brand creation and brand identity for the tournament and aims to provide qualitative and empirical insights that will influence the continued evolution and strategic management of the brand. This research was conducted within a framework of qualitative exploratory methodology and employed an inductive method, incorporating case study research in the form of face-to-face interviews. Key implications and findings from the case data were then interpreted utilising Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model (VSM) as a framework to understand systemic functions, analyse and make sense of the data (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996). A revised conceptual model of brand creation for the Sevens Wellington is then presented.

The research findings have shown the relative importance of each factor in the creation of the Sevens Wellington brand and inform recommendations for the continued evolution of the brand. As a consequence, the NZRU and WRFU will be able to determine how best to create additional value through an enhanced understanding of Parent et al.'s (2012) model and systemic functions.

The study has contributed to the literature of brand creation and has also revised Parent et al.'s (2012) model, specifically within the New Zealand and Rugby Sevens contexts. In addition, the study has also contributed to the sport specific event management knowledge and understanding within the New Zealand sport event management context in general.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank and acknowledge all the people who contributed to this research report as the finale of my MBA journey.

Most of all I am indebted to my research supervisor Professor John Davies, who throughout this project supported and inspired through stories and enthusiasm for the sport of rugby. Thank you ever so much for believing in me and playing such an instrumental role in the completion of this report. Thanks also to Professor David Stewart also provided significant inspiration, input and support throughout.

I would also like to thank the New Zealand Rugby Union (NRZU) and Wellington Rugby Football Union (WRFU) for the opportunity to delve into the Sevens brand. In particular, James Te Puni and Cameron Good for endorsing the research and providing introductions to relevant stakeholders. Thanks also to many others who gave their time to contribute, provide advice, proof sections or simply bounce ideas around.

I would like to thank my family, my parents Robyn and John, and bother Christopher and sister Emily all of whom provided emotional support from afar. Finally, my fellow MBA friends and students, especially Dylan and Albert who provided sanity, friendship and shared the journey with me.

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Introduction

“Consumers who are dissatisfied with and feel they are not receiving quality service will not renew their relationship with the professional sport franchise.”

(McDonald, Sutton, & Milne, 1995)

The concept of ‘brand’ and its importance in differentiating a product or service, creating value, and marketing a specific set of features, benefits or experiences has been widely studied (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Parent & Séguin, 2008; Shank, 2009). Based on a sound business strategy, a strong brand is considered to provide a point of difference, create a unique offering, and solidify strong relationships with stakeholders, therefore creating value and becoming an important intangible asset (D. A. Aaker, 1995; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Parent & Séguin, 2008). When this asset is nurtured over time, equity is generated by growing awareness, perceived quality, beneficial associations, and generating loyalty and proprietary brand assets (D. A. Aaker, 1992). In the sporting context, building a strong brand will ultimately allow organisers to seek resources (financial, material, and human) from a variety of stakeholders (Parent & Séguin, 2008; Shank, 2009).

It is recognised that the ability of a sports event leadership group (LG) to build relationships and satisfy stakeholders needs, can impact on their ability to deliver a high quality event. However, given the unique nature of sporting events, it can be difficult to create value and build long-term advantage over competitors (Parent & Séguin, 2008; Masayuki Yoshida, Jeffrey D. James, & J. Joseph Cronin Jr, 2013). To date, the wider sports event and management literature has generally focused on external antecedents to build sports events brands, such as benefits, measuring consumer motives and increasing spectator attendance (Funk, Filo, Beaton, & Pritchard, 2009). An exception has been the research by Parent and Seguin (2008) who developed a model of brand creation for international large scale one-off sporting events, based on the process of sports events identity construction proposed by Parent and Foreman (2007). Parent, Eskerud and Hanstand (2012) then extended these models for the evaluation of international recurring sports events, for application in the Northern hemisphere. Unfortunately, there is little research that examines brand creation for sports events in the New Zealand (NZ) context, let alone events so closely associated with the brand of NZ’s national game, rugby.

The Sevens Wellington rugby tournament marks round five of the International Rugby Board's (IRB) HSBC Sevens World Series and over fifteen years has become one of NZ's most popular international recurring sporting events. Popular with players and known for its unique 'carnival' atmosphere, the event has traditionally attracted high spectator numbers. Yet in 2014, the event struggled to maximise attendance and attract sponsorship, perhaps amongst other factors, due to a decline in brand strength. This research seeks to understand the concepts of brand creation and brand identity for the tournament and aims to provide qualitative and empirical insights that will influence the continued evolution and management of the brand.

This research addresses a gap in the literature by examining the inter-relationships between the four referents of Parent et al's (2012) model of brand creation for a recurring international sports event in a NZ context – the Sevens Wellington rugby tournament. The referents include, but are not limited to: (a) the importance of the LG, (b) the context, (c) the nature of the event, and (d) the induced event experience. The research sets out to identify and consider factors that may impact brand creation for a specific annual sports event and to explore whether Parent et al's (2012) model of brand creation can usefully be extended to the Southern hemisphere, specifically when applying the model to the Sevens Wellington event.

The paper begins with a presentation of the theoretical framework, focusing on a selective review of the literature relating to concepts of brand knowledge and the referents of Parent et al.'s (2012) model. This is followed by a description of the research methods. The results are then presented, analysed in the context of Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model (VSM) (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996), and discussed. Finally, a revised conceptual model of brand creation for the Sevens Wellington event is then provided along with concluding comments.

1.0 Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

"A brand creates a bond, power and profit, beyond what the product itself could ever hope to achieve."

Graeme Robertson (Robertson, 2014)

1.1 Brand Knowledge

1.1.1 Brand Identity

Marketing guru, David Aaker, argues that the key to building a strong brand is understanding how to develop brand identities; knowing what the brand stands for and expressing that idea effectively as an identity (D. A. Aaker, 1995). In the late nineties, Aaker was first to argue that brands can be considered as assets with strategic value that drive business performance, and that brand equity can form the basis of competitive advantage and long-term profitability (D. Aaker, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2012; Shank, 2009). The concept of brand equity relies upon five components, commonly agreed to include perceived brand quality, awareness, associations, loyalty, and other proprietary assets (D. A. Aaker, 1992).

The foundations for building brand equity are considered to reside in strategic planning, identifying a core identity (how you aspire to be perceived) and breaking that down by market segments, if required. Determining the value proposition (which may include both emotional, symbolic and functional benefits) and positioning relative to other brands is also considered to be vitally important, as is the ability to communicate these messages 'on target' and to the desired audience with an element of durability and consistency (D. A. Aaker, 1995).

In addition, measuring and tracking brand equity can be a difficult but necessary part of brand management, especially if there is a requirement to navigate barriers that may undermine an organisation's ability to build (Kotler & Keller, 2012). These barriers may include the pressure to compete on price, the proliferation of competitors, fragmentation in media and markets, and internal pressures such as the temptation to change a sound brand strategy or the pressure for short-term results (D. A. Aaker, 1995). Recent developments in the literature relating to branding would appear to be more functionalist in seeking to understand how brands meet customer expectations.

Recent research has shown that the impact of particular dimensions of brand equities (as measured by trustworthiness, esteem, perceived quality and awareness), have fallen

considerably over the years, with one exception: those brands with 'energy' (D. Aaker, 2014). Aaker defines energy as encompassing *"the visibility to be relevant"*. Ways of achieving this include being interesting and exciting; involving and engaging; innovative or dynamic; and being passionate or purpose driven (D. A. Aaker, 1992). Another important concept that has gained momentum in recent years is that *"a brand vision for today should be multidimensional, allowing the brand to express itself in ways that work for that brand...what will differentiate and resonate will depend on the brand context and the brand strategy going forward"* (D. Aaker, 2014, p. 22).

Finally, another feature of the literature that is gaining more traction is that of identifying what constitutes *"the customer sweet spot"*, based on the rationale that customers will seek out, discuss and be engaged in what they are predominantly interested in. This in turn will lead to positive feelings associated with the shared-interest area and positive feelings about the brand. A program based on shared interests should stimulate a social network community where organisations can engage and co-create with various stakeholders (D. Aaker, 2014, pp. 22-23). These themes around emotional attachment and shared interests are particularly relevant in the sports context, which will be explored next.

1.1.2 Organisational Identity Construction (OIC) and Brand Creation for Sports Events

The brand creation process in the sporting context is taking on increasing importance, especially in relation to professional sporting teams (Parent & Séguin, 2008). Extending Aaker's generic concepts, Richelieu (2004) identified that sports consumers develop strong emotional attachments to sports events, helping to create a strong brand. Therefore, defining the sports organisation's identity is considered to be important aspect in building a brand strategy.

Parent & Foreman (2007) then examined the process of organisational identity construction (OIC) in order to better understand how sports event organisers can build their brand more effectively. The authors proposed that if identity is a core aspect of brand creation, that identity referents (the enduring central, enduring and distinct elements relating to an organiser's intent and purpose) could become important for brand creation. Based on Scott and Lane's (2000) OIC framework and stakeholder theory, they proposed a model of brand creation that included three referents: key individuals or actors (leaders in the organising committee); the event (context); and the nature of the event itself (type of competition)

(Parent & Foreman, 2007). Key elements were the inclusion of stakeholders in a feedback loop, and the role of media in managing organisational image.

Parent & Seguin (2008) extended Parent & Foreman's (2007) model, by drawing on the extensive work of Gladden (J. M. Gladden & Funk, 2002; J.M. Gladden, Milne, & Sutton, 1998) who had provided another conceptual framework for the antecedents of sport brand equity: the team (success and head coach), the organisation (tradition, conference, and logo), and the market (media coverage and geographic location). Parent & Seguin (2008) created a model of brand creation for one-off large-scale sporting events based on a case study of the 2005 FINA World Championships held in Montreal.

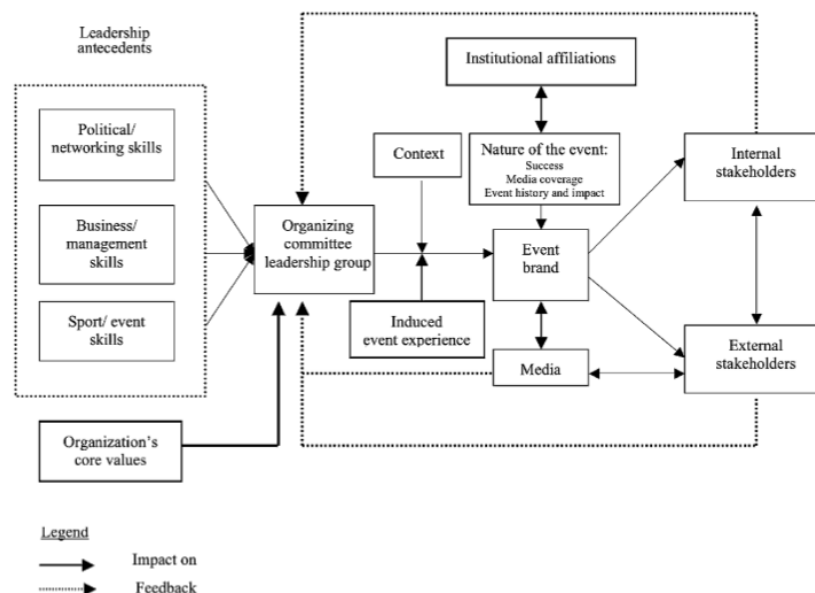
This study highlighted the importance of the brand equity referents in creating the event's brand: the LG (including individuals with political / networking, business / management, and sport / event skills), the context, and the nature of the event (Parent & Séguin, 2008). It is suggested that brand equity then creates marketplace consequences (including national media exposure, merchandise sales, individual donations, corporate support, atmosphere, and ticket sales), which in turn affect marketplace perceptions, and the initial referents through a feedback loop. Overall, it was found that leadership is the key component in creating a one-off international sporting event, however the importance of each aspect is suggested to vary depending on the situation.

Ross (2006) also presented a framework for spectator-based brand equity for sports teams. The study surfaced three categories of antecedents to brand equity; those that are organisation, market, and experience induced. These categories emphasise more service-orientated principles, such as those put forward by Berry (2000) who highlight the experiential nature of sport in creating memories for spectators (Parent et al., 2012). These ideas accentuate how sports brands are in continuous interaction with both consumers and the organisation; the importance of the organisations mission, vision and values in brand creation; and the concept of the 'leadership brand', where employees and organisational values are aligned (Urde, 2003; Ulrich & Smallwood, 2007; cited in Parent et al., 2012). These are all factors that Parent, Eskerud & Hanstad (2012) incorporate in a more specific model of brand creation for recurring international sports events discussed below.

1.1.4 Model of Brand Creation for Recurring International Sports Events

Because recurring sports events are held more frequently and by a larger number of cities than one-off events, Parent et al.'s (2012) study set out to examine the branding process within international recurring sports events. Based on Parent and Seguin's (2008) model, a comparative case study of the Alberta World Cup (Canada) and World Cup Drammen (Norway) cross-country ski events was conducted. The findings largely supported the three referents in Parent & Seguin's 2008 model, and led to the authors proposing an expanded model of event brand creation (as outlined in Figure 1), which could be applied to recurring sports events on different continents and in cities of varying sizes. There were characteristics that were similar to one-off events, however two new elements emerged from the data presented from the case studies. An additional antecedent, namely 'value based actions' and an additional referent, namely 'induced event experience', thus supporting Ross's (2006) emphasis on experience induced elements. These will be discussed in turn in the next section.

Figure 1. Parent et al.'s 2012 Brand Creation Model for International Recurring Sports Events



1.2 Parent et al.'s Model of Brand Creation

"One of the tests of leadership is the ability to recognize a problem before it becomes an emergency." Arnold Glasgow (Sport NZ, 2014b)

1.2.1 The Leadership Group

The first referent of Parent et al.'s (2012) model is the LG. The authors assert that building a strong brand and quality event that satisfies stakeholder's needs requires strong leadership. The case studies of Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen highlighted the following areas as particularly important: political skills and connections to manage stakeholder relationships; managing a volunteer force; maintaining high technical standards and a hunger to improve; and the leaders "commitment and passion for the event, sport and associated and inherent values" (Parent et al., 2012). Antecedents of the LG were found to include political / networking skills, management skills, sports / event skills and values based actions. Concepts of particular importance in the literature have also been expanded upon: stakeholder management, and strategic direction and planning.

Political / Networking Skills

Managing a multitude of stakeholders with varying interests and needs requires political astuteness, negotiation skills, and the ability to listen, observe and understand what is happening in the operational and strategic environment (Parent et al., 2012). Both case studies placed emphasis on the LG being well connected with strong local networks. Despite Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen being held in rural and urban localities respectively, both leaders had good connections to local stakeholders, international and national sporting bodies, sponsors, collaborators, athletes, leaders and media. In addition, having an organising committee with complementary skillsets was considered to be an advantage.

Management Skills

Another of the key skill-sets identified by Parent et al. (2012) were generic management skills, including: strategic planning (covered in more detail below), human resource, financial, marketing, communications, and brand management. Many large sports events rely on a volunteer force which can create challenges for event management. In both Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen, large volunteer workforces were utilised. It was found that empowering them and making them highly visible built emotional

attachment and assisted with enhancing accountability. The marketing orientation of the event LG was found to have a marked impact on the branding process. Alberta World Cup did not have Marketing person within the LG and struggled to promote and create interest in the event. In contrast, Drammen had a chief of Marketing and Finance in the LG and achieved a high level of brand awareness and cut-through.

Sports / Events Skills

Technical sport skills and event hosting technical skills were found to be a further requirement of a strong and effective LG. Preparing the venue to the highest standard and ensuring the best technical arrangements are in place for the sporting event are critical factors. Both Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen identified that creating a learning orientation was vital; improving year on year, and taking learnings from other events contributed positively.

Value-based Actions

Data that emerged from Parent et al.'s (2012) study also uncovered another success factor; the commitment and passion event leaders had for the event, the sport, and their inherent values. In both Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen, a deep understanding of the LG's values underscored daily actions and was regarded as the 'desired' LG identity. These values permeated behaviours then underpinned ways of planning and executing the event and were positively reflected in perceptions of stakeholders.

Stakeholder Management

A useful study to overlay against Parent et al.'s 2012 study is another conducted by Parent, Olver and Seguin (Parent, Olver, & Séguin, 2009), which discussed core elements of upper management leadership in events. The management of competing stakeholder demands and expectations is a key concern of stakeholder management theory. Stakeholder theory posits that a stakeholder's view of the LG will impact the focal organisations current and future actions. Given the complexity of preparing and hosting a major sport event, the study found multiple-linkage leadership theory (MLLT) to have the most relevance in comparison to other leadership theories. The MLLT focuses on a wider range of variables including: task commitment; ability and role clarity; organisation of work; cooperation and mutual trust; resources and support; and external coordination (Yukl, 2002). Given the time pressure in major sporting events, it is critical that senior leadership use these variables effectively to manage and bring various stakeholders onside and to obtain the necessary resources. It is

also important to recognise the constantly evolving nature of the environment and the dynamic nature of stakeholder relationship. This is particularly important when considering the strategic direction of an event.

Strategic Direction and Planning

"Companies that are not able to learn, adapt, and apply emerging insights at an accelerated rate are subject to Darwinian natural selection." (Henderson, 1981)

A key responsibility of an event's LG is to determine the strategic direction and shape the future to ensure the long term success of the event. A strategy can evolve under conditions of uncertainty as the organisation adapts to its environment and is a high level plan which describes the ends (goals), the ways (how), and the means (policies and resources) (Henry Mitznberg & Quinn, 1996). Key elements include: defining the nature of the challenge; determining a guiding policy for dealing with the challenge; and designing coherent actions to carry out the policy (Rumelt, 2011). Strategic planning is the formulation and development of strategy and depends on "the ability to foresee future consequences of present initiatives" (Henderson, 1981). This involves three factors: (1) extensive knowledge about the environment, market and competition; (2) the ability to examine this knowledge in an interactive dynamic system; and (3) the imagination and logic to choose between specific alternatives. It is proposed that having a suitable organisational strategy is an essential foundation for the creation and development of a successful brand strategy.

1.2.2 The Context

The second referent of Parent et al.'s (2012) model encapsulates the context of the event. A sound strategic direction and planning process will underpin the LG's efforts, shape and drive the creation of the brand. In the model, the event context is conceptualised as moderating the initial creation of the event by the LG, however little detail of the contextual factors for each of the case studies was not provided. However, it is proposed that having a good understanding of the context of the event is also vitally important, and includes factors such as the environment, economics, technology and culture (Emery, 2010). Gladden et al.'s (1998) framework of brand equity highlights the importance of the local market environment, including the geographic location. Key contextual factors for Alberta World Cup were that cross-country skiing was deemed to hold a weak position compared to other sports, it had been 10 years since Alberta had hosted an World Cup event, the event was

being held in a rural town, and spectator numbers were expected to be low. In contrast, for World Cup Drammen, Norway was considered the cradle of cross-country skiing, the town was larger and had hosted the event six times previously, and organisers were expecting big numbers (Parent et al., 2012).

Given that successful events usually happen even within a constantly changing environment. Adema & Roehl (2010), suggest that identifying forces driving change is a vital stage in the development of events and is also important when considering event aesthetics and functionality. Environmental scanning and the use of 'Porters Five Competitive Forces' framework are tools that can be used to assist with strategic planning outlined in the previous section.

Environmental Scanning

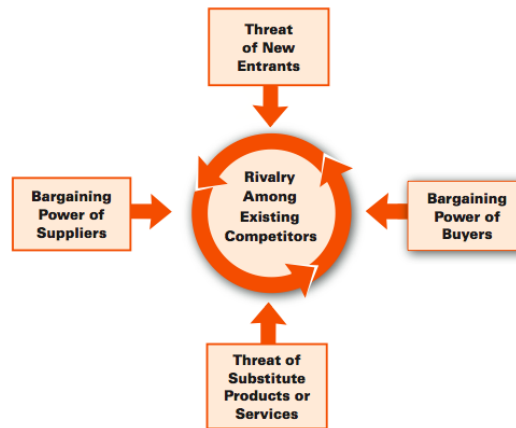
Adema & Roehl (2010) suggest three common environmental scanning techniques to observe or diagnose issues that cannot be ignored; gathering information concerning the external environment, analysis and interpretation of information, and the use of the information in strategic decision making. Another useful framework to consider these contextual factors has been found to be a 'PESTLE' (political, economic, social, technological, legal and environmental) analysis. Sports customers increasingly have more sophisticated tastes and expectations regarding service quality which has the potential to impact attendance. Furthermore, it is also proposed that *"events could even be considered to be in competition with technology"* (Adema & Roehl, 2010).

Porter's Five Competitive Forces

Another complementary framework for considering the strategic environment within the sports industry is Michael Porter's five competitive forces framework (Porter, 2008) as outlined in Figure Two below. Understanding these factors provides a framework for anticipating and influencing competition over time and is essential to effective strategic positioning. Societal factors such as changing attitudes to alcohol are likely to reduce the buying power of suppliers. However, the biggest impact identified in the literature is the influence of substitutes – alternative sport products, television, gaming, alternative venues (Wellington Regional Stadium Trust Inc, 2013), and the attraction of other sporting codes (Funk et al., 2009). Funk et al. also highlight that an *"aging population, declining attendance rates, and increased competition among sport and entertainment products"* makes it important that managers understand the factors influencing consumer demand (2009).

Figure Two. Porter's Five Competitive Forces

The Five Forces That Shape Industry Competition



1.2.3 The Nature of the Event

The third referent of Parent et al.'s (2012) model is the nature of the event. Factors that act as a catalyst include: sports recognition in the host region; the presence or absence of a worldwide brand for the sport; and previous event success, media coverage, geographical location, event history and impact. Institutional arrangements and the recurring nature of the event were also identified to be key factors. Once a brand is created (and depending on previous performance, impact and media coverage), it is possible to leverage long term relationships, a ticket base, and existing relationships with stakeholders to create additional revenue (Parent & Séguin, 2008). It is also suggested that if the LG capitalise on spectator's emotional attachment to sport, this could help to build a strong brand through increased community engagement and the trust and loyalty that will follow (Mullin et al., 2000; cited in Parent & Séguin, 2008). However, Mahoney & Vieceli (2010) highlight that over the past 20 years, sports event attendance across sports in general has actually declined and identify that the most significant predictors of attendance were the emotion attached to the sports event, perceived quality and availability of facilities.

Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen both experienced power struggles with respective National sporting Organisations (NSO's) and faced uncertain futures regarding hosting rights. Recognition of the sport was seen to be the most influencing, and perhaps uncontrollable factor (Parent et al., 2012). In both cases, strong athlete performances from the hosting nation was seen to improve media attention.

Ritualised Spectator Behaviour

One factor not included in Parent et al.'s (2012) study, but covered in the literature is that of ritualised behaviour. While mostly positive, ritual behavior associated with sporting events are common place and largely fan developed (McDonald et al., 1995). The authors find that ritual behaviours can form very quickly, especially where organisations are encourage to work with stakeholders (Lusch & Vargo (2006) (cited in McDonald et al., 1995). Usually a positive relationship was found to exist between ritual behavior and outcomes such as satisfaction, team identification, merchandise expenditure, and game attendance, however not always. In contrast, the consequences of 'deviant' consumer behavior have the potential to threaten the brand.

1.2.4 Induced Event Experience

Based on the notion that the strategic construction of the sport brand only happens after its identity is shaped (Richelieu, 2004), Parent et al.'s (2012) model proposes an additional referent, being 'induced event experience'. This allows evolution of the brand and fine-tuning activities after event execution, and before the next event. Increasingly, the ability to offer high-quality events and services to attract profitable attendance has become a critical issue for professional sports organisations in a large, expanding and competitive event industry (Boo Ho, Nagarajah, & Murray, 2014; Clemes, Brush, & Collins, 2011; Ko, Zhang, Cattani, & Pastore, 2011). It was found at the Alberta World Cup and World Cup Drammen that spectator and sponsor's personal experiences throughout an event shape to a large extent their impressions of the event and determine their interest in identifying with the event (Parent et al., 2012)

The primary product of the sports industry is the competition that occurs at a sporting event. Increasingly this competition is more 'entertainment' driven, providing sports consumers with a "*diverting or engaging*" spectacle (Shank, 2009, p. 4). In addition, sporting events are largely associated with intangible and subjective features that influence customer patronage decisions. Sports competitions and events are typically characterized by high levels of consumer commitment and emotional involvement (Underwood, Bond, & Baer, 2001) and as such can therefore be considered in terms of the consumer behaviour and services marketing literature. By examining the literature around motives and the attendance behaviour of spectators, it may be possible to examine the interrelationships of

antecedent factors that contribute to the event experience. These include measuring motives and customer orientation to sports events and factors contributing to service quality.

Measuring the Motives of and Consumer Orientation towards Sport Event Attendance

Funk et al. (2009) explore how sport managers and academics attempt to investigate motivations that drive decisions to attend events. The authors devise a parsimonious measuring tool of motivational factors to explain event attendance, which manifests a 10-item scale measuring 5 facets of motivation: socialisation, performance, excitement, esteem, and diversion (SPEED). Their analysis provided confirmation that just three facets of excitement, performance, and esteem explain 30% of the variance in the frequency of game attendance (Funk et al., 2009). In similar research by Pons, Murali & Nyeck (Pons, Murali, & Nyeck, 2006), the 'concept of orientation towards a sporting event' (OSE) is developed. A three-dimensional scale of OSE, designed to capture the motives of sensation, cognition and socialisation, was developed. Their motivational segmentation approach helps to answer the question of "Why do fans attend our event?" and "What kind of experience are they looking for?"

Service Quality Constructs

Martinez et al. (2010) identified service quality as one of the most important issues facing contemporary sports marketers and argued it can act as a proxy measure of management performance. Ko et al. (2011) agreed that service quality is a significant factor in the positioning of the company and is a key determinant of critical consumer behaviour variables, such as customer satisfaction and loyalty (and ultimately brand equity and the profitability of the service provider) (Anderson et al., 1994; Anderson & Sullivan, 1993; Dagger & Sweeny, 2007; Fornell, 1992; cited in Ko et al., 2011).) Parasuraman, Zeithmal, & Berry (1985) define service quality as a measure of how well the service level delivered matches customer expectations and identify five dimensions of service quality (reliability, assurance, empathy, responsiveness, and tangibles). Parasuraman et al. (1985) developed a much used 22-item survey instrument known as SERVQUAL to determine service quality (Shank, 2009). However, there is increasing support in the literature for the view that the dimensionability of the service quality construct should reflect, and indeed, is dependent upon the service industry (Clemes et al., 2011). This has particular relevance to the sports context.

Dimensional Views of Service Quality in Sports Context

The literature exhibits significant variation in the service quality dimensions in a sporting context. This is due to a number of unique factors that need to be considered, including the high level of emotional involvement, a sense of community, constantly changing and unpredictable spectator preferences, and often more focus on aesthetic rather than utilitarian benefits (Clemes et al., 2011). McDonald, Sutton & Milne (1995) adapted the SERVQUAL instrument to evaluate spectator's perceptions of service quality, and looked at the relative importance of each dimension. A new derived instrument named TEAMQUAL found that tangibles and reliability were most important factors (Shank, 2009). More recently, another study by Theodorakis, Kambitsis, Laios, & Koustelios (2001) developed a scale known as SPORTSERV, representing five dimensions of quality (tangibles, responsiveness, access, security, and reliability). However Clemes et al. (2011) argue that quality dimensions depend on the specific context. A myriad of studies provide alternative perspectives on the dimensionability of service quality, as summarised below (Clemes et al., 2011; Ko et al., 2011). Even though these dimensional models allow event managers to assess event quality to monitor service management and identify areas that need improvement in event operations, they do not make the linkage between quality and the follow on consequences. This is an important concept which will be discussed in the next section.

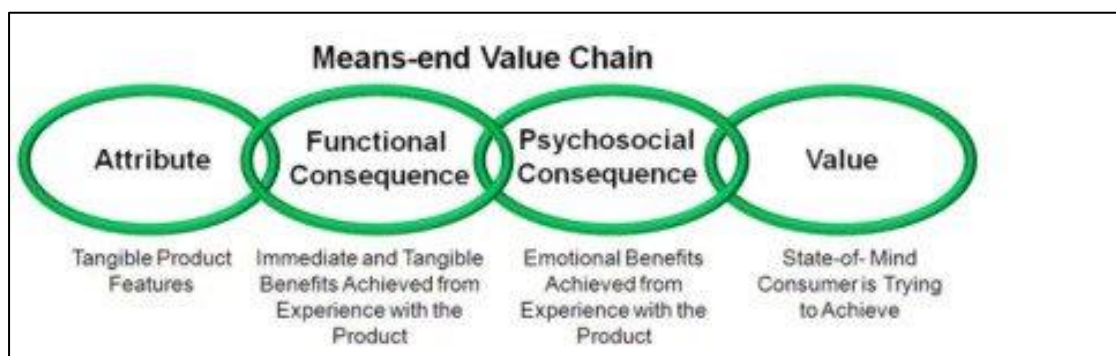
Figure Three. Dimensions of Sports Service Quality

Author	Dimensions of Sports Service Quality
Greenstein & Marcum (1981), Hansen & Gauthier (1989) and Getz (2005)	(1) game performance; (2) amenities and additional services; (3) event staff and service delivery systems
Kim & Kim (1995)	(1) ambience, (2) employee attitude, (3) reliability, (4) information giving, (5) programming, (6) personal consideration, (7) price, (8) exclusivity, (9) ease of mind, (10) convenience, (11) stimulation
Ko, Zhang & Cattani (2011) Model of Event Quality for Spectator Sports (MEQSS)	(1) the game; (2) augmented services; (3) interaction; (4) physical environment; (5) outcome.
Yoshida & James (Yoshida & James, 2011)	Three dimensional construct for hedonic value-dominant sports: (1) technical (outcomes and delivery); (2) functional (successful management of service environments and frontline employees); (3) aesthetics (creating engaging and memorable experiences). Based on 7 factor model including: atmosphere, crowd experience, opponent characteristics, player performance, frontline employees, facility access, and seat space

Alternative Views of Service Quality

By contrast to the empirically driven models that have emerged in the literature, Clemes, Bush & Collins (2011) in a New Zealand specific study on the NZ Super 14 rugby competition, utilise a higher-order hierarchical construct which offers improved explanations of service quality. They draw on the technical and functional dimensions of perceived quality, along with environmental factors to create three primary quality dimensions: (1) Functional - interaction quality, customer-contact employees and facility functionality; (2) Technical - physical environment quality, player performance and team characteristics, player skills and effort, excitement scale; and (3) Aesthetics - outcome quality, facility design, atmospherics, crowd experience, and promotional activities. Their study takes a more holistic view and is one of only a few that integrate the examination of the dimensionability of service quality, consumption value, and it's behavioural consequences (Clemes et al., 2011). Like Yoshida, James & Cronin (2013), Clemes et al.'s results suggest that the three quality dimensions described above have a significant impact on value dimensions and the flow on effect on behavioural consequences. These value dimensions are utilitarian, symbolic and hedonic. The authors draw on Gutman's (1982) means-end chain theory, which sees perceived quality as an antecedent of consumption value and provides a better understanding of the causal order between quality and value.

Figure Four. Gutman's Means-Ends Chain



The selective review of the literature explored concepts related to brand knowledge, the evolution toward Parent et al.'s (2012) model of brand creation for recurring international sporting events, and detail relating to the four referents of the model. The review explored several important emergent concepts not covered in detail in Parent et al.'s (2012) study. Within the LG referent, the ability to apply stakeholder theory, provide strategic direction

and carry out ongoing strategic planning were considered to be important factors. Several frameworks to analyse the environmental context were explored along with the concept of ritualised spectator behavior. Finally, the concepts of consumer motives, orientation towards a sports event, service quality and their subsequent effect on behavioural consequences are explored more fully within the context of the 'induced event experience' referent. It was found that a more dynamic connection between the LG referent and 'context', rather than just a moderating effect, would enhance the model.

2.0 Research Methodology and Design

“The aim is to produce rich, holistic and particularized explanations that are located in a situational context through using multiple methods of data collection to uncover conflicting meanings and interpretation.”

(Piekkari, Welsh, and Paavilainen (2009), in Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 61)

2.1 Conceptual Method

2.1.1 Description

This research is exploratory in nature and will take a qualitative approach utilising the Parent et al. (2012) model of brand creation for recurring international sports events to measure the impact of, and explore the inter-relationships of the brand creation referents for the Sevens Wellington rugby tournament. It is intended that a revised conceptual model will then be developed that can be applied to the NZ sports event context. The Wellington event was chosen because it meets the criteria for a ‘major’ sports event defined by Emery (2010) as *“a sports event that receives national or international media coverage as a result of high calibre of competition, and one in which a minimum of 1,000 spectators are present at the event”*. The Wellington event is also considered world famous on the international sevens calendar (Wellington Rugby Football Union, 2014) for its unique ‘carnival’ atmosphere.

2.1.2 Purpose

This research seeks to understand the broader issue of brand creation and identity for the Sevens Wellington rugby tournament and aims to provide qualitative and empirical insights that will influence the continued evolution and management of the brand.

2.1.3 Research Title and Question

The research title is “Measuring the impact of leadership, context, the nature of the event, and induced event experience on brand creation for the Wellington Sevens rugby tournament”. The research question is “How do we conceptualise and measure the brand of a recurring international sports event?”.

2.2 Conceptual Design

2.2.1 Approach, Core Assumptions and Philosophy

Given the nature of the event, and the multiple stakeholders that influence brand creation for the tournament, it is important to understand people and the social and cultural

contexts within which they live. As highlighted by Kaplan and Maxwell (1994), it is difficult to understand phenomena from the point of view of the participants just using quantitative methods, as often the richness and meaning of social and institutional context is largely lost. For this reason, a qualitative approach has been taken.

The research method will be an objective case study of the Wellington Sevens brand creation, taking an idiographic approach given the uniqueness of the event. However, nomothetic generalisations will also be proposed as they apply to generic sports events in NZ (Myers, 1997).

The epistemological paradigm chosen for this research is that of interpretivism (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). This assumes that access to reality is through social constructions such as language, consciousness and shared meanings; that the research is aimed at producing an understanding of the context of the system; and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context. Interpretive research focuses on the full complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges. According to Angen (2000), the criteria for evaluating interpretivist research includes consideration and articulation of the research question; carrying out inquiry in a respectful manner; and providing a written account that develops persuasive arguments and adheres to ethical and substantive validity measures.

2.2.2 Research Method

An inductive method incorporating case study research will be utilised, whereby the research will infer implications from the case data that can be used to validate and extend Parent et al.'s (2012) model of brand creation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A case study entails detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Bryman & Bell, 2011) - in this situation, the Sevens Wellington rugby tournament. Yin (2002) defines a case study as an empirical inquiry that: (1) investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when (2) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident. Case studies have traditionally been dominated by the positivist tradition, however an alternative interpretivist approach can be suitable in certain cases, particularly where the aim is to produce rich, holistic and particularised explanations located in a situational context.

Therefore, this method is particularly well-suited to the Wellington context, since the object of our study is the interplay of emotions, perceptions and relationships within an organisation and amongst multiple stakeholders, rather than focusing on technical issues.

2.2.3 Data Collection

To build a comprehensive case study, the collection of empirical materials relied predominantly on primary data – semi-structured interviews with senior appointment holders of key stakeholder groups involved in the Sevens Wellington event. Secondary sources such as archival research, spectator surveys, published and unpublished documents, and newspaper articles were used. The sampling strategy followed a purposive approach based on particular knowledge base of stakeholders, and retained the flexibility to ‘snowball’ and involve other participants as required. Introductions were facilitated by the CEO of the WRFU and General Manager (GM) of the Wellington Sevens.

A total of thirteen people were contacted and asked to participate in the research. Of these, nine committed to participate, while four did not respond, even after several follow up attempts. Of those who agreed to participate, seven were interviewed in person and 2 filled out a series of questions, with a follow up telephone call. One interview was cut short due to the participant having to leave early. A list of participants by position is included at Appendix 3. Participants were asked a series of thirty questions (as outlined at Appendix 4), adapted to the Wellington Sevens setting from Parent et al.’s (2012) original interview guide.

The interviews incorporated a structured outline and open-ended questions, examining key factors across all four referents as highlighted in Figure Two. Individual interviews were recorded, and notes taken to ensure that non-verbal and contextual meaning was captured. Statements from participants were anonymous and are identified by a letter. For example, a statement by participant C is cited as (PC), to allow correlation with the interview data at Appendix 5.

2.2.4 Approach to Data Analysis

The mode of analysis was centered around textual analysis of interview transcripts and other secondary data using ‘*hermeneutics*’. Hermeneutics as mode of analysis is primarily concerned with making sense of the meaning of a text, particularly that which is some way confused, incomplete, cloudy, seemingly contradictory, and in one way or another, unclear (Myers, 1997). The concept of a hermeneutic circle refers to the dialectic between the understanding of the text as a whole and the interpretation of its parts. It has also been described as a circular or mutually reinforcing relationship; *“the anticipation of meaning in which the whole is envisaged becomes explicit understanding in that the parts, that are*

determined by the whole, themselves also determine this whole" (Myers, 1997). In an organisation such as the Sevens Wellington, different stakeholders can have confused, incomplete, cloudy and contradictory views on many issues. The aim of the hermeneutic analysis becomes one of trying to make sense of the whole, and the relationship between people, the organisation, and the experience within the Wellington context.

2.2.5 Analytical Technique

Interviews were transcribed, coded and analysed manually within excel spreadsheets. The concept of triangulation, described as *"multiple...theoretical perspectives, sources of data, and methodologies"*, was used to analyse the data and ensure greater confidence in the findings (Bryman & Bell, 2011). A detailed content and discourse analysis was conducted analysing the language used by participants to gain a better understanding of how the various stakeholders make sense of and see the situation (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Searching out and identifying key themes in the materials being analysed was a key part of the coding approach. Given the complex interplay of elements and systems, Stafford Beer's VSM (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996) was used as a framework for thinking about and identifying the key factors and viability of the Sevens Wellington brand creation 'system' (Brocklesby & Cummings, 1996).

2.2.6 Research Validity

Piekkari, Welsh, & Paavilainen (2009) express concern that alternative interpretative orientated approaches to case studies can constrain the extent to which researchers are flexible in their business research, unless they are explicit about the assumptions underpinning it and the most suitable quality criteria by which to judge it. The literature also belays a concern for validity (whether you are identifying and measuring what you say you are); reliability (the degree to which the study can be replicated and the internal agreement among a research team about findings); and generalisability (the degree to which the research can be generalised across social settings) of case study research (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Alternative methods of assessing the quality of qualitative research include two criteria: (1) trustworthiness (made up of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability); and (2) authenticity (made up of fairness, and ontological, educative, catalytic, and tactical authenticity) (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, in Bryman & Bell, 2011). The use of triangulation

mitigated credibility risk created by having a limited sample participants whose knowledge could easily be compared. Given the intensive nature of the study, transferability is limited as already discussed. Dependability was ensured by maintaining a chain of evidence, proper completion of recordings and transcripts, coding and data analysis, that may be audited.

2.2.7 Ethical Considerations

The Victoria University of Wellington New Zealand Human Ethics Committee granted approval for this research on 20 August 2014. The data gathering was not anonymous, but confidential to the researcher and supervisor. Informed consent was gained and individuals are not identified in the report. A summary of data is provided in an aggregated form only, and in such a way that individuals persons are not identifiable.

3.0 Data Analysis and Results

The aim of this section is to provide qualitative evidence to evaluate the conceptual model of Parent et al.'s (2012) model, as applied to the context of the Sevens and the Sevens Wellington brand.

It should be noted, at this stage, that at the general level, research findings on the elements of brand creation for the Sevens Wellington brand are congruent with the model. Based on the data analysis, the study examined the inter-relationships between the four referents. The study also uncovered novel insights, which showed how additional factors could be incorporated into the model. In this regard, the preliminary propositions from the review of the literature have been extended to advance the existing knowledge on the creation of brands for large internationally recurring sports events. There were also elements that were unique to the Wellington event and held higher prominence because of the specific way this event brand has evolved.

3.1 Overview of Interview Participants

A total of nine participants were interviewed over a three-week period in September 2014. During this time, tickets for the 2015 Sevens Wellington tournament had just gone on sale and the incumbent General Manager for the tournament resigned. The participants were asked thirty questions (outlined at Appendix 4), centered around the four referents of Parent et al.'s 2012 model – the LG, the context, the nature of the event and the induced event experience. The key findings are presented using this construct and are backed up by evidence from the interviews, which are presented in summarised form at Appendix 5.

3.2 Research Findings

3.2.1 LG

Leader of Event and Skills Required

Parent et al.'s (2012) model mainly follows an organisers' perspective and focuses largely on the importance of the 'LG' referent. Within the LG referent, the ability to apply stakeholder theory, provide strategic direction and carry out ongoing strategic planning were considered to be the most important factors. The literature suggests that multiple-linkage leadership

theory (MLLT) has the most relevance for upper management leadership in sports events (Parent et al., 2009)

In general participants identified the GM as the key leader for the event (*PB, PC, PD, PG, PI*). Participants also identified key leadership traits, attributes and qualities necessary for leading an event such as the Wellington Sevens. These were generally in line with Parent et al.'s (2012) model and summarised below:

- Political / networking skills: Contextual understanding (*PG*) and managing stakeholder relationships were key skills (*PB, PG*), especially the need to understand customer and sponsor requirements. The ability to innovate (*PG*), strong emotional intelligence and political awareness (*PB, PD*), were also considered to be important.
- Management skills: The GM was considered to drive and shape the event (*PD, PG*), requiring the ability to present a clear vision, inspire, motivate people, lead change and build a team (*PB, PF*). Strong decision making, good project management skills, and the ability to communicate well were also considered to be important (*PB, PD, PF*). In addition, commercial acumen, along with sales, brand, human resource and fiscal management skills (*PF, PG*) were considered essential.
- Sports / event specific skills: Perhaps surprisingly, technical rugby knowledge and the ability to delivery operationally was only mentioned by one participant as essential (*PB*).
- Values based behaviour: This facet of Parent's model was not specifically/directly mentioned in the context of leadership of the event.

Governance and Management

A number of participants identified issues with the current governance and management structure that impacted on the GM's ability to deliver the event successfully (*PE, PF, PG, PH*). The NZRU have gained hosting rights for a tournament in New Zealand from the International Rugby Board (IRB) and devolved the management and implementation responsibilities of the tournament to the WRFU. This arrangement stems partly from the fact that provincial unions have the rights for all rugby at regional stadiums in perpetuity. The advisory board is currently chaired by the NZRU (chair), and also includes senior representatives from the WRFU (CEO and GM), PWT, and WCC – a diverse group of stakeholders with different objectives. One participant thought that *"the structure has served the tournament well while it was growing...and it probably is time to just pause and take a look at whether that structure is right"* (*PE*). Another participant suggested that

responsibility for management of the tournament should shift back to the NZRU (PH). Several participants identified a lack of cohesive strategic vision to guide and run the event (PI, PG). At the operational level, one participant suggested that *“people don’t understand their roles”* and that there is a lack of interaction between all elements of the system (PF). Another stated that *“I don’t think there is a leader”* and that there is a lack of decision making due to a *‘group approach’* (PG).

Leadership Influence and Mayor Involvement

Despite participants believing the GM was primarily responsible for delivery of the tournament, a number of participants believed the GM struggled to influence the board and other stakeholders to gain an appropriate level of resourcing for the tournament (PB, PC, PF, PG). However, one participant identified that the GM’s views on resourcing were important, as they are *“the only person thinking about this 100% of the time”* (PE). However, skill gaps were also identified, especially in strategic marketing (PG), alcohol management (PD) and sponsorship sales (PB). Another participant identified that, whilst human resources were adequate, the ability to co-ordinate resources was limited (PE).

In contrast to the case studies undertaken by Parent et al. (2012), most participants believed that the mayor should not be directly involved at either governance or tactical levels (PA, PB, PE, PF, PG). However other participants believed that a strength of the event is that Wellington gets behind it, with the Mayor a key political driving force who is willing to commit resources when needed (PD, PI).

Brand Image, Evolution and Differentiation

In the early days of the tournament, Sevens was a relatively new spectator sport in NZ. One participant mentioned it was like *“launching this new product”*, pitched primarily around *‘fun, family and camaraderie’* (PD). According to participants, at some stage a tipping point was reached, with a change in culture, where the *“party took over from the sport”* (PC). One participant described how the fan base had evolved, with spectators now more interested in socialising (PD). Several of the participants described the evolution of the brand as ‘organic’ – something the *“fans have helped create”*, focused on attendees expressing themselves and the *“entertainment around the rugby”* (PB, PD, PE). One participant also mentioned the historic linkages and that it had been *“built on rugby”* and the IRB series (PI). However, several participants perceived that the brand had evolved in spite of a lack in direction; that the brand has been *“led by audience over 15 years”* (PF) and *“the board is simply trying to understand it”* (PB). It was also mentioned that the brand had not evolved to take alcohol

legislation changes into consideration, allowing police and media to lead perceptions in this area (PH). It was also stated that a new direction was needed given *“the sport of Sevens is about to enter the Olympics”* (PI).

The new brand *strapline* for 2014 incorporates two key elements that event leadership presumably think the brand represents – *‘Where rugby meets awesome’*. The most common descriptions of the event from participants were ‘party’ and ‘fun’ (PA, PB, PC, PE, PH, PI). Several mentioned the spirit of ‘Wellington’ (PD, PE). Other participants used words to describe the international flavour of the event: ‘international’, ‘touched the world’, and ‘Olympic rugby’ (PG, PI). Other descriptions included ‘successful’, ‘celebration’, ‘music’, ‘exciting’, ‘colourful’, ‘fancy dress’, ‘great entertainment’, ‘amazing how it all comes together’ and ‘hard work’. Of note, only two participants used the word ‘rugby’ (PB, PI). Several also used terms with negative or problematic connotations to the present, such as: ‘tired’, ‘alcohol’, ‘lack of resources’, whilst others perhaps see the event in terms of its future – ‘hasn’t reached potential’, ‘things are different’, ‘challenging’.

The participants raised four key differentiating factors perceived to separate the Sevens Wellington from other competitors and other IRB series events: its demand, its unique personality, its exciting nature, and its operational excellence. Firstly, Wellington traditionally sells out with strong demand, massive fan and city support (PB, PF, PI). As a result, the yield is high and commercially it has been very good (PD).

Secondly, the tournament has always *“been a favourite for players”*, with a *“distinctive personality”* – there is *“no other event like it”* (PB, PH). Despite being NZ’s *‘most attended party’*, it incorporates creativity through costumes, a *“kiwi can do”* and a *“fun-rowdy”* crowd mentality (PC). However, there was a sense that the event has *‘hit the crescendo and is now coming down the other side’*, and that it is struggling to compete with one-off events (PE).

Thirdly, even though rugby is popular in NZ, the sport of sevens is still relatively new and quite different to the game of fifteens - it is short, exciting, and easy to understand (PC). However, one participant identified that, from 2016, Sevens will be a different product, with genuine stars that can compete with the star power of the NRL 9’s (PH). Another mentioned that there is a requirement to be innovative – *“18 hours of rugby over a weekend is a lot”* (PI). Finally, Wellington have traditionally been excellent at operational delivery.

Strategic Vision

Participants described in different ways that the tournament had always had an implicit ‘strategy’, and that this was to maximise profit and economic benefit for the city (PD, PE).

The stated aim was to be *"the best international sporting event in NZ"* (PF), but it had been perceived over time that strategy *"didn't need to change much"* (PD, PE).

Several participants mentioned that, given the changing environment, the board had been discussing *"shifting the emphasis"* back to rugby for some time (PD, PE). However, a clear strategy to achieve this had never been articulated or developed (PD). A new concept of 'sessionalisation' had also been discussed, but not approved, as this was seen as too risky (PD). A 1-page strategy (1-pager) was developed by the recently resigned GM. However, this was seen as *"pretty young"* and *"dynamic in nature"* (P.B.) The 1-pager describes the vision as *"Sevens Wellington, New Zealand's best international annual sporting event"* (Donoghue, 2014). The mission was:

"By Feb 2015 we have sold 28,000 tickets, have a naming rights sponsor / associate sponsors and have developed an entertainment plans that showcases: the carnival atmosphere of sevens with an overall theme of Kiwiana; Olympic rugby; great NZ entertainment; and a stadium atmosphere that fans are enthusiastic about." (Donoghue, 2014)

However, several participants were unsure if there was a strategy (PC, PG), and it appears that at the tactical level, various organising committee members were also not aware of whether a formal strategy document existed. Some considered that the marketing function, in particular, appeared to be disconnected from strategic planning efforts, with no guidance for an overarching brand identity, brand story, or brand attributes to allow detailed marketing campaign planning (PG, PH). Another participant also stated that *"the logistics of it became the crux"*, that is, delivering the tournament on the day, at the expense of *"true vision"* (PG). Similar differences in perception were evident amongst those filling different roles, exemplified by one participant who stated that the board had never consciously set or adopted values (PE). Yet a key member of the operational delivery team readily stated the values as being *"operationally excellent, experience focused and operating as a team"* (PI).

Challenges

The participants' identified three major challenges facing the event, largely as a result of a changing strategic environment. The biggest challenge is currently that the brand value proposition is somewhat 'stuck in the middle' between the party and the rugby (PF, PC, PI). Event organisers appear to be targeting multiple audiences (PF), yet increasingly it has become apparent that various segments are not co-existing within the current format (PF). One participant identified the challenge of shifting perceptions and emphasis, and likened this to *"how quickly you can shift a super-tanker"* (PE).

The attempt to shift perceptions is creating confusion around the brand, with some spectators perceiving the party is over, whilst others, not aware of any shift, remain turned off by the party (PC, PD, PE). There is also the view that the event, regardless of change, is perceived to be “old hat” – suffering from having been around for 15 years, when previously there had been no requirement to target repeat customers due to the high demand (PI).

Changing perceptions about the event are nevertheless occurring in an environment where people are increasingly time poor and there are more competitors, especially in the ‘festival’ market (PG). One participant identified the need to take a more collaborative approach for the creation of an overarching vision, then “strip [the brand] right back” (PD, PG).

A second challenge that participants identified related to the changing legislative environment and perceptions around alcohol (PB, PH). One participant identified ‘pre-loading’ as the single biggest issue (PH). There has also been a rapid change in police attitude and a change in the media treatment, impacting negatively on public perceptions (PB). Participants identified the need for the event/the stadium/the organisers to be responsible hosts and to work closely with stakeholders to proactively manage the issue and ensure positive messaging (PB).

Finally, now that Sevens is an Olympic sport, this has created some challenges and opportunities. The strategic positioning of the sport needs to be addressed at a national level, for as one participant indicated, there is a “risk that it could become a competitor to the fifteen's game” (PH). However, as others recognise, short format sports are becoming more popular globally, and this presents an opportunity for Sevens (PH). From 2016, there will also be true ‘star power’ available to help market the sport and event (PC).

Several other participants mentioned issues around resourcing, in general. There has been significant churn within the event organising team and wider WRFU and organising committees causing continuity issues (PI). A focus on profitability has also caused tension between investing the future of the brand and delivering the required revenue, and between the tournament and the stadium (PD).

Comparison to a One-off Event

Several participants mentioned that traditionally, Sevens Wellington has been pitched as one off event every year – “you can’t afford to miss out” (PE, PH). However, now there is, increased competition for the entertainment dollar and changing public perceptions of what an ‘exclusive’ event is (PE, PG). Given recent waning of demand, and the event’s maturity in the product life cycle, several participants identified the need to adapt to society and evolve,

learning from past experience (PD, PF). Moreover, several participants acknowledged that the brand needs to be considered as a long-term asset and the requirement to leverage off the existing fan base to attract back repeat spectators (PB, PI).

Marketing

The participants' perception of the influence that marketing policies have on the ability to generate revenue were insightful. In general, there seemed to be a lack of understanding about the linkage between brand identity and the ultimate objectives of increasing revenue. In addition to selling tickets and driving sponsorship appeal, one participant mentioned that marketing policies should support *"what we want the brand to represent"* and *"reflect to fans what they want to see"* (PB). Another participant identified that the new strapline *"where rugby meets awesome"* has focused more on a heightened rugby experience, but it is essentially still positioned in the same way (PD). A view was expressed that the question should be *"how do you create newness?"* and breathe new life into the event (PD). It was suggested that pursuing marketing policies where the product is associated with a party has not only reduced sponsorship opportunities, but alienated some elements of the target audience (PF). One participant identified a disconnect between WRFU (responsible for delivering the 'product') and PWT (who are responsible for the marketing function), resulting in limited marketing input into the overarching strategy (PG). Another participant echoed these thoughts, stating that whilst the event is basically a *"consumer marketing role and challenge"*, the Sevens LG lack marketing and fan engagement expertise. This was in contrast to the AFL where most clubs have a 'GM fan engagement' for the underlying reason that *"without a fan base you have no sponsorship, hospitality, TV and potential players"* (PH).

In general, all participants agreed that digital and social media marketing are vital for the event to provide relevant information, promote and attract spectators and sponsors, and provide a presence. The 2014 tournament was the first one where significant marketing effort was applied, because of a drop in demand. It focused on *"driving sales, building engagement and driving messaging, along with looking to influence behaviour"* (PB).

Another participant saw marketing as a mechanism to reconnect with old fans (PC). However, it was noted that despite the increasing recognition of the importance of the marketing function, event organisers were not only relying on PWT's marketing resource, but that the campaign was not even supported sufficiently to ensure a *"really good cut through"* (PG). It was also noted that social media has at times amplified negative public perceptions of the Sevens, and content management and editorial input on digital channels

was weak (PG). Another participant emphasised this, saying *“I don’t think we’ve done a very good job in telling stories and making heroes and personalities out of players that are on the Sevens circuit”* (PH).

Entertainment

Surveys of previous attendees and non-attendees identified that people have two main drivers for attending the Sevens – the most important being ‘the rugby’ (44%) and ‘the party atmosphere’ (42%) (Angus & Associates, 2014). Most of the participants identified entertainment and external activities as being critical to driving the event (PB, PD, PE, PH, PI). It was noted that a suitable balance was also critical and *“this is the happy marriage that we have to find”*, without detracting from the sport and *“losing the central part of it”* (PF, PH).

Another participant emphasised that the *“tournament should always be No 1 priority”* (PG). Several participants, however, thought that the success had probably hurt the tournament (PG) and the event had gone over the line, and by *“fuelling the party,”* and making the *“sport irrelevant”* (PC). One participant believed there was a way *“to get the two elements in there together”*, because *“boring and sevens don’t go together”* (PG). It was perceived that people have shortening attention spans, and there is an increasing requirement for event enhancements and extensions to create the festival atmosphere (PG, PH).

Sponsorship and Corporate Sales

Sevens Wellington have always targeted corporate sponsorship. However, there had not been much focus, or need to focus, on corporate sales in the past due to high demand for general ticket sales (PB). The event has a family of 60-80 sponsors and organisers see this as important for generating revenue (PB). Sponsors get an above the line opportunity to leverage the event for promotional purposes. However, there is the perception that the brand is tarnished, and this means potential sponsors are thinking twice about aligning with the Sevens brand (PD). One participant proposed that sponsorship sales will continue to struggle unless the brand reinvents itself (PD). Corporate hospitality and sales are managed through another partner, TNG (PB). However, as one participant mentioned, the event organisers haven’t really created the right kind of environment to host corporates, and this could be a potential area for improvement (PE).

The value proposition for sponsorship sales is currently focused around sponsor brand building and sponsor/product awareness - being associated with the event that represents characteristics the sponsor may want to be associated with (PB). Some participants implied

that the general positioning for sponsors was similar to that of spectators - “fun is integral” (PD, PI). However, one participant identified that it is harder for a sponsor to ‘activate’ around that kind of proposition given recent changes in attitudes towards alcohol (PE). It was suggested that the current lack of sponsorship “*stems directly from the brand problem*” making it hard to get a serious sponsor on board (PE). It was generally acknowledged that with Sevens becoming an Olympic sport, there will be a requirement to make it more prestigious offering, but that people don’t really understand that yet (PE, PH, PI). In addition, there are moves afoot by the IRB to centralise some sponsorship rights, which will ease pressure on Wellington event organisers.

Currently the responsibility for attracting sponsorship sales and servicing existing relationships sits with the GM as the only person mandated to speak on behalf of the event (PE). However, it was noted that it is somewhat of a collective responsibility, and an appropriate level of ground-work must be done (research, propositions, approaches) collaboratively – with sometimes the board being engaged in that space leveraging pre-established relationships (PB, PF). One participant identified that the event as a brand is “*not retaining key relationships and sponsors*”, and that the nature of sponsorship relationships being developed are changing towards more sustainable and community conscious initiatives (PG).

In general, participants agreed that event organisers had not sufficiently leveraged long-term relationships with spectators and sponsors (PB, PC, PD, PE, PG, PH). Several participants mentioned that there has been high personnel churn, introducing risk in operational delivery, and adversely impacting continuity in long-term relationships (PD, PH). Another participant acknowledged the importance of holding on to existing spectators and sponsors, but that this was reliant upon a vision and “*what we want to achieve in terms of the strategy*” (PB). It was considered that since the tournament had consistently been the subject of high demand, insufficient effort had been applied to “*keeping in touch with old fans*” (PG). Another participant suggested the requirement to “*cultivate a membership culture and mentality...using content over a 12 month period to engage with the customer base*” (PI).

Return on Investment

It was clear from participants that one of the key drivers behind the event is to generate revenue (PB, PD, PE, PH, PI). And it has been massively profitable in the past, generating a return on investment in the order of 40-50% (PI). There is a commercial profit-sharing arrangement between the NZRU and WRFU, where the NZRU take the majority of the

profits. The WRFU must meet a minimum threshold of revenue and profit, which creates some risk for both parties (*PB, PD*). The NZRU aren't under an obligation to commercially contribute to the success of tournament, yet need to ensure it is a good event to ensure the future hosting rights and solidify their relationship with the IRB (*PD*). Wellington's reputation is also on line – it is currently positioned as the '*events capital of NZ*', so the city needs to prove the economic benefit from investing in the event (*PE*). The event is also very profitable to Westpac Stadium from food and beverage sales, although it was noted these have declined over the previous few years (*PE*).

3.2.2 The Context

Within Parent et al.'s (2012) model, the 'context' referent moderates the initial event creation and includes national and regional factors. The literature also suggests that a key to remaining relevant and running a successful event is identifying forces driving change. It is suggested that a structured way of gathering information, analysing and interpreting information and using this for strategic decision-making is required.

In particular, sports events are also emerging as both a significant driver of participation and a potential revenue stream for sporting and entertainment organizations (Sport NZ, 2013). Socially, sport and recreation are highly valued in New Zealand, and make a significant contribution to many aspects of our lives. Other social factors include the changing face of NZ's drinking culture and changing perceptions around the way alcohol is consumed at large events. Legal and environmental factors include new legislation governing licensing of venues and increasing pressure from regulatory authorities such as the NZ Police (Alcohol Advisory Council of New Zealand, 2010). Politically and economically, the Wellington Region accrues benefits from sports events such as Sevens Wellington through additional prestige, tourism visitors and event related entertainment spending (Angus & Associates, 2014).

Regional Factors

Participants generally agreed that Wellington has the best located stadium in NZ, helping to build the event, and bringing a number of advantages such as being self-contained within the City, proximity to the CBD and access to public transport (*PB, PC, PE, PH*). However, it was stated that the stadium could be improved aesthetically (*PB*). Several participants also noted that the stadium is not 'wired' and would need to invest in technology to keep up with customer expectations and to enable viewing complementary content in real time during the event (*PB, PD*). In addition, perversely, the layout of the stadium, designed for

spectator flow, safety, and convenience, can also be considered a weakness – it encourages socialising rather than watching rugby and does not allow for the effective segmentation of audience groups when needed.

Forces of Change

Participants identified that the biggest force of change that should be considered is that the tournament *“is very mature event by most standards” (PB)*. As previously mentioned, new alcohol legislation will force changes to comply with changing public perceptions and to attract continued sponsorship (PC, PF.) One participant stated that the event *“needs to shift from adult party to a celebration of NZ's national game” (PF)*. The fact that the game is now an Olympic sport also brings opportunities - the ability to tell the Sevens story more and leverage the star power that will be available (PI). On the whole, whilst the need to evolve is clear, one participant stated that the board haven't *“had the vision to realise the product needs to evolve with the times” (PD)*. In a similar vein, another participant identified that there has *“never been a plan for brand longevity”* - no overarching story, and a disjointed brand journey with different creative partners (PG).

Event success is based on two key elements: firstly, having a sound strategic direction and a planning process that will underpin the LG's effort to shape and drive the creation of the brand; and secondly, the effective and efficient management of stakeholder relationships across the LG. These elements underpin the three antecedents identified by Parent et al. with consideration of broader environmental factors, including socio-economic, technological and cultural factors (Emery, 2010).

3.2.3 Nature of the Event

Parent et al.'s (2012) model indicated that aspects of success, media coverage, geographical location and event history and impact represent sub-components of this referent. The literature identified several factors which impact on the 'nature of the event' referent which are not included within Parent et al.'s (2012) model. These include how the recurring nature of the event may influence, and be used to capitalise on, the emotional attachment of spectators, and the positive and negative impacts of ritualised behavior.

Factors Impacting Nature of Event

Participants identified the importance of Sevens as an Olympic sport (PA, PB, PH). This brings a number of advantages for the sport, in general, instead of *“just being a hybrid of fifteens”*

(PE). The fact that star players will be available will be a drawcard and will allow the event organisers in to reposition the brand offering (PB, PH). One participant advised that the IRB will also be rebranding to 'World Rugby' and that this will bring benefits in terms of greater recognition for the sport globally (PE). Players will choose to become Seven's specialists, so this should also be leveraged (PH). Likewise, it was noted that being part of an international circuit, with international teams representing countries, also brings status (PB).

The Wellington Sevens tournament attracts good television coverage for the sport, however more recently it has also attracted negative media interest because of a small number of alcohol related incidents, detracting from the sport itself. Several participants highlighted the importance of the media and previous success in driving perceptions (PF, PH). Another suggested that previous success had driven an *"insatiable demand"* for tickets; however, this had now waned, making marketing and communications more important in the current competitive climate (PH). Recognition of the sport was also perceived to impact on branding. Globally, Sevens is a young sport, but has been hugely successful at Commonwealth Games, and as more representative teams from non-traditional rugby countries compete, it is expected that there will be more money and interest in the game (PC). It was also stated that *"unless the tournament evolves, it will be a lost opportunity to grow the sport and educate the NZ public"* (PC).

Recurring Nature

Participants identified that whilst the event has benefitted from being a recurring annual event, it also made it hard to compete with other one-off concerts (PB). Until 2016, it may also be difficult to compete with NRL 9's, as the Sevens don't yet have comparable 'star power' (PC). Another challenge identified was getting repeat customers back - *"people that enjoyed it last time"* (PA). However, due to fatigue in demand, the ability to attract repeat patronage will require *"creating newness"* (PD, PE).

Ritualised Behaviour

Participants offered a common view of positive and negative aspects to the ritualised behavior exhibited at the Sevens. A typical negative ritualised practice has been the 'pre-loading' and 'smuggling' of drinks, and the subsequent 'unruly' behavior of some consumer segments. Event surveys have also indicated that a main reason for choosing not to attend was *"too many intoxicated people"* (Angus & Associates, 2014). A typical positive aspect has been the festival and costume culture which is also *"central to the experience"* (Wellington Sevens Study, 2014). Several participants talked about the event as a *"right of passage to*

drink” and saw it as a reflection of wider NZ (summer) drinking culture which is very hard to change (PA, PC, PD, PF). The phenomenon of pre-loading is a tough and city-wide challenge. The costume culture was generally regarded as positive and adds to the atmosphere (PB, PC, PE). There can also be unintended consequences. For example, it is thought that the lack of stars on the field means fans have become stars off the field. This has created a unique atmosphere, leading to some attendees disassociating and exhibiting behaviours they *“would never do when they are in normal clothes”* (PE). It was further identified that event organisers would need an innovative approach to change the way people act in the future.

3.2.4 Induced Event Experience

Parent et al.’s (2012) model suggests that a leader’s effect on the brand is moderated by the ‘induced event experience’ referent, yet this is not explored in detail in the model, especially from a spectator perspective. The literature suggests a number of possible antecedents and supports the hypothesis that service quality is an increasingly important factor for sports events.

A recent rugby-specific study by Clemes, Bush & Collins (2011) takes this further by integrating the dimensionability of service quality with behavioural consequences. Yoshida, James & Cronin (2013) propose a higher-order hierarchical construct where service quality (functional, technical and aesthetic) are antecedents of consumption value (utilitarian, symbolic and hedonic), which in turn drives behavioral consequences such as satisfaction and loyalty (and thus overall brand equity). Other factors identified in the literature that influence this referent include ‘motivation to attend’ and a concept known as ‘orientation towards a sports event’ (OSE).

A key implication of the service-orientated literature is the importance of managing the controllable elements of quality – being the functional and aesthetic. These dimensions help sports marketers in particular to enhance customers' assessments of value factors. In particular, participants identified the role that the stadium has played in shaping spectator behaviour, and the role that spectators have played in helping build the current atmosphere by creating a costume culture.

Sports Service Quality

Participants were asked to rate the event performance against the five elements of sports service quality used by Yoshida et al. (2013) on a scale of one to five. The results were averaged and are summarised in Figure Five below. The participants rated the event the highest on 'tangibles' at 3.89, and the lowest on 'access and security' at 2.72. General comments made by the majority of participants were that *"it was a constant challenge to look after fans"* and that host responsibility was important (PB). Themes that surfaced were that operationally the quality was strong, however the event was considered not to be delivering on some elements of customer contact (PD, PE, PF). In general, the facilities were perceived to be good, however, issues of concern were considered to be more *"product related"* (PH).

Figure Five. Average Ratings of Sports Service Quality

Tangibles	Responsiveness	Access / Empathy	Assurance / Security	Reliability
3.89	3.00	3.06	2.72	3.33

Spectator Value

Participants generally perceived symbolic and hedonic value to hold equal importance for Sevens spectators, with the utilitarian factor being seen *"as a basic hygiene factor"*, as price is not seen to be a deciding factor in attending (PB). The symbolic factor was seen as important due to social identification; being a part of something bigger than yourself, the shared experience, dressing up (PB, PC, PG, PH). The hedonic factor was also considered to be important; the fun and excitement value, the ultimate escape, what's happening on field (PG, PH).

Motivation to Attend

The key factors identified by participants include the influence on motivation to attend the rugby, and the social experience. An important aspect was delivering an operationally good rugby tournament (PA, PB, PE). Several participants identified that a large number attend because the event has become a *"right of passage"*, and place the Sevens on their bucket list (PB, PC). However, for the generation of people who have already experienced the Sevens, it is perceived to be *"getting a little ho hum"* (PC). It is considered that people also want a social experience and the *"cool factor"* (PH).

What Are Fans Looking For?

Participants identified a range of factors that they think excites Sevens fans, and provides the experience they are looking for. Overall, participants agreed that the collective atmosphere was important (*PA, PD, PG, PH*). This includes the music, fun, party, rugby, being part of something popular, a collective atmosphere, escapism, the ability to express themselves, and connection with people. On the whole, this atmosphere has been co-created and “*fan-led*” (*PG*). However, now there is a perception “*that people don’t want to go anymore*” (*PD*). One participant mentioned that there is a “*latent demand out there, but we haven’t created the environment for them*” (*PE*).

Key Recommendations

Participants generally agreed that, despite obvious signals that the environment was changing, a holistic approach and a long term view to the strategy has been missing (*PD, PF, PG, PH*). There was an expectation that the “*GM would crack vision and strategy*”, yet at a high level, the vision and brand story had never been confirmed (*PG*). In addition, it was recognised that once direction is confirmed, then it needs to be fully resourced and co-ordinated (*PG*). In addition, the governance and structural arrangements were deemed to be no longer “*fit for purpose*”, with stakeholders all having different incentives (*PF, PI*). Because of this, it was perceived that WRFU can’t invest in the future of brand’ (*PI*). One participant also suggested that a new operating model for the event should be explored - sessionalisation. Several others saw the alcohol related issues as key; requiring “*deep change around management of alcohol*” (*PH*). Another participant believed that the funding and investment model for the stadium needed to be addressed (*PB*). In summary, despite many suggestions about which dimensions of the Sevens event were considered to be capable of change and improvement, there was no underpinning unifying theme to the suggestions that would easily result in new strategy.

4.0 Discussion

“The organisation must be adaptable and responsive (self organisation) to changing conditions, while preserving overall cohesion and unity of purpose. This is the fundamental paradox facing businesses – not to mention living cells, immune systems, ant colonies and the rest of the natural world”

Dee Hock (Waldrop, 2014)

The aim of this section is to discuss the key findings of the research in the context of the continued evolution of the Wellington Sevens brand, and for revising the conceptual model of Parent et al. (2012) for application in a NZ setting in light of the VSM. The VSM will be used as the basis for interpreting the findings of the previous section.

4.1 Analytical Framework

The notion of ‘Management 2.0’ reflects an emerging set of best practice ideas about organisations that conceptualises management and leadership in organisations in process terms, not based on positions. It also conceives of ‘management without hierarchy’, and the related notions of loosely connected elements, strategy and innovation taking place at all levels, and the acceptance of bottom up activism (Brockelsby, 2014b). Stafford Beer’s VSM builds on these notions, relating them as aspects of systemic thinking. As such, the VSM focuses on ‘the whole’ of the organisation, as well as the multiplicity of strategic ‘wholes’ that emerge and may be necessary in a world of complexity, change and global connectivity (Brockelsby, 2014a).

A detailed description of the theoretical underpinnings of the model is not within the scope of this report. However, the VSM functions on the idea that an organisation can be conceptualised as an organism with developed intellectual capacities which enable systems thinking, vision and strategy to create viability in a state of constant environmental change (Zatanovic, 2012). The VSM embraces organisational cybernetics as a systems approach to designing complex, adaptable systems that are regarded as modern organisations. The model encompasses five sub-systems - identified as also existing in other viable organisms, the brain and body - and the appropriate feedback and information flows that connect those sub-systems, facilitating self-adaptive viability. These sub-systems may also be capable of viability. Viable systems are also [recursive](#); that is, viable systems contain viable systems that

can be modeled using an identical cybernetic description as the higher (and lower) level systems in the containment hierarchy.

A key question that the VSM aims to answer is whether organisational infrastructure and collaborative arrangements are sufficiently systemic to adequately support key activities to add value and provide the basis for on-going learning, development and viability. Ashby's notion of an organisation needing to be capable of 'requisite variety' in response to environmental forces, in order to survive, is important VSM thinking. His 'law of requisite variety' is applicable in relation to the interface between processes ('operations') and the environment, and that between management and operations (Brockelsby, 2014b). This involves finding an appropriate balance between 'amplification', or increasing variety, and 'attenuation' or decreasing variety. Examples of each are highlighted below.

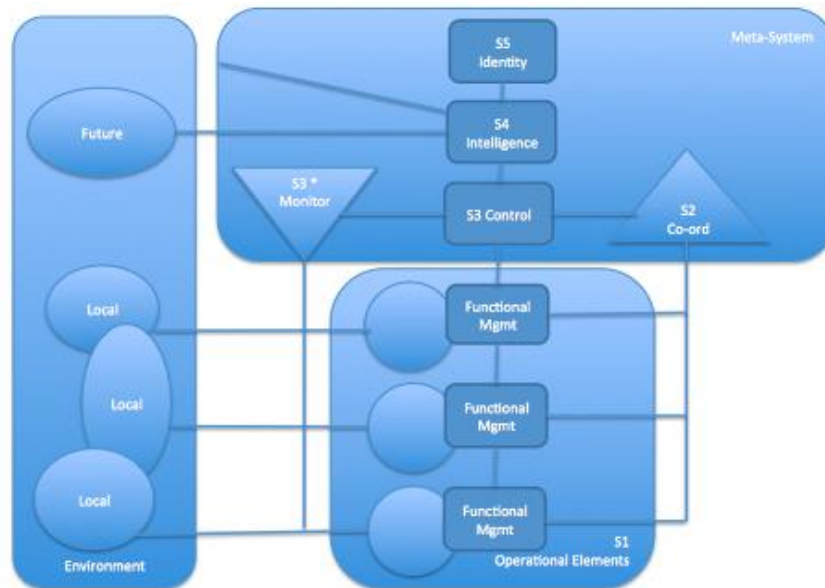
- 'Amplification' - may involve developing capability to respond through research and development, market research, staff training and development, risk management etc; and might include in rugby terms, building a 7s development programme for Women's 7, excluding non-eligible players.
- 'Attenuation' - may involve acting so that we not need to develop abilities to respond further, avoiding variety and complexity, withdrawing from markets, not entering certain markets. It may be expressed through changes to mission, market segmentation, priority listing, delegation of tasks etc; and might include in rugby terms, a nation deciding not to enter the IRB 7s circuit, or a Province making financial life easier by not entering the national 7s programme.

The five systemic functions necessary for organisational viability and their relationships with each other and the environment, are depicted graphically in Figure Six. These functions are defined by Brocklesby and Cummings (1996) as:

- S5 (Identity): Functions which conceive of the purpose or *raison d'être* of the system, it's soul and place in the world.
- S4 (Intelligence): Functions which consider the system as a whole and, strategic opportunities and threats and future direction.
- S3 (Control): Activities which maintain and allocate resources to the operational elements. Its focus is '*inside and now*'. S3 is also able to audit (via the S3* monitor function) past performance and monitor risk, allowing S3 to ask for more resources or implement a remedy.
- S2 (Co-ordination): Functions which ensure the operational elements work harmoniously.
- S1 (Operations): That part of the system that directly does what the system is 'designed' to do.

- Environment - The recognition and capturing of the environment within the model is necessary as reflecting the domain of action for the organisation. Without it there is no way in the model to contextualise or ground the internal interactions of the organisation.

Figure Six. Stafford Beer's Viable Systems Model



The VSM framework is generally used to help structure thinking about organisational systems, functioning and activities of interest (in this case branding), the relationships between key elements, the deployment of key resources, and current performance. It should be noted that the five inter-related sets of systemic functions are not necessarily role descriptions for individuals or groups contributing to those systemic function; and the VSM is simply a way of capturing and conveying the interdependence between the sub-systems and their systemic functions. The model can also be The Sevens Wellington event will now been discussed using this construct.

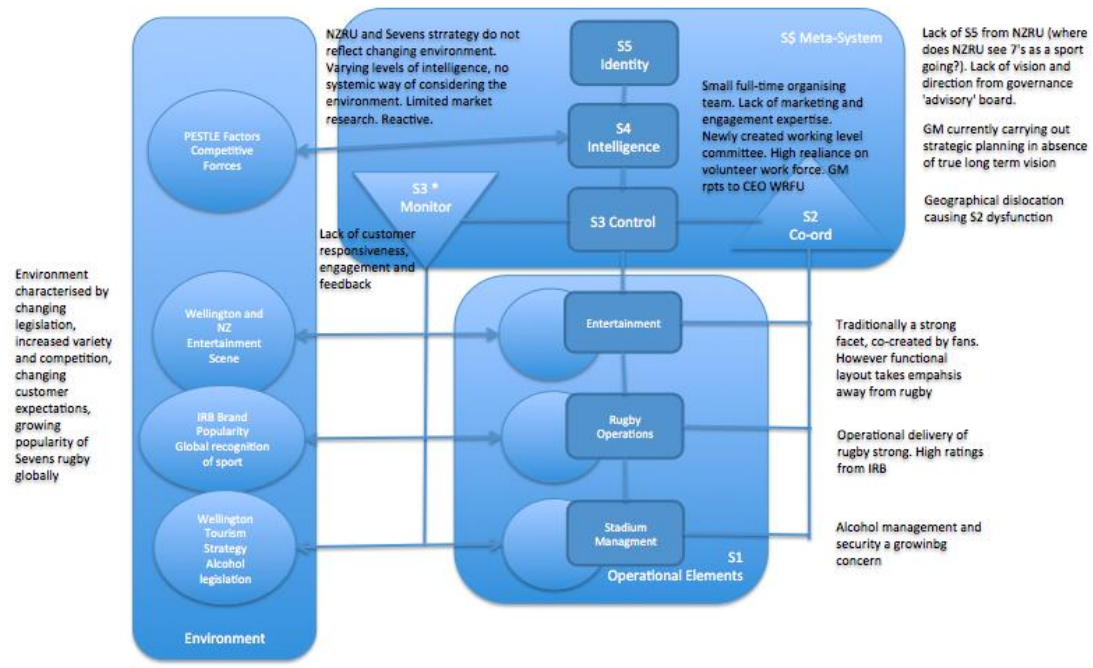
4.2 Managerial Discussion

4.2.1 Overview of Sevens Wellington within VSM Framework

The VSM framework has been applied to the Wellington Sevens to provide a systems perspective on key issues that surfaced in the findings and have been identified in the literature. As such, various elements within the Parent et al.'s model of brand creation have

been reconceptualised using the VSM model provided at Figure Seven, to highlight systemic role conflict, systemic overlap in functional duties, and/or systemic gaps or weaknesses within the current system that create risk.

Figure Seven. VSM Model for Sevens Wellington System



In this initial conceptualisation, it should also be noted that the Sevens Wellington event is regarded as an S1 unit of the wider NZRU and WRFU system, so this should be taken in context. Within the S1 Sevens sub- system, it may not be surprising to find the notion of *'requisite variety'* (to optimise system performance), was not evident in participant interviews. It is suggested that the previous success and high demand of the Sevens tournament, there was little need to create variety. It could be argued that the event organisers engaged in implicit attenuation to avoid variety and complexity. For example, if it was thought that there was no need to develop the event further, then little effort needed to be placed on segmenting the target audience, refining the brand or developing the 'product' and service offerings. Event organisers were able to roll out the same strategy each year, perhaps because it seemed to be a winning formula. By contrast, increasing variety would have needed better matching resources to key processes, developing better capability to respond to environmental forces, for example through research and development, market research, staff training and development, and risk management . An example of amplification would be including a Women's Sevens draw within the tournament

and specifically targeting different audiences within the marketing strategy. ‘Variety Engineering’ therefore arises as a key strategic management challenge.

Currently there is an absence of S2 and S5 functionality within the NZRU system that relates to the S1 Sevens operations. In particular, there is a lack of S2 coordination, within the NZRU system, between Sevens Wellington and WRFU. This S2 systemic weakness has impacted on the Sevens Wellington event as a S1 sub-system, and as a possible viable system in its own right. Key activities within each systemic function will be explored in the following discussion.

4.2.2 Identity (S5)

The S5 function is responsible for deciding on strategy, the organisation’s values, vision, and mission – and thus for guiding operating and policy decisions within the organisation as a whole. It also has systemic responsibility for the ability to project identity, both within the organisation and also to the external environment; to balance demands from different parts of the organisation. In general, S5 is responsible for stewardship of the organization, for steering its strategic direction.

In looking at the key themes that emerged from the findings, there appears to be a level of S5 dysfunction. This likely stems from a lack of overarching, long-term direction and vision for the Sevens tournament. For example, participants spoke about and acknowledged the changing environment and that this had been ‘discussed’, yet decisions had seemed not to reflect major environmental forces impacting on the Sevens. In one instance, an idea for a new concept of ‘sessionalisation’¹, was rejected in favour of sticking with the status quo. Similarly, participants were unsure, and perhaps confused about what the Sevens values were. It was suggested that the recently established vision and mission did not appear to be widely known at the lower levels of the Sevens organization, and may not have provided sufficient guidance for marketing staff, for example, on brand positioning.

The key issue is that if an organisation doesn’t have a clear sense of identity, that is, doesn’t know who or what it is, then there will likely be difficulty in knowing what identity to

¹ ‘Sessionalisation’ was the idea that two sessions could be held on the second day – the first focused on families, and the second more exclusive session, aimed a broader audience and perhaps including the younger ‘crowd’ who have been attending more recently.

project. Allied concepts of strategic frameworks, strategic positioning and governance are particularly important aspects of the S5 function and will be discussed in more detail below.

S5 Strategic Framework and Positioning

Although the modern game of Sevens is relatively new, it is already one of the world's fastest growing sports due to its ease of watching, short matches, and frenetic action (Olmsted, 2013). Responsibility for the sport of Sevens remains under the umbrella of the NZRU who have a strategic *framework* which incorporates their *"Towards 2016"* strategy (New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), 2014a, 2014b). In New Zealand, rugby remains the national game, has been the most successful of all NZ sports, and the All Blacks Sevens team has been the most successful of all national Sevens team on the global stage, having won the IRB Sevens Series circuit ten times and four Commonwealth Games titles. The vision of the NZRU is evident in the following statement: *"rugby teams in black that are unrivalled, a high performance system that produces the world's best talent, competitions that fans love, and a community game that is strong and cherished"* (New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), 2014b).

One of the strategic goals of the NRZU is "two Olympic Gold medals in Rio" - a goal that relates specifically to Sevens rugby. There are also elements within the overall NZRU strategy that are of specific relevance for Sevens rugby, and which include: increasing financial revenue generated by Sevens to ensure the financial sustainability of the NZRU Sevens programme; attracting more people to the game; continuing to enhance traditional international relationships including the International Rugby Board (IRB); continuing to leverage commercial relationships and global networks to grow its brands; and contributing leadership and expertise to developing the global game in a way that benefits New Zealand (New Zealand Rugby Union (NZRU), 2014b). It may be inferred that an important emphasis has been in making profit, and the other priorities have not been sufficiently well communicated, and have not cascaded down to the S5 function of the Sevens Wellington event.

Of possible concern, however, despite the changing nature and influence of Sevens rugby globally, is that Sevens does not appear to feature in an overt or compelling manner within the NZRU strategy or the Seven's "1-pager". The role that Sevens rugby will play (as a S1 of the wider NZRU system) is not sufficiently evident, and there appears to be no cohesive

governance structure for Sevens rugby, nor the Sevens Wellington tournament which plays such a crucial role in achieving strategic goals outlined above.

S5 Governance Structure

The research findings clearly identified systemic issues associated with the S5 governance role of Sevens Wellington. As outlined above, systemic dysfunction stems directly from a lack of clarity in S5 identity within the NZRU strategic framework, and other S5 and S3 weaknesses. As the national governing body/organisation responsible for Sevens in New Zealand, the NZRU have gained the hosting rights for the IRB Sevens Series event to be held in Wellington and New Zealand. Although there is a joint 'advisory board' to effect wider S3 resourcing and S2 coordination, it appears not to have the status of a governing board, and, as such, is not charged with carrying out the broader S5 functions usually expected of a governing board.

'Governance' broadly refers to the mechanisms, processes and relations by which organisations are controlled and directed (Shailer, 2004) and is generally considered to be responsible for setting the strategic direction and maintaining stewardship of the organisation (Sport NZ, 2014b). Sport NZ define governance as:

"The exercise of corporate leadership through the establishment and monitoring of necessary controls and strategic direction setting so that the organization is equipped to respond to the changing circumstances and situations in the external and internal environments in order to meet it's requirements by law and the expectations and requirements of owners (members) and other key stakeholders."
(Sport NZ, 2014a)

In a VSM sense, governance can be conceived as a 'meta-system' function (S5/4/3), providing the 'strategic direction' through S5/4 and 'monitoring of necessary controls' through S3* and S3 functions. These might include monitoring the security and sustainable use of resources. However, if those engaged in S5 governance start engaging too much in S3 or S1 matters, then we may see system role conflict or role overload. However, we might reasonably expect those involved in S5 governance board matters to engage in S\$ strategy deliberations and to contribute their insights to S4 data gathering about the environment, such as the Chair of the advisory board providing insights from the IRB.

S5 Recommendations

In order to address perceived systemic weakness, the NZRU may consider establishing a separate Sevens Rugby governance board with a capacity for wider-system S5

functioning, S4 strategising and S3 resourcing of the event, that is, it will oversee strategic direction, not just for the Sevens event, but for the sport holistically. The CEO of Wellington rugby is currently a member of the advisory board, effecting some S2 coordination at the lower level of recursion, however given the WRFU's responsibility for operational delivery, there is no clear separation of the governance and management duties so this appointment should be reconsidered. This would allow NZRU to maintain greater systemic 'control' over the strategic direction of the sport in general, and more appropriate alignment with the event.

4.2.3 Intelligence (S4)

This function includes thinking about the 'outside' – the environment, current and future, trends, scenarios – and then strategising to provide the S5 with options for strategic direction. This function also has the responsibility of modelling the whole system, that is, seeing the system/organisation as a whole related to its internal and external environments, and assessing its resilience in the face of anticipated and unanticipated futures, as part of its role of stewardship and securing the future, its long term viability and sustainability

S4 Strategic Planning – Environmental Scanning and Porters Five Forces

The literature review highlighted the importance of understanding the macro and micro environments, including what is happening in the broader sports industry (and Rugby and Sevens in particular), entertainment and events industries. Being able to interpret the PESTLE factors and trends which influence the Sevens is vitally important. Factors that should be considered are other related sports and entertainment events, socio-economic and other demographic trends, issues and expectations related to the different stakeholder interest groups. Seeming one-off Issues can often be catalysts or fore-runners of trends, which, as stated can be be societal shifts or technological innovations (permanent of temporary).

As the research findings have shown, the Sevens have faced several trends, both in the NZ local environment, and globally. Local trends include a large shift in perceptions and attitudes around alcohol, and new legislation governing the sale and management of alcohol at events. Global trends include spectator and media preferences shifting towards short format sports, and Sevens, itself, as a sport is growing in global popularity and significance

because of its designation as an Olympic sport. In addition, the prevalence of global connectivity and access to digital media via devices will soon change the way people engage with live events and their expectations around how content is delivered. Although the participants in this research generally acknowledged these trends, an under-developed S4 function and lack of S4 resource has limited the strategic response seemingly available to the S5 governance function/board. As a result, the event is now merely 'reacting' to the environment, rather than anticipating the environmental change and getting ahead of the competition and becoming a market leader once again.

Porter's five forces descriptive framework facilitates a systematic way of analysing the micro-environment, and in particular, the competition within an industry, in order to determine the most effective strategic positioning and competitive model (Porter, 2008). A change in any of the forces usually requires the organisation to re-assess the marketplace and their positioning within that market. Organisations can be expected to use their core-competencies to retain, for example, profitability and to differentiate their product. There have been 'new entrants' within the sports and event market in the past two years, the most notable being the introduction of the Auckland 'NRL 9's', the rugby league equivalent of the Sevens. There has also been an explosion in the availability of one-off concerts, which could be considered 'substitute' events competing for the event dollar, and these compete directly and indirectly with the Sevens. There has also been a shift in the underlying demand for the Sevens 'product', increasing the 'bargaining power of buyers'. Despite being aware of these changes, it seems that in terms of S4 functioning, the Sevens event organisers have done little with respect to S4 amplification of strategic options, with respect to product innovation, or with respect to altering the strategic positioning to suit the changed environment.

S4 - Product Life Cycle and Innovation

The research findings clearly highlight that the Sevens Wellington event is at a 'mature' stage in the product life cycle, perhaps even in the 'decline' stage. At this point, with increasing pressure from competitors, the event organisers will need to boost S4 functionality, and may have to commit more resource to defend the products' market position or to introduce extension strategies. Failure to do so may compromise the continued success and viability of the tournament. Although the Sevens brand, in terms of S5 identity, has evolved with input from spectators over the years, there has not been an underlying change in the product. Several participants highlighted the need to innovate and

create 'newness'. Event organisers have also failed to account for changing demographics, and of a need to reconnect with old fans and previous attendees, which some would consider the lowest hanging fruit for maintaining or building event attendance.

S4 Change Leadership

Given the changing environmental factors and the likelihood of the brand evolving further, a key factor to enable the change will be the S5 function enabling strong leadership within the S4 strategy function. Change leadership refers to the driving force, visions and processes that fuel large-scale transformation. As one of the participants mentioned, *'turning a super-tanker around'* and the scale of change required to shift perceptions around the event could be regarded as such. Much of Kotter's research on change demonstrates the importance of creating an emotional attachment and a vivid picture of what is ahead, that is, vision, to build 'buy-in' and bring people with you (Kotter, 2007). Driving the change requires participation from people across all parts of an organisation, which highlights the importance of S4 functioning with respect to identifying important stakeholders, and S3 resourcing of stakeholder relationship management and the development of relationship management skills as part of the S3 support function for S1 Sevens operating unit..

S4 Recommendations

It appears that the GM was primarily responsible for carrying out the S4 function, with some assistance from the advisory board. The GM may have been subject to systemic role overload whilst also carrying out S5 and S3 functions, rather than investing in S4 intelligence functions that involve identifying and analysing and interpreting environmental trends in terms of what they might mean for the event in the future.

Creating additional capacity for enhanced S4 functionality with a dedicated S4 strategic planning and S4 innovation resource would boost Sevens Wellington's organisational ability to monitor the external environment (including market research), conduct analysis, and make recommendations for change. As a time consuming, but vital task, this would reduce systemic role overload, reduce role conflict, and allow the GM greater time to focus on S5 and S3 operational matters. Underpinning any change would require clarity of S5 strategic direction, with appropriate leadership and vision from S5 governance.

4.2.4 Control (S3)

The S3 function includes day-to-day management and resourcing of S1 units – not just with funds or people, but with policies, guidelines, requirement and even goals. It also provides for infrastructure, and identifying and seeking an optimal balance between the centralisation and decentralisation of support activities.

S3 Organisational Design and Structure

Within the current Sevens Wellington organizational structure, the S3 function as a support function includes the human resources, marketing, sponsorship and communications functions that facilitates, but do not deliver the S1 operations. As highlighted within the research findings, there are complex systemic command and control arrangements for staff working on the event. Given the demands and complexity of running a large-scale event, several participants have implied that S3 resourcing has largely been ‘undercooked’, that is, under-resourced, especially with respect to the mentioned commercial activities, such as marketing, promotion etc.

Resourcing of the Sevens is into context when stating that the GM is currently the only person working on the event full-time, although two positions currently report to the GM. A part-time contractor (located in Auckland) is responsible for the sponsorship, commercial and HR functions, whilst a separate WRFU resource is responsible for the communications and PR planning. PWT, the WCC agency, also provides marketing expertise, whilst branding and creative is outsourced to another agency. This geographical separation and separate reporting lines are all likely to lead to S3 dysfunction, as has been noted, resulting in additional complexity, a lack of responsiveness in decision making, and lack of cohesiveness and integrated approach (as borne out in the research findings). Other functions identified as weaknesses in the research findings were commercial/sponsorship and marketing, specifically ‘fan and member engagement’ and ‘content management’.

S3 Allocation of Human Resources and Volunteers

It was noted in the research findings that there is a high turnover or churn of personnel within both the WRFU and the Sevens organisation, indicating a possible range of S5 to S1 dysfunction, as well as the systemic role overload and role conflict, that arises from an inadequate S3 resourcing dysfunction. Some degree of churn is expected with a high profile event such as the Sevens because of its recurring nature, however the current level of turnover is concerning, because of a loss of S4 intelligence, not only within the Sevens

organization as an S1 unit, but also within the wider system. A high dependence on volunteers is another area of risk, with the inevitable turnover mitigated through an intensive training programme prior to the event.

S3 Change Management

Given the high profile nature of the event and the S5 reputational risk to the NZRU in getting it wrong, it is vital that the S3 function is capable of responding to, and implementing change. We may regard change management as needing a basic set of basic tools or structures intended to keep any change effort on course, and effective S3 functioning facilitates this. One goal of effective change management is often to minimise the unintended consequences, distractions and impacts of the change. For this to occur, systemic roles and responsibilities need to be clear and everyone needs to understand their part in the overarching vision.

S3 Recommendations

If the capacity for S3 resourcing is inadequate, then S5 governance has to guide the resourcing decision determining the best option from S4 strategic planning. This would require effective S3* functioning with the GM being able to identify gaps, and learning and building on previous experience, in a non-routine manner. In addition, event organisers should ensure that effective S3 reporting and accountability systems are in place to measure and review performance on a regular basis, to be better able to implement change. This would include conducting a review about the current level of staff turnover, and identifying the root cause of the matter.

Research findings also identified that in order to retain a strong fan-base, marketing efforts cannot be spasmodic, and leverage both the stars of the game and what's happening on the IRB circuit on a continuous basis. This is deemed, by participants, to be a necessary task and systemic activity, and is not something that should be 'contracted out' to an external resource for specific periods of time. The creation of an additional full-time marketing resource contributing to the S3 function, would significantly enhance S3 marketing support to the Sevens as a S1 unit, and to provide S3 operational control and improve effectiveness. Investing in additional S3 commercial/sponsorship capacity to research and prepare sponsorship proposals, to service existing sponsors, and to generate further funding resource, would also enhance Sevens Wellington's capacity to deliver on its main purpose. Another potential enhancement to S3 functioning could arise from better information flow

between the Sevens GM and the NZRU governance board, rather than CEO WRFU – perhaps through a formal report mechanism directly to the Board. In this way, Sevens Wellington may then be better able to secure and leverage NZRU resources and expertise, such as marketing, branding, strategic planning, finance, legal etc. rather than having to contract these functions out. This would also ensure greater systemic alignment with the overarching NZRU strategy.

4.2.5 Co-ordination (S2)

The S2 co-ordination function seeks to ensure that all systems elements work harmoniously together. It represents necessary information channels and information, and would include, by contrast, the provision of policy guidelines, scheduling mechanisms, and any other processes that allow the primary activities in S1 to communicate with each other, and allow S3 to monitor and co-ordinate activities within S1, dampening down unnecessary competition between S1 units etc. Given the large-scale of the event and disparate nature of the resources allocated to organising and delivering the event, effective S2 coordination of resourcing was identified in the research findings as being problematic.

It was implied in the research findings that there was a lack of integration of the various internal management functions overall, especially in relation to S4 strategic planning activities. For example, it was suggested that the external S3 marketing resource, and therefore, relevant marketing information, was not involved in strategic planning activities, and neither was the S3 marketing function conducted with awareness of the wider strategic vision. This was found to be problematic when trying to unbundle what the Sevens brand was, what it actually means, and how to create a tactical marketing plan.

However, the research findings highlighted that a lower level S4 working group was created in 2014 to work through operational details with various stakeholder groups. This was found to improve co-ordination and was a successful initiative. Another suggestion to further improve S4 intelligence and strategy development would be to implement a formal Integrated Business Planning (IBP) system to strengthen information flow, and to ensure integrated planning across the organisation.

S2 Integrated Business Planning

IBP refers to technologies, applications and processes of connecting the planning function across the enterprise to improve alignment across all organisational systemic functions and activities. Engagement in IBP enables decision makers to access and share information and identify activities that will deliver the greatest financial and intangible benefits. It is recognised that the S4 marketing intelligence function and the S3 marketing as resource to the S1 units function, have not previously been considered holistically within the S4 strategic planning activities, or aligned with other systems functional areas. Nor has customer and ticketing data been regarded as intelligence and analysed in sufficiently appropriate detail to inform future planning, especially in the sponsorship space. A formal IBP process requires development of a holistic model of the company in order to link strategic, operational and financial planning. IBP processes can also strengthen S4 functioning by translating insights into financial impact by identifying financial (profit) drivers, conducting 'what-if' simulations and sensitivity analysis, optimising financial variables and ratios, and conducting feasibility analyses etc. Key benefits are that it provides an integrated planning platform across marketing, operations and finance functions, but also provides a holistic systemic understanding of performance drivers, quantifying the financial impact of changing variables and interdependencies, and quantifying risk.

S2 Recommendations

Introducing IBP processes would necessarily improve S2 functionality, and also provide much greater visibility and integration of S4 planning efforts. As such, it would enhance S4 strategic planning and S5 strategic decision-making. However, at a minimum, ensuring that input during strategic planning from various functional areas, including marketing, would be a step forward.

4.2.6 Operational Elements (S1)

The S1 operations function includes elements that directly interface with the external environment and that enact the identity of the system, and deliver on the wider system's purpose. Responsible for implementation, the key proposition is that S1 units (Entertainment, Rugby and Stadium etc) should be given sufficient autonomy to satisfy the 'law of requisite variety' – i.e. match variety within the environment with variety in the

organisation. Here, a lesser emphasis will be placed on discussing the S1 function, given relative importance that the S2-S5 functions have in brand creation efforts.

Whilst the S1 sport entertainment (and subsequent unique carnival atmosphere) has contributed to the success of the tournament, this function has emerged as a potential weakness, given its own *de facto* S5 identity and association with partying and alcohol. This brand imagery has indeed turned off many sponsors and alienated some fans. The S1 technical delivery of the rugby has traditionally been a strength of the tournament, and has always been rated highly by the elite players and the IRB.

The Sevens organisation's partnership with the stadium is one area for potential improvement. As identified in the research findings, trying to find the 'right balance' between the two organisational systems and their different system's goals will be critical, in the future.

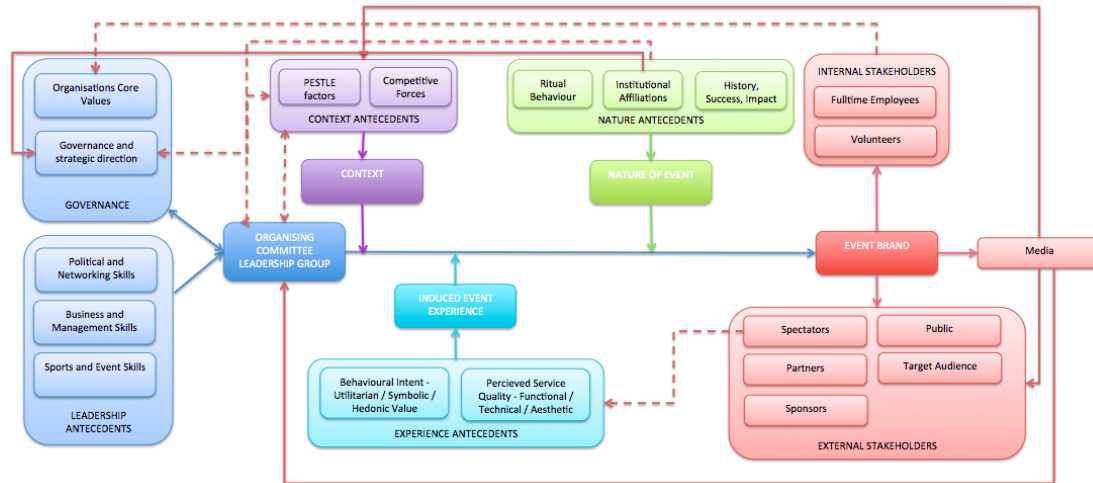
Key themes that emerged in the research findings were that tension existed in the relationship between the stadium and the Sevens tournament. The layout of the stadium itself is a key factor in shaping how spectators are physically segmented, how spectator flow is managed, and therefore on the spectator experience of the Sevens S1 as a success or not.

Alcohol management at the stadium is a shared responsibility and something that will also be critical going forward in as much as it demands a revisiting of S5 identity. The variety in food and beverage offerings was also another issue raised. These are all areas that need further work to enhance operational delivery.

4.3 Revised Conceptual Model for Brand Creation Sevens Wellington

In light of the research findings and interpretation of the Sevens Wellington brand creation 'system' using the VSM framework, a revised conceptual model of brand creation is presented below at Figure Eight.

Figure Eight. Revised Conceptual Model of Brand Creation for Sevens Wellington



The key insights portrayed within the model reflect a need to distinguish/differentiate S5 strategy and vision from the leadership antecedents, and to make these systems ‘governance’ functions, and an articulation of organisational values, governance and strategic direction, more explicit. As highlighted in the discussion facilitated by using the VSM as a conceptual lens, the importance of the dynamic systemic interplay between strategic and operational planning, and environmental scanning and interpreting the external environment, cannot be understated.

Within the revised model, the S5 function of creating and disseminating organisational values has been separated out, and is then provided to the LG. Whilst not reflected in the revised model, S5 values play an important role in effecting effective S2 coordination functions (as an implicit role of the LG), without putting in place a formal coordination mechanism. The overarching S5 identity and long-term vision as a governance function, has also been separated out. This function also has a role in identifying long-term strategic trends and factors in the macro environment as depicted by the new feedback loop with the ‘context’ antecedents.

The various S5 leadership functions identified in the VSM, such as strategic positioning and governance are also reflected in the revised model by the interplay between the new ‘governance’ elements and the ‘LG’. In addition, a feedback loop between ‘internal stakeholders’ and S5 functions has been created to capture the essence of S3* monitor and S2 coordination functions.

The S4 intelligence function is reflected in the revised model mainly within the LG element and the feedback loop with the 'context' and 'nature' antecedents. Being able to proactively identify trends and amend strategic positioning appropriately is a key skill. More localised trends within the environment such as 'institutional affiliation' and 'history, success and impact', are reflected in the model under 'nature of event' antecedent. An additional factor, being 'ritual behavior', has been added to recognise the important impact this behavior has on an event of this type and Sevens Wellington in particular.

The S5 'governance and strategic direction' element, most likely carried out by the advisory board, will also have a role to play in understanding and analysing the strategic environment.

Within the local environment, understanding the target audience is also vitally important. This facet is captured within the revised model by adding several antecedents to what we may regard as the 'induced event experience' referent, such as: 'behavioural intent' and 'perceived service quality'. A systemic feedback loop between 'spectators' within the external stakeholder grouping has also been added to emphasise the importance of information sharing and flow. This is a function that would most likely be carried out by S3* monitor.

The S4 strategising function is carried out by the LG and is reflected by the two-directional arrow with the S5 governance element. The ability of the S4 function to take all of the inputs previously discussed, innovate and create 'newness', then lead change, is reflected in the ultimate creation and success of the event brand.

Within the revised model, the LG are also responsible for S3 control functions as they relate to resourcing the creation of the Sevens Wellington brand and helping to shape the environment and enable specific S1 units (being 'entertainment' 'rugby' and 'stadium operations'). As depicted in the LG antecedents, there are a range of S3 skillsets that are required in order to create a successful brand, in particular S3 marketing support and S3 commercial/sponsorship management skill-sets.

The interplay between S4 intelligence and S1 operational elements, and the environment are reflected in the revised model by the interplay of the 'event brand' and 'internal/external stakeholders' (including media), which have also been separated out to provide greater clarity. In the case of external stakeholders, their positive/negative

perceptions of the brand then impact on behavioural intent and perceptions of service quality for both spectators and sponsors. The LG then needs to have an S3* monitoring system in place to conduct market research and surveys to understand how perceptions of the brand may have change as a result of ‘induced event experience’ or as a result of media coverage. The perceptions of internal stakeholders will also have an impact on the organisational values as depicted by the new feedback loop. The role of the media has been separated out, and re-orientated to highlight the important impact that this stakeholder group has on a number of referents. These connections with the contextual, LG (governance) and organising committee antecedents have been made more explicit.

4.4 Research Limitations

The generalisability of this case-based research is an inevitable, but key, limitation of the research. Sevens Wellington has unique factors that apply specifically to the particular nature of the event, in a specific location in Wellington, NZ, in the specific sport of Sevens rugby. This research has largely followed the case-based approach adopted by Parent et al. (2012), which approach has which informed the development of the model, and thus provides inferred reliability.

The timing, time-limited and scope of research did not allow for a greater sample of interview participants or of additional focus groups with spectators or sponsors. As such, whilst its findings may provide a basis for research of a complementary nature, examining other sports or entertainment events, or research that seeks to add to an understanding of similar Sevens events on the IRB circuit, its findings do not lend themselves to generalisability across sports or sports events.

This research may have enhanced the findings within the ‘induced event experience’ referent – as a chance finding.

4.5 Future Research Directions

Further study may enable the generation of additional concepts to extend the Parent et al. model (2012), which might then be further tested within NZ or across other sporting events or IRB Sevens tournaments.

As previously stated, an awareness of research limitations may provide opportunity for research of a similar nature for related sports or sports events. However, opportunity for further research is also evident in as much as it may arise from a reconceptualisation of or re-interpretation Parent et al.'s (2012) framework.

Such reconceptualisation may involve notions to extend the Parent et al.'s (2012) framework, the modification of notions existing within the framework, or the removal of notions from the framework. The revised framework might then be further evaluated within similar NZ or sporting contexts, or across other sporting events or IRB Sevens tournaments.

5.0 Conclusion

“Sport and entertainment are now mutually entwined. Live sport competes with a multitude of other entertainment experiences. Social motivations and the entertainment experience often trump on-field factors for attendance. The Wellington Sevens' carnival atmosphere is one of its strengths, and it would be a mistake to diminish this. Sevens is escapism, a temporary suspension of everyday roles where we can dress up and have a lot of fun. Every other sevens event wants to be Wellington. It is ultimately for the fan to decide whether they wish to attend for the sport or the entertainment, and we should not dictate.”

Shane Harmon, Westpac Stadium Manager (Heather, 2014)

As alluded to in the above quote from the CEO of the Westpac Trust stadium, the support of the fan base is a critical element for the future longevity of a sports brand. The Sevens Wellington brand could be regarded as mature as demand is waning, so connecting with the fan base and finding the right balance between the sport and rugby, without under-mining either, is crucial.

Given the dynamic environment impacting on demand for the Sevens Wellington event, this study sought to provide qualitative and empirical insights that will influence the continued evolution of the Sevens Wellington brand. This paper addressed a gap in the literature by examining the inter-relationships between the four referents of Parent et al's (2012) model of brand creation. The referents include: (a) the importance of the LG, (b) the context, (c) the nature of the event, and (d) the induced event experience. The research considered additional factors that impact brand creation, utilised Stafford Beer's VSM as an analytical framework to interpret the Sevens brand creation 'system', then subsequently present a revised conceptual model of brand creation.

The review explored several important emergent concepts not covered in detail in Parent et al.'s (2012) study. The ability to apply stakeholder theory, provide strategic direction and carry out ongoing strategic planning, the ability to analyse the environmental context, ritualised spectator behavior, consumer motives, orientation towards a sports event, service quality and their subsequent effect on behavioural consequences, were all considered to be important factors. It was found that a more dynamic connection between the LG referent and 'context', rather than just a moderating effect, would enhance the model.

The research findings found that despite many suggestions about which dimensions of the Sevens event were considered to be capable of change and improvement, there was no underpinning unifying theme to the suggestions that would easily result in new strategy.

An analysis of the research findings using Stafford Beer's VSM framework then followed, providing insights that may influence the continued evolution and management of the brand. Key recommendations to address perceived systemic weaknesses include the establishment of a separate Sevens Rugby governance board with a capacity to oversee strategic direction, not just for the Sevens event, but for the sport holistically. Clear separation of the governance and management duties should also be reconsidered. This would allow NZRU to maintain greater systemic 'control' over the strategic direction of the sport in general, and more appropriate alignment with the event. Creating additional capacity for strategic planning, innovation, marketing and sponsorship functions would enhance Sevens Wellington's organisational ability to monitor the external environment, engage with the fan base, and to research and prepare sponsorship proposals and overall capacity to deliver. Another enhancement would be for the Sevens GM to report directly to the NZRU governance board in order to better leverage NZRU resources and expertise. This would also ensure greater alignment with the overarching NZRU strategy. Introducing a system such as IBP would provide greater visibility and integration of planning efforts across various functional areas, and enhance strategic planning and decision-making. Improving aspects of the relationship between the stadium and the tournament could also enhance operational delivery.

In light of the research findings and interpretation of the Sevens Wellington brand creation 'system' using the VSM framework, a revised conceptual model of brand creation was then presented. The importance of the dynamic interplay between planning, scanning and interpreting the external environment is made more explicit in the model and elements from the literature review and key themes from the research findings have also been incorporated. Overall, the study has contributed to the sport specific event management knowledge and the understanding within the NZ sport event management context in general.

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Appendix 1: Sample Consent Form



Personal Interview CONSENT FORM

I agree to be interviewed by SARA HARRISON for the purposes of her MBA Business Research Project and consent to the use of my opinions and information. I understand that none of the opinions or statements that I make during the interview will be attributed to me personally, and that I may withdraw from the research before 29 Sept 14. I am also aware that the findings derived from this study will be published in the Victoria University Library and excerpts may be included in academic publications and/or academic conferences.

I have been informed of the purpose of the research and the confidentiality conditions.

I understand that raw data collected during the interview will only be available to the researcher, Sara Harrison, and her supervisor, Professor John Davies.

I have been informed that, only if requested, will I receive a summary of the interview to correct and approve before 29 Sept 14.

Name:

Date:

Signed:

If you would like a copy of the research summary please add your email/address below:

.....

Appendix 2: Sample Request for Interview



X September 2014

(Name)
(Title)
(Company Name)
(Address)

Dear XXXXX

I would like the opportunity to interview you as part of my MBA Business Research Project. The research is concerned with brand creation for the Wellington Sevens rugby tournament. The interview is designed to take between 50 – 60 minutes.

The success of this research is reliant upon your honest opinion so maintaining confidentiality is of the utmost importance. **Under no circumstances will the information presented during the interview be attributed to any one individual. The organisation will be identified but your name and title will remain anonymous.** Interview tapes and transcripts will be kept in a locked office, and will be destroyed at the conclusion of the research. The research findings will be published in the Victoria University library and excerpts may be included in academic publications and/or academic conferences.

Victoria University of Wellington has granted ethical approval as a teaching activity and this project has been reviewed by the Course Coordinator.

With your permission the interview will be recorded and a summary of the interview will be provided at your request before the project is submitted for examination. If you for any reason would like to make contact regarding this research please contact one of the following:

Sara Harrison	+64 21 2601509 smlharrison76@gmail.com
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Professor John Davies	+64 4 463 5382 john.davies@vuw.ac.nz
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Yours sincerely
Sara Harrison

Appendix 3: Participants

BY INTERVIEW:	
1	Wellington Rugby Football Union, CEO
2	Wellington Rugby Football Union, Sevens Wellington, Previous GM (resigned Sept 2014)
3	Wellington Rugby Football Union, Sevens Wellington, Previous GM
4	New Zealand Rugby Football Union, Sevens Rugby Board Chairman
5	Westpac Stadium, CEO
6	Positively Wellington Tourism, Marketing Manager
7	Fairfax, Newspaper Sports Reporter
BY EMAIL:	
8	Positively Wellington Tourism, CEO
9	Sevens Wellington - Ground Announcer and Media Programmer

Appendix 4: Interview Questionnaire

1	What was your role in relation to the event?
2	In your opinion, who was/were the leader(s) in this event? What aspects (traits, skills, qualities, etc.) do you consider as part of leadership to lead an event like this?
3	How did leadership influence the OC in terms of its: structure, ability to access resources and financing?
4	Should the mayor be directly involved in the OC If so, why? If not, why?
5	Name 3 words that come to mind when you think of the image of your event (regarding organizers, the event itself, its audience).
6	When would you say the official brand got unveiled? (e.g., logo presented) and did the event build on a pre-existing brand?
7	What, in your mind, differentiates your event from other IRB Sevens events and other competitors?
8	Did the organizing committee have a vision? Mission? Values? How did this influence your role in the event? what was the importance of the leader(s) in creating these images of the organizing committee?
9	What are some challenges for an OC when creating a brand? What would you recommend to solve these?
10	Do you consider the OC for an IRB Sevens event as an enduring (permanent/stable) or temporary organization, and why?
11	In which aspects would you say that branding an IRB Sevens event would differ from the branding of one-off event, such as a concert?
12	What were the influences of your marketing policies on the OC's ability to generate marketing revenues?
13	What are the key differences between "sponsorship" and "corporate support" and what does the Sevens focus on?
14	How was the event positioned and presented to potential sponsors? - What role did leadership play in formulating sponsorship decisions? - What role(s) did pre-established relationships between the OCs members and the members within the corporate community play in gaining sponsor/corporate support? - How does leadership influence the event's promotion to stakeholders and their desire to associate themselves with the event?
15	What are your thoughts around the importance of internet marketing communication in terms of: (1) providing relevant information, (2) Providing images and multimedia to promote and attract individuals to the event (sponsors & spectators); (3) website and social media presence?
16	What are your thoughts around the importance of including including other, minor events, such as concerts, breakfast tents, merchandising stalls, parades, and the carnival atmosphere into the overall sporting event?
17	How was return on investment measured by the OC and stakeholders?
18	What would you recommend for the leadership and sponsorship of future similar events?

19	How would you rate the Wellington Sevens against the five dimensions of sports service quality: (for 1 (not at all), to 5 (outstanding or exceptional: (1) Tangibles; (2) Responsiveness, (3) Access / Empathy; (4) Assurance / Security; (5) Reliability
20	What do you think spectators value the most? (utilitarian, symbolic or hedonic factors)? Is this the same for sponsors? (1) Utilitarian; (2) Symbolic; (3) Hedonic
21	Are there any other factors that influence 'motivation to attend' (for spectators) or 'motivation to sponsor' (for potential sponsors)?
22	Describe some of the positive and negative impacts of ritualized spectator behaviour surrounding the Wellington Sevens event. Do you think this benefits / harms the overall event brand?
23	How would you describe the Wellington Sevens in terms of characteristics ascribed to a product, company, person, and as a symbol? (ie – brand personality)
24	What do you think excites Sevens' fans? What kind of experience do you think they are looking for?
25	How much do you think national and / or regional factors have impacted on the creation of a brand identity for the Wellington Sevens? What are your thoughts on the relative importance of: (1) geographic location; (2) access to public transport, (3) other PESTLE factors?
26	What factors do you think influence consumer demand and the ability of the Wellington Sevens to compete with substitutes such as the NRL 9's or the homegrown concert? (eg; competitive intensity, market potential, demographics...)
27	What forces of change do you think the OC of the event need to consider when shaping the brand identity for the event?
28	What is the relative importance of contextual factors regarding the nature of the event, such as: - Recognition of sevens as a sport? - The presence or absence of a worldwide brand for 'Sevens'? - Previous event success, history and impact? - Media coverage?
29	Has Wellington Sevens OC been able to fully leverage long-term relationships, the ticket base and existing stakeholder relationships to increase consumption value for spectators and sponsors and increase revenue?
30	Is there anything else you would like to mention, anything that I should have asked but did not?

Appendix 5: Summary of Data From Interview

Questionnaires

Data is presented anonymously (participants A-I) and is not in the same order as Appendix 3. Question 1 has been omitted to retain anonymity.

2	In your opinion, who was/were the leader(s) in this event? What aspects (traits, skills, qualities, etc.) do you consider as part of leadership to lead an event like this?
A	The ability to let people do their jobs is paramount.
B	In terms of operational delivery , the GM (is) responsible for obviously running and delivering that tournament . The advisory board, in effect, it has always operated as a governance board . Yes – its been an interesting arrangement. Its a committee / board, but its always been called a joint venture advisory board. Skills - someone who is a leader. It's a large scale event , so you gotta have someone ... who has those leadership qualities . Someone that has the ability to inspire people and build a team it's important to have intellectual and political ability in a relationship sense . There are a lot of stakeholders to manage and a lot of demands...more specific skills around delivering the tournament ... the ability to operationally be a good manager of projects at whatever level you want to pitch that item.... this is a large project, so you have to have good project management capability.
C	I would credit him (previous GM) with creating that brand really and making it incredibly strong. I think he introduced a lot of new things that got it going and became part of the wallpaper. Creating characters. He's a real Wellingtonian and a real Rugby guy . He understood the mix between the sport and the party .
D	The GM (leads), but its political . You're trying to keep the board happy . You're trying to keep Wellington rugby boss (happy) . So as the GM you are the media spokesman , the figure head , but the (WRFU) takes the money and doesn't resource it as well as it should. You know, in an ideal world to me that sevens would be a totally separate entity . The advantage that Wellington rugby has...is that all rugby... held at the stadium must be run by Wellington rugby...we devolve management of test matches to each provincial union....The advantage is that they have relationships with the stadia, they have relationships with all this team of people. Wellington rugby have been fantastic at running that operational side...But, some of those wider issues, alcohol management, the marketing etc ...now they need a whole lot of expertise to position this event to make it desirable...– that's a whole lot of resource that we never had to expend . (You need a) core range of leadership attributes . The necessary intelligence... organizational background....(and) commercial acumen to be able to work within the commercial space .

E	<p>It would be Wellington rugby as the event manager. The ‘lead organization’ would be the way I would describe it. But if it were to be one person, it would be the GM....So the current governance arrangement has been in place in some, way, shape since the early days (where it was a) loose arrangement between NZRU and Wellington and it was just kind of done. It is an unusual structure ... because you have people are there from different organizations, then they also come with that hat on. That’s a positive in some ways, ...But on the flip side...My sense of it is the structure has served the tournament well for a long time when the tournament was growing, and the last few years I guess it’s evolving and it probably is time to just pause and take a look at whether that structure is right. That structure is part of the event management agreement that we have through to 31 May 2016. Beyond that point there is a question mark as to how we do run it from all concerned, but we just haven’t really through about that.</p>
F	<p>The event is owned by NZRU but delivered by WRFU....So everyone’s got a role to play. I’m not sure that everyone necessarily understands their role, the role of others or what is expected of others. Leadership skills require are: Decision making, Prioritization, Capacity to deliver change, People Management, Fiscal management</p>
G	<p>(the previous) GM was.... the very meaning of the manager part of it. You know you could put everything through to him and the information was shared quite well. (after that) it impacted on the team, because there was a huge amount of institutional knowledge that left... with him. And so (the other team members) were signing off on things that came through. So, it became a group sign off, I guess... So when you ask who the leader is, I don’t think there is a leader. There is no one person where I was comfortable to say, this person will chair this conversation and then make a decision and say, ‘this is what we are doing’. So its definitely more of a committee... (the GM) just wasn’t available enough to be that final pinnacle point. So, they took on a group approach. It was very time consuming, no final direction. It was very opinionated, rather than factual and asking ‘is this actually achieving what we need? At the governance level, (the various boards) are all at the same level and they are all peers. At least this year...a sub-committee was created ..., so we had this working group committee ensured that the right decisions were made for every party involved. ... it also includes key people at the tactical level. (Key skills are) being able to know your direction throughout and being able to lead based on that direction. If you know where we are supposed to be going, if everyone knows exactly where we are supposed to be going, and having a clear vision that is documented that states WHY we are here.</p>
H	<p>...but absolutely that party and alcohol has taken over from what it was established to be, which was the rugby competition....my guys.... tell me it was the best behaved sevens that they’ve ever actually been involved in....contrary to what was actually reported in the media. The way NZ rugby is structured is that you have 26 provincial unions, and in the Wellington region, and it’s the same in Auckland for example, its only the union that has the right to promote rugby in that territory. So sevens is managed out of Wellington rugby, not out of NZ rugby. And, my firm belief is that their key property should be managed by NZ rugby. My sense is that NZ rugby would, certainly over the next few years see that change and see responsibility and management of that event shift back to NZ rugby at the expense of Wellington Rugby.</p>

I	<p>We have the board there from a governance perspective to ensure that that the strategy are set and met. They give strategic direction. They're also stakeholders in that they represent various stakeholders that are interested in the event, whether it be Wellington City, Wellington Rugby are the implementer, and NZRU are the overall 'rights holder'. It is the GM that drives how the event ends up looking. I would say it is or should be fan led. What we need to be providing is what the fans require. A fan led experience. Which has got us in trouble in the past because we've become very stakeholder led, so either what the stadium wants, what the board wants, what the IRB wants, rather than understanding the psychographic of what we want attending – what would they want? Key skills are: Innovation, understanding the current and potential customers might want, being able to work with stakeholders that have significantly polarizing views, being able to sell the event from a creative perspective, and motivating a workforce (some non paid) to deliver an experience.</p>
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3	How did leadership influence the OC in terms of its: structure, ability to access resources and financing?
A	Not aware
B	<p>The GM has very little influence over the make up of the board at the governance level, (it is) actually joint venture partners...that determines who sits on the board. Those partners have been fairly stable, but the people obviously change...The stadium CEO has been invited over the past 6 months....It is a board that represents the interests of those that put the money into the tournament, So those people actually conduct the interviews for the last 2 GM's that have been appointed. So it works the other way around. It works the way a board works. The board appoints who it is they want to do the work at an executive level and they set the governance and ultimately sign off the strategy that might be worked up by the GM or CEO (depending on the structure). So they are in charge ultimately and the GM is there to deliver. The reality is that at a macro level, most of that is set when the deal is done..... So, there is the same ability that any senior manager has with a board to influence. It really comes down to the strength of the intellectual argument and the relationships and whether or not it lines up with the strategy.... The GM definitely leads that. ... Developing up and recommending a business plan. Marketing strategy. The work around the brand. The GM's responsible for delivering sponsorship, which wasn't delivered last year. And, yeah, everything around delivery of the tournament as well.</p>
C	<p>The WRFU manages the event. There have been various people within the union that have been involved in organizational and liaison roles, and then they bring in various contractors if you like. Anyone with half a brain who had been there at the start could have made it a success, because it was just such a run-away train. The GM does have quite a bit of say in the finance and sponsorship sort of stuff. ... the IRB step in and you know, say, they ultimately have the say in where these tournaments are hosted. If the IRB says its not working or we don't like what youre doing, they can pull the rug out from under your feet just like that. The hard thing is the timing. Most of the work has to go in about this time of year, which clashes with the busiest time of the year and the club season. The WRFU isn't resourced fully to pull it off and synchronise and dedicate resources to it.</p>
D	<p>Wellington rugby have the rights to run the event and WRFU sit on a board with PWT and NZRU, so the obligation is on Wellington Rugby to make it seem all fine and... no issues. The problem ... is that sevens has been a cash provider to pay for all the other services. And there is limited transparency. ...The issue that Wellington rugby needs to resolve is, "what is the priority when it comes to resource?"... 99.9% of personnel were volunteers. Probably a bit undercooked in commercial and always have been. ... now is a lot less resource going into the tournament, and I think its going to continue to struggle unless there are more focus and emphasis on the needs and demands of running a large scale tournament. Especially now (the need to focus on) alcohol management. ...alcohol management has become a major issue. ... It's been left to it's own devices. The way the model works is that management will put recommendations up to the board ... what's changed is that previous you had this desirable thing that everyone wanted and it was nice to be associated with.... Now, the tournament, the brand has been sullied. The alcohol...The legislations changed and the City Council is coming down harder on behaviours.</p>

E	They would have a massive amount of influence... only person that is thinking about this thing 100% of the time . There are two other people... dedicated. So the purpose of having a GM, rather than someone who is doing other things and the sevens, is that they can stay totally focused on that. So, certainly, their views (on resourcing) are incredibly important . I think for the main the tournament is adequately resourced . There are bits of it that, not so much lack of resourcing, but lack of co-ordination of that resource... But certainly the rugby event and what we deliver, with the defence force and all the volunteers.... it is very impressive . The resources to run the event are absolutely adequate . It s that remaining 11.5 months of the year and the co-ordination of the resources that is the issue .
F	Limited influence on structure and poor in this regard. This is where the who's who issue is a challenge . Those with greatest resources to access new and leverage existing resources don't. Those with the job to don't have the resources to .
G	To be honest I don't know..... lot of pressure on the team to deliver sponsorship etc. But, very little support, hard to see how their efforts could have been supported the fact that the marketing sits outside in a silo you would not be able to tap into all those numbers and figures. You don't know how much someone else's brand could get out of your kind of commercial positioning and making the most of the communication channels..... not covered off in a nice holistic way. So- yeah just not sure how it would have been pitched.
H	Yes, but undermined by lack of emphasis on the brand .
I	(We need to be) Evidence based. We are an organization that captures lots of data, but uses it poorly . Bringing all elements of the leadership team in to work on a strategy From a ...functional basic perspective, actually making sure that we had processes. Customer evaluation was very ad hoc ...a key element that the 3000 people that we interviewed said is the key reason why they go . So we asked them a further question around what they were really wanting, and they said they wanted a big international act. ...so where we've landed is you know, Day 1, mini concert as part of the sevens... We know from our current customers that this is what they require , therefore the intervention should be around enhancing the entertainment. So, we've got more resources around that . So one of the other objectives is around making the stadium a destination... So it's about going back to the customer surveys and finding what is it that they want . We want really good food choices. So, first of all I had to get a budget, which was significant. So I had to convince the board , and again, not only was it a significant amount of money, but it's also significant in that in comparison to other years we took a bit of a sho-ing. We're spending more on, you know (entertainment), a reduction is revenue.

4	Should the mayor be directly involved in the OC If so, why? If not, why?
A	Doesn't play a big role.
B	The mayor is keen on the event, she attends media events. She announced certain aspects around the tournament. But, she is not involved at the governance level.
C	Yes – absolutely! The event generates in excess of \$10m for wider Wellington economy. However it is arguable as to whether WRFU should deliver the event as it is not benefiting Wellington rugby per se – it is simply a cash cow for them. (WRFU) aren't resourced to deliver properly. It's a complicated structure.
D	Yes – I had involvement with (the mayors) quite a bit.... (WRFU) go to the NZRU and say this is the bid. And typically (that).... will involve and how it will be positioned. Primarily NZRU is a business that wants to make money... The commitment that the city is making is a key thing. The economic impact assessments (McDirmit Millar one in 2008) that brought in \$15.6m dollars into the city. So the position is that if its bring that much into the city, you've got to share some of that with us as well. SO having a mayor onside that is willing to commit some resource from their event funds, ... But you need the mayor, and the CEO and the events people at the city council to say, yep were are going to get behinds this. So we actually had Celia Wade-Brown fronting up for a bid, and Kerry came the planning groups and we had them as part of the bid. The city is behind this and pledge that it will deliver these benefits , including financial gains. PWT was as subsidiary of WCC....PWT have been involved in the marketing, but fundamentally this is driven by the management.... What happens is the we had used PWT for resource and expertiseThe tournament will set the general strategy and PWT will go away and deliver.
E	More just for the parade and reception in civic square really. More of a figure head. I am sure with a representative on the board, she has more than a cursory interest in the event, so the council involvement is critical. It can be helpful in a PR sense, but that's about it
F	No. No more than she should be involved in operationalizing the repairs to sidewalk pavements in Tawa
G	So PWT are funded by the council and the other half comes from the downtown ratepayers. The mayor doesn't play a major role at the tactical delivery level.
H	N/A
I	Yep – big time. SO we get her, she's involved during the event, she's involved in the lead up to it. And, we have her talking about the event, because one of the key strengths that the events has is that Wellington in general, get behind it.... the city is alive.

5	Name 3 words that come to mind when you think of the image of your event (regarding organizers, the event itself, its audience).
A	Music, party, fun
B	One is successful . Another is celebration . And a third would be party .
C	That's tough, because I think of it as two events. So, for the first event, you know for the first 10 years of it, it was about the costumes and being a truly Wellington event . As it stands right now, I would say " party, alcohol, and rugby ". The irony is that what made it so successful and helped to build the worldwide brand for Sevens, has now causing the IRB to look at the event and say "you've taken it too far!"
D	Fun , to me it really encapsulates Wellington's spirit – its what Wellington is all about. And hard work . What happens in this tournament – a lot of people think that it just happened. ... they don't realize how much work goes into it. Typically on tournament week we'd be going to bed in tournament week between 2.30 and 4 am, getting up again at 7am....there are always things that comes up. Lack of resources, things are different, new people.
E	Party , which is an issue, Wellington , it is patently that. Successful .
F	Exciting, Colourful, Challenging
G	Its hard because I'm so used to looking at it from others perspectives. Top of mind is 'tired', 'hasn't reached fill potential yet', and 'international'.... it was the most exciting event that I had ever been involved in, on the ground....I had never felt a part of something that touched the world on that scale. ...probably what makes me so sad about how tired the local tournament is on the ground now. You know, like its amazing how it all comes together....
H	Party, alcohol, fancy dress.
I	Olympic rugby, fun, a fun experience, and just great entertainment.

6	When would you say the official brand got unveiled? (e.g., logo presented) and did the event build on a pre-existing brand?
A	The original concept that forms the basis of sevens in Wellington was arrived at in 1999... The event entertainment was based around the idea of getting the people to entertain themselves , a concept I brought to the table. (we)...lead the field worldwide in the presentation style ... over the two days of 7s rugby....
B	This is the second of third year of the 7's logo in its current form. ... the 'rugby meets awesome' strapline , that's been developed this year by YNR who are the agency doing the work .Look, I think if we think about brand in terms of a fan or public perception and personality... its was almost organic if you like in terms of how the direction came to be. Moving into that celebration around rugby.... entertainment around rugby....how the fans organize themselves into groups and teams of friends who then dressed up to express themselves. So you can't plan that. It actually wasn't... it started off with this idea, of look, that we'll run a bit of a costume competition, and bang. So it wasn't like, this is what we want to build over the next 15 years..... So I think the fans developed it themselves by the way the way they engaged and expressed themselves and then in more recent years, you know the role of the board... has been to understand that, reflect on that, and build on it.
C	I don't think there's any doubt that the party took over from the sport after about 5 or 6 years and it slowly tipped further to the party , to the point where now, the sport is almost completely irrelevant . Which, depending on your perspective is a good or bad thing.
D	(initially) we had Jonah Lomu and Christian Cullen on the poster saying "7's rugby – come and enjoy it" . And we had some experience third hand having looked at the HK sevens and so we knew there was this model. But we were launching this new product – and word got out. It was fun, something new. But what we realized was that there was a lot more to this tournament around the party than what was happening on the field. ...What we realized is that the fan is as much a hero as the game... we wanted to do was empower the fan and make it a good time.... we started to identify that the fan base of the audience evolved ,...when we started this thing, we had this really nice mix of family and young, old, a really nice sense of camaraderie.... everyone had this shared experience of being rugby fans, loving the rugby, 16 international teams,...a new style of rugby and its fast and entertaining and lots of tries,...there is music playing...and everyone parties together , but what's evolved is that its become a lot more "flesh exhibition" for young people... it's a real chance to show themselves off...walking around and socializing on the concourse and
E	I was there when the current logo cam in. Previously we had a logo that was hard to use for sponsors. So I think the current colour scheme etc came in Jan 2012, so around 2 and a bit years. The rugby meets awesome just came in this year. It's been its own brand. The best way I've heard it being described.When we actually consciously tried putting posters up of people dressing up, that's when it took off. So you're right. The fans helped us create the brand.
F	I'm not sure that it did! It evolved, led by the audience over 15 years.

G	<p>The one page 'strategy on a page'. In it's defence – it's the first time I've seen a strategy. ... I mean I had to work off something - ... I didn't have any input into the '1-pager' – it was 'provided'. Just seeing the brand over the last 3 years – I've seen the focus internally go from lets create a fantastic time, to 'we need a naming rights sponsor'. And it all became – the focus changed heavily over the last 3 years and I became more about having the cash to fund the tournament... the consumers were the ones that bore the brunt of price increases...they put their feet down and said 'no I am not OK with this.' The brand has evolved, but not because the brand is evolving. It has evolved because of everything else around it and everything else that has influenced it.</p>
H	<p>The thing about the event is that it has been changing over the years....beer sales have declined over 50% over that time.... we actually increased evictions and gate turn-aways, however police and media used these numbers negatively, but we see these as positives.... a lot of those indicators have been trending down for some time. But because the legislation changed last year and the supply of alcohol act, police decided to police the 7's differently this year. ...And I think many Police and certainly senior Police feel that some of the messaging was unfortunate. Because the Dom Post went for it hook, line and sinker....there was precious little investigative reporting.... the villain was the stadium in this event. While we liken the sevens to a big tanker, that we are trying to steer gradually, the Police took a sledge-hammer to it in one year. I think where sevens is going to end up, is that I think in the next 2 years is you'll see a very different sevens to previously.</p>
I	<p>You would say it was built on rugby. But I mean 15 years ago, you would not have imagined that this is where we would be today, either with the All Blacks Sevens as a team, and the professionalism, and that it's about to enter the Olympic Games. The IRB series did kick it off. Before that it was the Hong Kong Sevens, way back in the 80's. Although 7's goes back to 1905, I mean there are historic NZ 7's team from way back then.</p>

7	What, in your mind, differentiates your event from other IRB Sevens events and other competitors?
A	The music
B	Well we are one of only three or maybe four on the entire circuit events that actually sell out . So we actually have massive physical fan support for the event. That's pretty significant.... like excellent operational delivery...we are regarded in a rugby sense by the IRB as excellent in that regard. The other thing is that we do have. Unique is an over-used word, rather, ' distinctive ' personality around our event. The fact that you know, the costume.... expressions of creativity through costume aspect , has become synonymous with the event, for many years, marks us out as quite different. Its not common on the sevens circuit at all.
C	Costumes! Plus its an exciting game and a relatively new sport.
D	...comparing Wellington to other IRB events, typically the yieldSo Wellington rugby has been second or third highest yielding tournament, yet only has a 35,000 seat stadium,...So its commercially been good. Wellington has always been a bit of fun. One of the issues.... is that it is dictated to quite strongly by stadium management ... run by financially focused people, where the bottom line (is important).... there is a sense in rugby that they are being burnt along the way and there isn't a true partnership there. And I'm not sure how that works for other stadia and other tournaments....There has been open tension in the paper and media
E	The party . Effectively, its really interesting when you (look at) the other 8 events...Hong Kong who's a hybrid – they can segment their stadium – they have a massive party at one end – the South Stand. They also have the corporate area and family area. ...Dubai is a bit different. It's a massive rugby event, with sevens at the core. And then London is the other more successful event in recent times. And that is one day. Saturday is huge – 70,000 people. Sunday is on finals day is smaller 10 – 15,000 people. We are the fourth event that have traditionally been strong. For all the others – they are trying to become what we got to about 5 years ago the party aspect . So you sit in a room and you are listening to all the aspects they are trying to push, whereas we've hit that crescendo and coming down the other side . So, yeah, that the big difference – they can keep doing what they are doing because no-ones stopping them .
F	The city differentiates this event from other IRB Sevens events as the whole city gets in behind the event . However, the event has become an adult event on which the sport has taken less of the centre stage .
G	... competition for the Sevens I think of one-off events like the cricket world cup. I think of Homegrown because of the music and the entertainment , and its just after the sevens and on the waterfront. It's quite similar. NRL 9's – it s not a no1 leader – its more of a copycat event. When I think about what makes this event different - it has a real kiwi can do attitude around itSo, there's this kind of fun crowd mentality – it's a kind of 'fun, rowdy' if that makes sense. So yeah, kiwi can do attitude, which is engaged and encouraged . Also – just geographically. The fact people can walk there and back from hotels, mates houses, whatever. There is this nice triangle – stadium, waterfront, accommodation... its good because everything is so close , and I don't think you could achieve that at a place like Eden Park.

H	<p>Those factors do differentiate it. It has been the most attended party over the last 15 years in NZ and there isn't another event like it. The comparison has been drawn to the 9's at the moment...because both are happening at the same time frames...but it is a very different event.... Its got established fans and in Auckland and in Auckland you have a strong league fan base. You've got genuine bona-fide stars playing, so you have star power. Sevens has never had star power. That said, in 2016 we may have the likes of Sonny Bill Williams, Israel Filau, Quade Cooper. Running out for their teams which would be a very different product for us.</p>
I	<p>It is the fact the city gets behind it. The second thing is we don't take ourselves too seriously in terms of you know, 18 hours of rugby is a lot to watch. So were cognisant that we have to be innovative around the product we are providing. Even though I've said different things up here, we are really fan led. You know, if the fans want bloody hand held tablets at their seat, and that would help sell tickets, that is what we would do. They like... costume creativity, and creativity overall. And the fact that it is not an individual experience... so unlike a test match or other sporting event, we have groups. On average, people buy 3.9 tickets.</p>

8	Did the organizing committee have a vision? Mission? Values? How did this influence your role in the event? what was the importance of the leader(s) in creating these images of the organizing committee?
A	The OC did have an entertainment vision as outlined earlier. By staying true to this the event has become what it is.
B	They do at the moment. But whether they had that at the start I don't know. The stadium wasn't built when it was awarded to Wellington rugby. So, (the original organisers) sat there looking at each other going "Shit, we've got a tournament to get on the road, what do we do?" And then they got on and did it. So it's had various iterations of vision over the 15 years and the current strategy is the '1-pager' developed by Marty. Look, its pretty young, that last document. So the vision needs to be tweaked in terms of the headline statement...
C	Unsure
D	There [was] a framework, we had about a 15 point objective list. You know, running a world class tournament, maximizing return, ensuring wellington remains the event capital of NZ, ensuring there are no issues with fan safety. There [was] an objective list that we delivered to commercial. All that stuff was a standard framework. ... about three years ago, (we looked at) a concept of "sessionalisation"...The GM fronts up in around June with the vision and here's how we want to position it and the ticketing at a top level and the board will have input into that. For many years it was clear that it was selling out and it didn't need much work...Whereas before it was ticking boxes, it kind of was just tweaking. We didn't need to change much. But now, it needs a...concerted effort to deliver a successful product. And that needs to come at governance and board level. We've actually gone to the board twice. We suggested it [sessionalisation] once, about (2-3 years ago)... We had an ideas, a planning group and pulled in some outside people, you know with fresh thinking, our own people, the management team, the board, and said, you know "what are some of our goals?" "We want this to be enduring, we want to have 100% sell out, all of these things" Lofty goals. Which were realistic.
E	No – we've probably never consciously talked about that. Certainly the vision – ... more difficult over recent years to articulate what this event is and what we want it to be, because we are in a state of evolution. Yeah – whereas 5 years ago it was probably quite simple. What is this event and where do we want to take it? There have been discussions for a number of years on shifting emphasis. There is the rugby and there is the party. And – I think we got to a point where the party became all consuming. Which perversely enough all of the other tournaments are trying to replicate. And now, we are an Olympic sport and there are some societal shifts in attitudes around alcohol. I just think we need to swing it back, but if you go too quickly back you'll lose people and that is really the challenge for us.
F	Yes. The aim is to be the best annual international sporting event in NZ. Leaders are somewhat detached from operational delivery and there is complication by the WRFU being both governance and deliverer
G	Um, there is no formal document that says...This is our vision, this is the mission statement. This is what we are doing. I haven't seen one of those in a couple of years. I have seen one, but it wasn't the crux of what everyone was doing. My gut feeling... is that the logistics of it became the crux...It was more around the physical 'doing' of the event. That was where the focus lay – it wasn't 'what are we aspiring to?'.... first time I had seen a one page strategy. ...It highlighted again that marketing wasn't one of the core I guess outputs that they were looking for. This is hard because you can never tell, I mean when that strategy was written, the language itself just want angled towards

	marketing outputs. ... I'm not sure if there was much other input.... it was just hard to pin point how it came back to marketing. And that may well have just been a language thing.
H	No. I'm not aware of a vision. I cant tell you, if you asked NZ Rugby or Wellington rugby what are the brand attributes, they wouldn't be able to tell you that. So, we've had this huge cash cow over the years and everyone's ridden this wave but there been precious little attention to the actual brand and the event itself and setting a long term vision for what we want and whether that can be achieved.
I	Yes –... 1 page strategy map. We have a vision and mission. The values.... so last year we went down to just a couple: leadership and customer focus. This year we might have a value about being here next year, oh no that's a vision [joking]. The values of the organization need to be focused on delivering the experience, and I know it's a trite term, but we have to be operationally excellent. We are always rated highly by the teams. Because when they come here, they can see we are like a first world amongst rugby players.... So, (1) operational excellent. (2) Experience focused. And the other aspect / value we have is (3) Operating as a team. So, you know, we rely very heavily on our volunteers, so with that team approach...But it's about enabling them, so we're maximizing their skills. And using them for that appropriately, not wasting their time. Or giving them an experience that they like. First of all, there is a lot of management by walking around. You can't just be focused on the commercial aspects of this. the team thing is making sure that the team management are confident in what you are delivering and satisfied with the level of service. it's about making sure really that everything that we have planned maximizes the experience for them. We have an orientation evening, so from the time they walk in, to the time they leave, it needs to be 'bang, bang', that they are getting everything in terms of the logistics, they are getting the information they need, and actually they are having some fun. Without planning that, we're just wasting their time.

9	What are some challenges for an OC when creating a brand? What would you recommend to solve these?
A	N/A
B	<p>... there are some challenges around the way the brand sits at the moment... the alcohol management issue and it's reputational impact,...(the) impact on brand perception and brand value... that really swung pretty quickly. That's a challenge from a brand point of view.... the reality is the reputation got beat up last year. There are all sorts of reasons ... but fundamentally – a change in the legislative environment, a change in the police attitude around it, and ... a shift in the media treatment around the issue. The challenges around brand are (making sure it) doesn't scream to the fans, the party is over. I think that's a big challenge. And one that last year wasn't executed perfectly at all. I heard of a couple of people up in Auckland that... thought the party was over. That's what they read it as.we do have a responsibility around being good hosts for the event. But that's probably the single biggest challenge to the event. Look, it's a work in progress. One of the key things was to.... is to work with the Police under what is a legislative environment that's changed. We're talking about an environment where something fundamental to that environment has changed.... if that's our response and our strategy around that, then what's the messaging around that likely to be? And then how are we going to go about making sure that that gets out. And balancing that... understanding that we have got to everything we can do to assure that key relationship with Police leadership is prioritized.</p>
C	<p>Biggest challenge for the event... they created 'that' (the party) as the main event, at some point they turned off the purists to some degree. They turned off the people who actually like sevens, who go, "you don't want to go and I definitely don't want to take my kids there". And then, and now that they've sold it as a party, they're now trying to pull back on the party. So now the partiers are now going, well I don't want go either, because they're going to kill my vibe, you know? So they've really created a rod for their own back. I'm not sure what the answer to it is. ...(if you) make it about the sport, they have the issue of not having well known players. They don't have any 'star-power'....once it becomes established as a 7's sport they will create specialist 7's stars?....</p>
D	<p>I'd say the first one is selling tickets. With the lack of brand strength, I don't think the tournament (is as)... desirable as it once was. Because of perception that it is not in demand, (ticket glitch in 2013) So that created a perception that it's not in demand anymore. So the biggest issue now, is making it desirable, combine with overcoming the perception that the media have created that it's just a big piss up. Lots of people have been to that tournament lots of times....they've moved on and the tournament needs to re-invent itself. Easier said than done. Combined with the fact that we've had it in Wellington for 15 years, so a lot of people going to that tournament have been 3 or 4 or 5 times before. So the demand to see those early games is not as great...I'm happy just to turn up and watch the last one.... but fundamentally, if you could make something better, it would be a more cohesive relationship and a joint strategy (between tournament and stadium), rather than individual shareholders in the stadium. There is a very strong focus on delivering cost, rather than delivering a long-term event experience which will benefit.</p>

E	<p>We've almost been too successful around that party aspect....We ended up being a poster child (the would be my language) for alcohol, and we experienced that last year. I'm not saying we are a victim here, because we had been taking steps for quite some time. But I guess the rate of change that was, I mean how quickly you can shift a super-tanker like that is, well lets say we [Police] had differing views on that. Whereas we were looking to do it over a number of years to shift the perception of the tournament, whereas we ended up where there was a challenge laid down to do it around the 14 event in totality. That lead to some conflict there.</p>
F	<p>There is conflict between the 'party' and the sport. A decision has to be made about the future of the event and what it is as the two audiences are no longer happily living together.</p>
G	<p>The biggest challenge would be being able to strip it right back. Its hard to let go of the way that things were done. ... I think its just, being able to solve it,, would take being able to step back, take a fresh look and strip it right back. What are we trying to achive and taking it back to that overarching vision. Those steps, they need to be strong, and there needs to be a really... but a strong team collaborative approach... A green fields approach. The target market...can be cut in lots of different ways because it is such a diverse event. You have people that come to Wellington, just because it is on. Also the rights of passage people – now in twentys and thirty's. People who have always heard about what a great time it is, but have never made it along. People a bit older with kids. In terms of our marketing strategy – yes we are targeting all of those groups. But in terms of the tournament strategy – I couldn't say.</p>
H	<p>I think the association with alcohol is the biggest issues and that hardest one....(the new off license rules rely on) stronger process on monitoring intoxication and then the assessment of them while they are in the stadium. The single biggest issue with that is pre-loading....One of the challenges with the Sevens over the years, and the IRB will never admit to this, is that the (7's players) are guys that can't get a Super Rugby contract. I think it will change. ... around the world, millions of dollars being ploughed into sevens from non-traditional rugby countries like China and South Korea, putting very large investment into this area. So I think that now it is an Olympic sport that the sport of Sevens is becoming far more high profile than it was in the past. Its going to be interesting for rugby as there is a risk that Sevens itself could become a competitor to the 15-a-side game. Whereas they would see them as complementing each other, but then there are opportunities around Sevens in terms of dealing with some of the concerns that parents have about rugby as a participation sport ...And, you know you see a lot of sports shrinking their main events...Sports that are being challenged globally right now are those that are particularly lengthy. ...but there is the view the games should be getting shorter as thats what people want. People are increasingly time poor... So I think Sevens, when I talked about it sitting in this 'festival' market, I'm seeing this in Australia, you know the 'Big Day Outs' of this world, There are a number of them that fell over this year, because you know, 2 days of time, its increasingly hard for people to commit and then sell tickets. ...society is changing and we need to move with the times and the policing of the act and the legislation has all changed....</p>

I	The biggest challenges are around brand perception . So particularly around alcohol. A perception that after 15 years its old hat and do we really want it. You know, there are new things to go off to do . A perception that it is very costly . A challenge around the experience itself . We have a lot of churn in the organization [within the rugby football union], because I rely on their support.
10	Do you consider the OC for an IRB Sevens event as an enduring (permanent/stable) or temporary organization, and why?
A	The OC has changed so much over the years it can't be seen as enduring, however there are certain things that have to occur as is the nature of a tournament format event. As long as there is sufficient on going training of key people the event can go ahead
B	Well the entity has existed for 15 years, so in that sense it is a permanent (although the members may change). So you would have to say stable.
C	It is temporary. It's a constantly evolving team with contractors and different stakeholders having input.
D	Temporary in a way due to high turnover. so I think there had a harsh staff polic...because they have been through a lot of staff at Wellington rugby. And as a result, we've lost a lot of human capital in terms of knowledge and relationships with commercial partners and other partners, and ways of doing things. So all these people, and if you're bringing in all these new people and having to educate them, and do your job, its just a lot more demanding.
E	You'd have to consider it enduring in that it has been around 15 years and this structure for around 10 years. Yeah so its enduring up until this point. I think now that it is an Olympic sport, rather than just being an after thought. Once again, each year we had a party and went back to the 15's. Its here to stay and its really challenging us, not just for this event, but for rugby. But what is sevens? and who plays it? and when?, and how that all fits together. So that's a challenge.
F	Not sure. One wonders whether its life-cycle is waning. Or it needs significant reinvention.
G	Temporary – there have been so many changes in personalities and no guiding vision...you have a lot of changing people and that's always going to be the case, but even though that governance should not have impacted on the brand strategy, you can just see over time, how it has. Different personalities. And that's not a bad thing.
H	I firmly believe it should sit with NZ rugby. It's a massive revenue driver for them. So the sevens and being the size that it is, needs dedicated 365 day a year resource and it needs dedicated marketing resource, which it has never had.
I	This is the first year they've had a strategy. The rights after 2016 might be given to someone else, so it's a strategy that's now appropriate for the length of time we have the event. But in Oct this year, if Wellington get it for the next 4 or 5 years....(the NZRU pitch to the IRB for the event rights, although we did the work) then we need to re-do that strategy. Probably appropriate for where we are at the moment.

11	In which aspects would you say that branding an IRB Sevens event would differ from the branding of one-off event, such as a concert?
A	N/A
B we know that everything we do influences the perceptions that people have at any given time. That each (year) ... you're not starting from scratch . So you know, the reality is that you invest, the decisions that you make , have to be seen as not only valid for the immediate event that you have in front of you, but have to be seen in the context of actually, going over 10-15 years . That's probably the key difference. ...We know it's an asset and it's an event that is recurring. And people understand it as opposed to starting from scratch each time.
C	The focus of party and alcohol .
D	What's happened with the demand for the product on the field is lost its pull in that the tournament haven't evolved to address that.... fact. All products have a life cycle and at least half the people going are Wellingtonians and they've seen it 5 or 6 times before so its less of a reason to go there early each day.
E	Our competition is concerts . We are a sports event but seeking the entertainment dollar . In a way it has just been (pitched as) a one off event every year . Yes we repeat it, but its not like other events where you are asking people to come to 8 Hurricanes games – you know there are 6 AB's test matches in NZ in any given year. It is a pretty unique one off event in Wellington every year , but you come back again and do it again the following year. I think we marketed along the likes of – you can't miss out , and then sold all the tickets accordingly. Five years ago, there wasn't anything else where you would put tickets on sale and they would sell out in a day... but you now have to amend peoples behavior because they were so used to having to get in before it sold out. And that's changed. And how that works around the sevens is a real challenge.
F	It needs to evolve and be built upon with time rather than be one big call to action. You have the ability to apply learnings from past experience , but also important that the event does not rest on it's laurels and is able to adapt to changing behaviours in society .
G	Our accessibility now to... hot shot names , and rugby world cup factors...that have changed the public perception of what an exclusive event is . The perception ...of how much to spend on those types of events.... The amount of star pull, versus an annual event . If its only going to happen every 10 years, what do you do. Do you see Elton John, or the sevens? Thinking about the NZ wide plethora of events... a lot of offers around New Years , ... Now the summer circuit is well entrenched in NZ's summer, so you find all these people are going to all these music festivals just before the Sevens, so it's a big ask . So people are likely to think, "I've just seen all my favourite bands – I'm not going to spend money in early Feb, because I've just blown it all on my summer".
H	The brand has evolved , it's created its own steam over the years, but there's been very little control over what the event is , and how we've allowed it to evolve as a brand.... Wellington and NZ rugby took the opportunity and took this party thing , and they decided to feed that machine , and the marketing of the Sevens very much sort of just, did the marketing of the Sevens... very much on the party, and it was promoting party at the expense of what was happening on the field.

I	I think the fact that its now an Olympic sport there is a bit of cohesion around that sport and branding . We can leverage the existing fan base.... we have 15 years worth of heritage. This year our unstated, but 'actual' strategy is getting some of our older fans to fall back in love with us.... Instead of always trying to get new customers, we want repeat.
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12	What were the influences of your marketing policies on the OC's ability to generate marketing revenues?
A	N/A
Bin addition to making sure that our marketing supports what we want the brand to represent , so sit that over the top, at the next level down, the marketing has two very important jobs. The primary job is to sell the event out or maximize the number of tickets sold at an appropriate return. The second is to drive appeal from a sponsorship point of view . And if there was a third... reflect to our fans and our potential fans what it is that they want to see .
C	It's definitely about the party, and the chance to meet other guys and girls . I'd say that its probably aimed more the 18 – 25 target market these days. But personally I think its hit its peak. Like I said I think the rugby purists are turned off – even the safe zone isn't attracting numbers and didn't sell out last year. I'm not sure dropping ticket prices will make a difference
D this year "Where rugby meets awesome"...So the focus is on the rugby and the fact it's a heightened rugby experience. Generally ...I would agree with that. The question should be, 'how do you create newness' . It needs some new life breathed into it . And is that going to be enough? But partly, it is still really aiming at the 18-25 market and it's still really about the party.
E	If you think about what we did for years, we made it about the spectators, we positioned it incredibly well for them . But potentially that's turned off other groups of spectators....18-35 and wanting to dress up, have a lot of fun, and dance and be the centre of attention, ie other people were looking at you, rather than sitting in your seat and watching the rugby, it was perfect. But if you were the family wanting to come along and watch the games then we didn't really provide that.... we are reaching out to those other groups . We were so successful in creating the party that we almost turned off the other groups.There is some shift back now. The stadium itself causes some issues around that. The continuous concourse and bowl is a real strength,....you cant easily create family zones you know non-alcoholic zones etc, so you can't segment that stadium easily.....
F	It's been challenging as some stakeholders have remained fixed on the party whilst sponsorship has shied away from this and declined
G	... the marketing is split – product is looked after by Wellington Rugby...PWT "given" a product to promote the biggest influence – the fact you are given the product ...we were told to do a ticketing and marketing strategy....(that's hard because) the ticketing is the product – what we are trying to sell... ticketing (should) be more aligned with the product . And the comms and marketing would then be about harnessing around that product and communicating that message ... I couldn't confidently say if there is a PR strategy that sits with the comms plan we look broadly at the lay of the land 3 years out, the learnings for the previous year, and combine that with market research. There is an informal survey at the end of the tournament to get feedback.

H	<p>...sevens is the ultimate crowd-sourced event, and created it's own steam over the years and its not been created by the organizers, in fact the fans have actually created this event. In fact it started as a purely rugby event...there was a tipping point where it just took off....collectively we have just created a beast. And, every sevens around the world wants to be Wellington and Wellington is now at the point where it needs to evolve into being something else. Yeah – I think there are some skill gaps....this is a consumer marketing role and challenge. I think that's the main purpose of that role. There is certainly and operational component to it. (Stadium ops staff) have... been here from the very beginning But this is a consumer market exercise. I think across Rugby Inc. that's the key area they are lacking across all their properties... look at the AFL, most clubs have a GM fan engagement sitting on the senior management. (they) have split consumer marketing from commercial and corporate marketing and they give so much focus to the fan experience to the fan experience and fan development and their membership programme.... Without a vibrant and strong fan base, you have no sponsorship and no hospitality, you have no TV, you have no potential players.</p>
I	<p>It had to involve rugby. You couldn't just have the piss up. But conversely, it had to be slightly quirky and build on all of the strengths of our brand. Which are 'the dress up', the fun experience, Wellington itself. And that's how we've positioned our self this year. When you see the brand stuff come out, it'll be "even though its rugby with paintball". There's one, you'll see it has the rugby element, and then you'll see these other bits.</p>

13	What are the key differences between “sponsorship” and “corporate support” and what does the Sevens focus on?
A	N/A
B	There always has been a strategy to attract corporate sales . It’s important. There are a family of sponsors - big and small sponsors, and also supplier-ship relationships that we have. So if you look at that group of companies that number between 60 and 80 , they are a key part of the corporate group that supports the event by purchasing tickets or an exchange of value that leads to them receiving tickets. There is also corporate hospitality partner, TNG , and activity in that space..., they are marketing that offering and that really is important to us.
C	N/A
D	Around commercial partners. It is an albatross around your neck at the moment . It is so tarnished at the moment about being a piss-up. What sponsor I think they would really struggle to get a commercial relationship that’s gonna want to align with what the tournament stands for at the moment . So, strategically it needs to reinvent itself to say. You know its not going to be Coke, because if they say, yep we have this session, and its fun, and its exciting and family friendly and your being part of that. Which they cant do at the moment.
E	Yeah – I don’t think we’ve done that vey well . Certainly the box holders at the stadium they use their boxes...(but haven’t) created that environment to ‘host’ corporates . I’ve seen it done really well in Dubai and Hong Kong, and so, we’re almost lazy, because we’ve never had to. We’ve always just gone out to joe publicCertainly for current sponsors, yes - we host them and that’s all part of the package for them...But as a tournament we’ve never really targeted it.
F	A sponsor gets real above the line opportunity to leverage the event . A suppliership gets business/tickets in exchange for providing a service at a reduced or complimentary cost. We havent really done corporate sales well .
G	PWT - our key output is consumers – any output that we have is ion the consumer sphere. Wellington rugby has always looked after that corporate space, so cant really comment.
H	N/A
I	Our suppliers are a bit more transactional – eg coke provide pump. Whereas an associate sponsor also try to provide an experience. It’s far more influential around the experience we are delivering. It needs to be aligned.

14	<p>How was the event positioned and presented to potential sponsors?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What role did leadership play in formulating sponsorship decisions? - What role(s) did pre-established relationships between the OCs members and the members within the corporate community play in gaining sponsor/corporate support? - How does leadership influence the event's promotion to stakeholders and their desire to associate themselves with the event?
A	N/A
B	<p>The value proposition is pretty standard...There are a number of ways in which a company might see value around the event...(we need) to understand that one size doesn't fit all and for some its important for a brand building and awareness perspective – that's a common reason for being involved. In those cases, signage on grass, presence in the marketing activity is important for them. For others, the opportunity to reward clients or host people that are important to their business is an important aspect and why they would want o be involved... just being associated with an event that represents some of the characteristics that they want to be associated with as a brand. I know that sounds reasonably generic, but the reality is, that when you strip it all away, it's a decision people are making. Just like any other marketing investment.... You need to demonstrate the value you are adding. In terms of the servicing of existing relationship, that's largely with the GM and the sponsorship people within the team to service those relationships. There an understanding that at certain levels and at particular times.. the board is engaged in that space. ...Good sponsorship activity – its not rocket science. These are commercial relationships. People... need to be looked after appropriately. ...relationships, ... you've gotta use, ...all of the relationship available to you in order to maximize the chances of getting a good outcome... And you have to do the ground work.... which is doing research and looking for possible matches. Exactly what the value proposition might be, then you work out an approach to engage. In terms of leadership ability to influence - ..., so that's not a hat that's just thrown to the GM, the reality is that's a collective responsibility if you are involved in the tournament at the top end. It's very important.</p>
C	I'm not sure really, but I know they struggled to get sponsors last year.
D	<p>I think the general positioning that it is fun is integral. I think if you went out and said rugby – these are world class athletes, I think that is less compelling if you aren't a rugby fan – its 10 hours long. I'm not a rugby fan. And part of the positioning of this product was trying to attract new people to rugby, who weren't hard core rugby fans. It s a way to introduce a lot of people on the edge, or not really even on the edge, to start watching rugby. And get them to say "oh, this is quite easy to understand – there are no scrums, and what's that decision all about" It was seen as a way to do that. Fundamentally if it's not fun, to sit there for 10-11 hours is a big ask. So you need to have those other aspects.... parades (etc) to deliver on that promise.</p>

E	<p>Again, for sponsors, a lot of them brought in to the party, and rode that wave. But when it started to get a little more serious around alcohol, then all the conversations around alcohol legislation changes, which have tarnished the brand a little bit. Yeah. Plus it's a 2-day annual event...hard for a sponsor to activate around that. Key messages are that we would talk about the Olympics, being part of the 7's series; I think the Olympic thing is new. You can talk about it but people don't really understand it yet, because it hasn't happened. Its making it more prestigious and linking the series a little bit more. ...so certainly we can talk about this great thing that we are a part of, sevens series, but I still don't think people... but they don't really link the tournaments. So talking about the Olympics, being a part of bigger, brighter and better is really where we need to take the brand and take that proposition through to sponsors. The GM is the critical person in that. He is in the front of the tournament. ...Board have relationships that we can leverage. In the end, because the sevens is owned by NZRU and run by Wellington Rugby, (as well as PWT and the city), not many people understand that, all they see is sevens Wellington. The GM is the only person that can speak on behalf of Wellington Sevens...</p>
F	<p>Sponsorship has shied away from the party and declined. Leadership had little influence in formulating sponsorship decisions. Pre-established relationships significant – Rugby in NZ has a family of sponsors it regularly turns to...For many years the event sold itself to ticket buyers and sponsors now, it feels as though the event owner should have taken a more direct hands on approach.</p>
G	<p>I think you can see the lifecycle of the event. It is a very clear lifecycle... What happened to all those commercial partners? Why did they leave? What made them leave? Why was this not a brand that was keeping and retaining those relationships? ... there are not enough partners on board to do all of that now....not enough money in the promotion budget to pull off that same experience that you could get with the commercial partners they had previously.... I just think in sponsorship in general are changing, commercial partnerships these days are more in line with sustainable, ethical, feel good, community efforts – its not the sports sector that is winning sponsorship dollar, unless it is about wellbeing. Touching on wellbeing, and the sevens was becoming well known for its partying, and for a lot of brands, that puts off more customers than it attracts.</p>
H	<p>I'm not aware of how they position themselves. I see them targeting sponsors you know, in the pizza space, fast food space, the alcohol space. ... at the moment its hard to get a financial company or an insurer on board. I see that changing from 2016 onward in that the IRB are looking to centralize all the commercial rights. So you're likely to see major global partners coming on board and taking up sponsorship rights for the entire 7's circuit, which would be good for the 7's. ...that current lack of sponsorship for the sevens stems directly from the brand problem.... However, if it is to evolve back into rugby and with an Olympic theme, because it is an Olympic sport, and yes, we may not be able to charge as much, we might be able to replace some of that revenue by bringing more sponsors on board. Companies that see that value of being involved in an Olympic property. That is attracting families and children to the event.</p>

I	<p>And that's how we've pitched it to potential sponsors (Where rugby meets awesome). Some of them who are obviously not Wellington focused or in love with Wellington, it's the wider exposure. We are broadcast in 123 countries. 227+ households. A significant broadcast in US, Asia, Africa... It's a global market. In terms of leadership influence - ... but it's about getting them to see the vision. Part of the vision setting was involving them as well, the co-creation process. You know, what vision did they have for the tournament. We sat down with the current sponsors and had a co-creative session. They had some good ideas. They had some bonkers ideas as well. So that included Coke , Ford, Qantas, TRN, Lion.</p>
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15	What are your thoughts around the importance of internet marketing communication in terms of: (1) providing relevant information, (2) Providing images and multimedia to promote and attract individuals to the event (sponsors & spectators); (3) website and social media presence?
A	Imperative.
B	I think it's important for most, if not all brands to understand the environment and have a plan. And its certainly, a significant part of the marketing spend last year and I think that if we look at last year, it was a watershed year in a number of ways. Prior ...its been emphasized as more of a comms channel, as opposed to ... driving revenue... building engagement with current and prospective fans and then also driving messaging , and looking to influence behavior , particularly around engagement and purchasing tickets and all that and becoming involved with the tournament in some way. Building the engagement includes providing information about the event and logistics etc . Its about communicating with corporates in the pre-sale space at the moment, ...linking all that stuff up is really important for an event such as this. So when we go to 'on sale', we'll obviously be building up and using some of those channel as well.
C	...using various forms of social media, twitter, facebook etc to generate interest, but it's (marketing) not something they've really had to focus on before . They have had a lot of free press over the years, although only recently has there been negative press, focused around some of the alcohol issues. They have attempted to increase their web presence ... to reconnect with old fans and previous attendees . Not sure if it will work. Might be too little, too late.
D	Just as digital and social media has evolved, we up-scaled our use of that, compared to when we started in 2000 when we just did media and radio advertising. But now, some of our media partners... also use social networks and digital media. So there was a natural evolution towards using digital media . Its cost effective, and targeting the people we wanted. And PWT were using it a lot more for other events. So it was just a lot better evolution to use .
E	Those aspects are so important , particulaty in recent years. Our reliance on facebook inparticular but generally social media. That's massive now and you'd get left behind if you didn't embrace it.
F	The most commonly viewed channel these days is digital – it's essential .

G	<p>...Over the past 3 years PWT have become ...more involved as more things have happened in the public sphere.. We've seen a massive decline in the past 3 years in the positive public perception of the sevens... but with the increase in use of social media and engagement levels in the NZ market, has really amplified how disgruntled they are about their different experience... Hugely important to the right target market. Its just one part of the marketing mix we need. It depends on who you are talking about (and targeting)....Not only that, but how the media perceive that the public is perceiving the sevens. So, there is a flow over effect, so it cuts over into reputation land. YNR are the creative agency for the sevens only. ... They effectively did a brand refresh, to align the rugby and the party...this year the campaign, all through different channels, people were tagging their friends and saying "keen,?" so anecdotally, the evidence, but yep – public perception it looks ok....the campaign wasn't given the support it needed to really do a good cut-through job..... content on social media sites. PWT pen it. Which is interesting, because... Wellington rugby (used to) provide the rugby content. But that hasn't been happening over the last couple of year even though I've been pushing it. Authenticity is key. You can always pick out a phony. ... But just making sure that we have the same amount around marketing messages and editorial content – you know "this is happening in the rugby sevens world."</p>
H	<p>...doing a reasonable job in terms of utilizing that social media space at the moment. But I think it's too focused around those periods when we want something from our customers. It needs to be 12 months of content. I think we can be doing more...and building up Sevens. I don't think we've done a very good job in telling stories and making heros and personalities out of players that are on the Sevens circuit. I think if you scratched beneath the surface you'd be able to get some really interesting human interest angles on some of these players and tell their stories. And connect with them. Beyond DJ Forbes I would say most Sevens fans would struggle to name another Sevens player. SO we've got these anonymous people playing for their countries, that is really fertile territory if you scratch beneath the surface and find out a little about them and tell their stories.</p>
I	<p>(We used to do) nothing... until the ticketing fell over last year, and we actually had to invest some money, we did very very little marketing. (we) basically relied upon sufficient demand....(However) indications were that demand was waning and that we really should be doing something else. This year... the marketing has been focused on the experience that you're going to get. The entire experience. The value for money around the ticket, and the concept of the stadium as a destination. So, trying to disrupt that (drinking and turning up late) planning process (we had to say to YNR) that "because this is a fan-led experience, we cant forget that rugby is part of this, but the key images we need to show are of people enjoying themselves." Not as if they are getting pissed, but they are obviously enjoying themselves and the experience. So the hero image that we have is a group of people in all sorts of different costumes, obviously enjoying themselves, looking off to the distance at something that's happened on the field. The second image is one that shows the field with the rugby on it, but in the foreground is the people having fun. Those are the images that really strongly portray the brand. Social media and online are critical to marketing the event.... the vast majority that go will use it to co-ordinate the groups that are going.and they are influenced by the content that we put up on social media.</p>

16	What are your thoughts around the importance of including other, minor events, such as concerts, breakfast tents, merchandising stalls, parades, and the carnival atmosphere into the overall sporting event?
A	I think this is a critical part of the event as it should be a partnership with the city and Tourism business and as such should incorporate external activities to drive the event and other opportunity.
B	From the 1 -paggers - based on fan feedback, but you have to be careful about that, but the reality is that we sat down and asked at any event, “would you like more” and the answer is usually yes. ...it’s an important part of it. What we know is that people who attend have two drivers really. And they sit equal in terms of the survey responses. One is the rugby... And the other is the part and entertainment aspect. So, ... we need to make sure we are meeting those needs. But I think there is a second piece...., I think the attention span is getting shorter and shorter out there and so if you’re not reinventing part of your experience in a way that’s still takes your fans with you , then its only a question of when you’re going to die.
C	Another element of people no longer enjoy it because its too, there’s too much , because they created that alcohol environment and I mean, you can take what you like from it, but it’s disgraceful how much alcohol is consumed at that event. ...As I say – it tipped at some point. It WAS acceptable and fun , it was really good natured. People got drunk but they had a great time. But at some point, the sport became irrelevant and like people spend more time on the con-course than they do in their seats. Like the concourse is packed and the stadium is empty. (the behaviour is) really bad.... over the years it’s got worse and worse....
D	So we empowered the fan to be part of the entertainment. And they really embraced it and loved it.
E	Good question, and one that we are grappling with right now. Because I don’t think “K C and the Sunshine band” has led to a significant up spike in sales, lets put it that way. Certainly, when we made the conscious decision to talk about the fact that we needed to create that environment, a lot of it happened organically.... Austin Powers was a fan ... then the next year he’s back as part of the entertainment package... other tournaments started adopting him. ...It was like, oh shit, that works – lets just roll it out again next year. And we’ve kept doing it. Its got a lot more sophisticated as we’ve gone through. The entertainment package is very carefully choreographed ...It’s not a broadcast thing. It’s for the fan in the stand there. But you could argue we fuel the party by starting to introducing more and more of the singing and festival aspect. But when we do our fan research, they say that the party and the rugby are equally important. So, yeah, equally important to the people coming. So if we ignore one at the expense of the other , that’s the dilemma we’ve got.
F	It’s important but shouldn’t distract from the main event

G	I think its, people come because of all of that cool stuff, but they also come just to Wellington and the tournament and the extra stuff doesn't impact of their decision to come. I think that the success probably hurt the tournament in some ways, because of the stuff that happened outside of the tournament.the tournament should always, always be the number one priority but there is a way to get the two in there. You don't have to be boring because you are talking about rugby. Boring and rugby sevens doesn't work together. Its high impact, and fast paced. You know, and there is a way to get it into a space where they can go along and people understand that they can come along and still have a good time, without actually having to say it.
H	That is the happy marriage that we have to find. I think it would be a mistake to remove the carnival from this event. It is a great weekend and but sitting down and watching 2 full days of rugby would be a long day. ...in terms of how long peoples attention spans are it's a lot of the same over 2 full days, so you need the event enhancements and extensions that a festival and carnival provides. It's "how do we do that without losing the central part of it?" There are wider societal challenges there and are people capable of keeping themselves entertained without alcohol over 2 days? I don't know.
Ithis year we are marketing the concourse as a purely transactional area.... we have other areas set up now for you to have your experience. Where its on the plaza, on the walkway, or in your seat on the bowl. They are the three key areas we have focused on. So the entertainment is equally as important as the rugby. Um, again from the 3000 people we surveyed. I was surprised at how many of them said rugby was as important as it was. It's about a 51 /49 split between the rugby and the entertainment. That survey was the angus / PWT survey.

17	How was return on investment measured by the OC and stakeholders?
A	N/A
B	Yes, well there is a business plan. There's a bottom line. ... we know what we get out around that commercial arrangement with the NZRU. So each of us that invest in we know what we get out of it in a financial sense. Absolutely. It is a profit share arrangement and that is a key part of the commercial arrangement. So it's not the only part. So there is once again there is some risk that resides with Wellington Rugby around running the event
C	N/A
D	In terms of profit sharing NZRU get ¾'s and Wellington get ¼. But there is also a minimum guarantee...., (we need to) hit that threshold, or it is 100% NZRU. ... it was felt that was necessary to do and at the time it made sense. But the problem is NZRU aren't under much of an obligation commercially to help contribute to the success of that tournament. There is a big commercial ask on it...\$4m profit reqd.. ... The city council, its general positioning is the "events capital of nz" , so it doesn't want to tarnish its reputation. NZRU needs to ensure that it is a good event because it is one of its showcases to the IRB.
E	Well for NZ rugby it is an incredibly profitable event for NZ rugbyprofit share arrangement between NZ rugby and Wellington. Yep. So as far as direct surplus from the tournament, that flows directly through to NZ rugby. And not in equal shares. NZRU take the lion share... Wellington city (is) important (because of) the economic impact of having that many people in the city and spending money... And for Westpac Stadium it's been incredibly profitable as well, off the food and beverage mostly.
F	Ultimately tickets sold
G	Not sure.
H	It's a massive cash cow.... everyone was happy to ride that wave. But I do feel that people have sat on their hands and what we are seeing now was almost going to be inevitable...I looked at some of the numbers and I could see over the last 3 years that pre-sales were declining. I could see that that last 3 years and I looked at google analytics on the morning of pre-sale the number of people online purchasing has been declining.
I	Again, if you were thinking about, if you were thinking of investing in the sevens, we are a highly profitable organization. And you cant put it in there because it is confidential and the NZRU probably wouldn't want it known. But for a. It's probably got turnover of \$10m. Probably ends up in \$6 direct costs. \$3-5m is the return.

18	What would you recommend for the leadership and sponsorship of future similar events?
A	N/A
B	<p>... there is a range of things we can always do better. I think we need to lift our game in terms of the quality of work we do in the sponsorship space, in terms ofone of the key questions for any city or regional stadium is what it's drivers are... – we have a stadium that is required to turn a profit....just about every sporting code that plays there loses money. So this isn't a sevens specific thing, but.. if the funding and investment model for the stadium from a regional and city ...point of view is modified... if more cash is made available for the stadium, thereby enabling the stadium...to take a more creative approach to the provision of food and beverages with the kind of margins they need...and ..., to re-investing in capital development in the stadium itself. (it) has been largely unchanged for 15 years,. 'Kiev on a bad day',..... its just barren. Its ... one of the few stadiums of this size in NZ that is profitable, and that's great, but it's a tough place to do business and deliver a world class event when you've got your customers saying "shit, why do I have to pay \$6 for a bottle of water."</p>
C	Honestly I have no idea, but I will be fascinated to see how it develops. The event has an element of 'fanaticism' about it and is a truly unique event.
D	<p>So I think they need to say, OK look Wellington, "its about family and kids, and make it a safe environment', (we should look at the) sessionalisation concept, where that first part of Friday is more about families. Lets really bring some fresh air into the thing. You would diminish your ticket yield by doing that, but I think overall you would still make more money. You might charge more for a later session at 75%, and at the earlier session it might be 35% of ticket price, so overall you are charging 110%.The problem is that Wellington rugby cant afford to invest too much in the future of the brand. They need money here and now. SO that would be a big ask.</p>
E	N/A
F	Governance arrangements and long term strategy needs to better thought out.
G	<p>One of the big challenges is that there are mixed opinions around the table at both the tactical and governance levels on the WHAT should be done with the 7's in terms of consumers vs the actual tournament...is it the party or the rugby. I would expect the general manager to crack that and figure out what that is on behalf of everyone else. And once they've cracked that, actually deliver. Its just about making sure that everyone around you can actually do their jobs to the best of their ability. ... it needed to be looked at again. And the brand story and overall brand look and feel at all levels, that was never figured out at a high level outside of a daily running of the tournament. A tournament of this size is a year long job to get it up and running, but there was never that taking a step back and strategic planning reviews and all of that sort of thing.</p>

H	<p>I don't think we've been responsive to what I would see as the obvious trends that have been happening the last couple of years. ... My boss said "you said you were worried about the Sevens".... this has been coming for quite a while, and no-one has done anything about it essentially. I think you're going to see a Seven's that's more focused on the actual rugby side of things and I think we have a unique opportunity around the Olympics to create something different. However, ...some challenges... the commercial value of the sevens might not stack up to where it was a few years ago... So the whole supply and demand equilibrium is no changing.(if the) is now purely about what's on the field of play, you are going top have to attract families and children along to the event.... with a substantially lower price point than where it is at the moment.</p>
I	<p>...At the higher strategic level, ...at structurally, the mechanism, the operating model is not fit for purpose. In terms of the governance. (The NZRU) are entirely focused on money. The Sevens is one of their biggest revenue events. ...we are focused on delivering an experience for the punter. ... nowhere in their strategy does fan engagement and fan experience sit. ... The NZRU strategic objectives for the event is based entirely on making money....but for the Wellington Sevens, it's all about the revenue. Um, yeah so inherently we are structured incorrectly. If everyone wrote down ... their strategies... you'd go well 'this is crazy'. This can't work coherently. Because structurally, you've all got different incentives. The stadium ...maximize the monetary value....(but I'd ask)"How are you maximizing the fan experience?" ...The stadium have done customer surveys of people at their events who want different things. But as a user, I know that people going to the Sevens want different things. We have very little influence on it however...structurally, we have signed an agreement ...and we cant change that.</p>

19	How would you rate the Wellington Sevens against the five dimensions of sports service quality: (for 1 (not at all), to 5 (outstanding or exceptional: (1) Tangibles; (2) Responsiveness, (3) Access / Empathy; (4) Assurance / Security; (5) Reliability
A	Overall I'd give it a 4.
B	...it needs to be acknowledged is one of things around the experience is despite our commitment to being a good host and our massive investment to that, the reality is that it is an environment where alcohol is being consumed prior to the event... it's a constant challenge for us to...look after our fans in the way we are meant to.
C	The (stadium) layout is not conducive to flowing in and out and once people are on the concourse, they stay there. Just providing a place to party really. Everyone treated the same.... What about rugby fans? What about families? On the whole I think it is as safe as it could be. Its more the perception that people have around the drinking
D	If its fun and exciting...Being responsive is far more critical . Generally the problem... with the stadium is the price is very high for the product. The variety is driven by the provider, ...if want a better variety over 11 hours, not just pies and chips, but the pricing does keep people away . I think generally people have been pretty happy (with security)personally was very happy with the delivery of security at the event. The IRB have a 150 pt checklist afterwards and will rank you... We did a good job of managing the IRB requirements Generally the Wellington tournament was ranked as 'world class' standard..
E	We've been... complacent. We've rolled out a similar model year after year without really refining it. We know what some fans want, but we can't give it to them, because we would be breaking the alcohol legislation. There are a large groups of people who love the party ...but we cant ignore the reality and have to be responsible in that space... they're pining for the olden days ... Kind of ironic. we don't know what our fans want, and that's manifesting itself in ticket sales. The PWT survey was aimed at people who had been to the tournament, so asking them is like preaching to the converted....
F	The facilities are good and reasonably new and usually we deliver an operationally strong tournament . I think that the various elements of quality are equally important (functionality, technical, and aesthetics, but we are not quite there on some elements of customer contact .
G	The stadium -...some room for improvement. I think people feel safe, but harassed by people who are having "too' good a time.... I think everyone feels 'safe' when at the sevens, but some people are 'put off' by poor or unacceptable behaviour. Some people do get into character when they are in costume.
H	... everyone has an opinion.... I'm weary of the opinion the Dom Post has in this market and how that drives opinion, ... The issues are less stadium related and more product related . The quality of the product you are putting on the event. I do fear that our crack down on alcohol and is going to impact on the customer experience
I	People like the branding – its quirky, sharp, modern . Facilities – players and teams like the facilities – it's a relatively modern stadium. They love the accommodation. The volunteers like the uniforms we give them. We need to be more responsive . We don't even have a CRM (customer relationship manager). In terms of the process for event operations, it has to be re-invented every time....

Tangibles	Responsiveness	Access / Empathy	Assurance / Security	Reliability
4	4	3	3	3
4	3.5	4	3	3.5
3	2	2	4	3
3	4.5	4	3	4
5	3	2	3	4
5	3	3	3	3
4	3	4	2	4
4	2	3.5	2.5	3.5
3	2	2	1	2
3.89	3.00	3.06	2.72	3.33

20	What do you think spectators value the most? (utilitarian, symbolic or hedonic factors)? Is this the same for sponsors? (1) Utilitarian; (2) Symbolic; (3) Hedonic
A	Mainly people are there to have fun and enjoy themselves
B	I think hedonic is...the most important . The social identification is also really important too....utilitarian...- it's almost like a basic hygiene factor . You strip that away – you know – is price important? We've just reduced our price to \$195. I think there the perception that is it cheaper to go to the sevens or the nines they would go "its cheaper to go to the nines." But, from the point of view of our customer base, would the reduction in price or looking at a cheaper event be the reason they make a decision not to attend . Usually not.
C	...when the stadium was new, there was the novelty factor.... the organisers haven't adapted . The stadium also doesn't offer much variety at all , specially in comparison to other venues. People expect choice is food and beverage offerings. Symbolic is important – social identification...dressing up , but I think the excitement value is more important . I think its important that it's something new to do. Its moved so fast, that now it seems the organisers don't know what to do . These days it is much harder to please people – there is much more choice available .
D	N/A
E	Symbolic is most important . I think the ' being a part of something ' is the most important and what we've thrived on because you get large groups coming. You know its not just 1 or 2 people. They come with 20. It's the prime reason why they buy a ticket . And we know that because people take months getting their costume and getting ready for the event. Etc.
F	The spectrum of attendees – and beyond that potential attendees – is very broad . Thus these matters all need careful consideration and to be considered at every turn
G	... probably the symbolic – the becoming a part of something that is bigger than you . Because if it was the rugby, people would know all of those players. The people who don't watch the rugby would most value the hedonic factors - Excitement value . With right of passage – the guys watch rugby and girls the tag along – its sounds like fun. That would probably be the majority. People also don't like to admit that they don't know a lot about the rugby.
H	I think a combination of 2 and 3... there is that the shared experience , ...The main attraction is atmosphere and what's happening on the field . That is still to this day the main driver of why people come to sporting events. The shared experience is a critical part of that. ... The hedonistic aspect is absolutely a part of that...sevens is the ultimate escape ... people dress up and they become this other person and they engage in behaviours they wouldn't normally when they aren't dressed up... the concept of escapism. And I think we need to be pushing back towards point one. It's the ultimate balance....There's no silver bullet and it's about driving change over a period of time...
I	Nil

21	Are there any other factors that influence 'motivation to attend' (for spectators) or 'motivation to sponsor' (for potential sponsors)?
A	Yep – I think the rugby is important , and being able to access reasonably priced food etc is important also.
B	In terms of consumption value - I think the functional, technical and aesthetic are all important . I mean if we drop the ball on any of those three, we are toast. We rely on the teams wanting to and saying thing and enjoying the rugby experience itself. If we don't functionally deliver with the 5000 people pumping in there for, 70,000 for 18 hours of rugby, with alcohol involved, then we're clearly toast. And in terms of the aesthetics as part of what people expect from us , but also in terms of what we bring ourselves. So they are inextricably linked ...I think there is the part of the market where it is on their 'to-do' list like a right of passage that is still a part of it, in terms of the drivers to attend. I would say that we want the tournament to be more strongly identified with is the quality of the rugby....
C	So the rights are up for renewal in 2016 I think. Up until a few years ago you would have said the tournament will be in Wellington until the end of time, but as I say, I'd be fascinated to see when it will reach that tipping point. And personally, I think it has reached the tipping point where you have a generation of people that have already been to it. Been to it multiple times and a bit sick of it . A bit ho hum.
Dbehaviours at the tournament (haven't) changed that much. But the reporting of it and the focus on it has changed. Changing expectations of the public . What happened was Jeffery Palmer, put this paper out "curbing the harm from alcohol" a white paper, ...so that kind of changed the perception, and then this legislation came through impacting licences etc. ...But if NZ had more sophisticated attitude to alcohol, who can say what it is, you know the whole 6 o'clock closing mentality , where you have to binge as hard as you can, and even earlier from the early colonization days. You know drinking hard has been a strong cultural habit in NZhard to break those perceptions.
E	Rugby!! You have to keep reminding yourself that people just want to come along because of the rugby . Some are not interested in the part and dressing up - they want to watch some world class rugby sevens. And I'm not sure weather we have catered that well to them.
F	N/A
G	We would have to look outside the event environment to look at it properly. Without taking into consideration what's happening outside and what's happening in the wider events sector. I think of when I used to go, there was nothing in this world like it. It was the event to go to. That was the only one that was like that.
H	Social experience with friends, Unique event attributes, Cool factor/must attend event (at least until a few years ago), Two day party. For potential sponsors - low at the moment given negative PR last year
I	Nil

22	Describe some of the positive and negative impacts of ritualized spectator behaviour surrounding the Wellington Sevens event. Do you think this benefits / harms the overall event brand?
A	It feels like it has become a “Right of Passage” for youth to get wasted . I think it is just a reflection of our wider culture and acceptance of alcohol and excess. It also has become something of a sex fest!! This is a huge issue for the OC. People pre loading for an event that lasts two days. Great looking people having a great time at an excellent venue hosting an international 7s tournament. Lots of singing and dancing and celebration. Huge appreciation of NZ sevens team.
B	... there are groups of friends or work colleagues or people that are team mates in a sports team or other endeavour that use the sevens as a way to have an experience together, a shared experience that is seen as positive. And then obviously if we think about this, this becomes a ritual in itself . It becomes the ‘who’ piece – like we always go with.... f our customers will buy 3-4 months out from the event... tells us is that they are planning a long way out from the event. And as they come in closer to the event, that the planning is part of the ritual and that that picks up the aspects of what are we going to wear. You know meetings and email and social media conversations around, no, I don’t like that or ‘I want to go dressed as onions or dressed as nurses’, or whatever it might be and the process of creating those costumes and the then ‘where are we going to meet’, and ‘how’. The social experience, how is that, what is our ‘pattern going to be?’ So that’s a real positive thing we can leverage for marketing purposes. Pre-loading is a definitely negative ritual. Particularly with younger people.
C	Ritual behaviour is mainly negative and associated with alcohol and pre-loading . Because people are enjoying the party this takes away from the sport. It also means that people aren’t actually in their seats – they’re on the concourse, which could have implications for TV coverage of the event. The dress up factor could be regarded as positive and adds a certain atmosphere and festival Its good for wellington, but bad for the 7’s.... people are drawn to the city just to experience the atmosphere, dressing up, the parade and the nightlife. Often people don’t actually make it to the stadium or may not even buy tickets!
D	As already stated....alcohol culture hard to change.
E	The dress up is a real positive and that ritual has been a real positive for us. Some other tournaments copy it. I mean we adopted it from Hong Kong. But certainly getting the whole stadium dressed up which we were able to achieve(creates a) unique atmosphere . If you talk to the police, what that will argue is that leads to a disassociation almost, so some of the behaviours that people undertake when they are dressed as a chicken, they would never do when they are in normal clothes.... there are a whole lot of behaviours coming through that they wouldn’t do in a normal Saturday night out. So, its been great in that aspect, but some unintended consequences. Oh, alcohol is a big one. There has been a ritual of pre-loading and smuggling alcohol in. and that’s really difficult for us.
F	The drinking culture, dress up, behaviour on concourse, pre-loading can all harm the events reputation. Whilst creating the right positive atmosphere based on festioval aspect and the connection between fan and team can all benefit the events reputation

G	<p>... couple of years into the sevens, they had a whole lot of people in men in black security style turned up in the stands. There are ways to have fun without taking the fun away, and having all of the security guards dressed as 'men in black'. There are ways to marry the two. If we had continued to look at that sort of integration of the culture and an innovative approach to the culture and ingraining it with the people; If you had a whole lot of people in a security role, consistently keeping watch and in an actor role; it would change the way people act. It would make them feel as if there were a part of a 'circ-du-soleil' act, just for them. Whereas people [volunteers] are just let loose and can do what ever they want – yet the core role of the event is to create that culture. You could do it in a way that people are not alienated in a big brother way. The pre-loading is tough. Sure it stems form the tournament, but.... It's a city wide challenge, ... if you consider that pre-loading and drinking at the event without considering the NZ drinking culture and the summer drinking culture which it is quite difficult to make a call.</p>
H	<p>I think the dress up culture has generally been positive. However it also means that attendees experience a sense of escapism. They are in character and it gives a minority an excuse to behave differently, as if they are someone else. There is no doubt that Sevens and alcohol have become inextricably linked. Lack of star players have meant that the fans have become the stars</p>
I	Nil

23	How would you describe the Wellington Sevens in terms of characteristics ascribed to a product, company, person, and as a symbol? (ie – brand personality)
A	Unsure.
B	I cant think of anything sorry
C	N/A
D	Cant think sorry.
E	N/A
F	N/A
G	I asked for the brand values and they weren't provided... they didn't exists.... It went back to the lack of institutional knowledge . They might exist, but not that he knew. I think the best local brand off the top of my head would be Vodafone. They seem to fit with that whole playfulness of it whilst also delivering something quite serious. In terms of where it is right now, I couldn't tell you. Maybe red-bull. They concentrate on sports and extreme sports and talk about extreme nights out. They do it well. You never think they don't do that sort of stuff and they embrace it. Its always crazy. But no, probably not for sevens.
H	N/A
I	Nil

24	What do you think excites Sevens' fans? What kind of experience do you think they are looking for?
A	Collective atmosphere. Music, friends rugby.
B	They're looking for, a good chunk of them are looking to escape actually. Wanting to just step out of themselves for a couple of days. And you know be able to express themselves in way they cant the other 365 days of the year. I think there is a big piece around connection with people that are important to them, that group thing.
C	I think the rugby is still exciting and it should more focus on this. The people who are being targeted to attend are not necessarily there for the rugby though and that creates problems.
D	I think partly that people want to be a part of something big . That creates the atmosphere and people want to be part of something popular... Then from the third year in 2002 we started selling out. And we sold out right through til 2013, and then 2014 we had that ticketing glitch which I think that is a major, is going to cause major ongoing effects. The viewpoint of the fans is you know "no-one wants to go anymore" and I think Ticketmaster have a lot to answer for what happened. And now it reflects badly on the tournament.
E	What's happening in the stands, not what's happening on the field. We need to change. And I think we can, because I think the Olympics has given us that opportunity. If it wasn't I think we'd be seriously worried. (current fans) might not necessarily want that.the two can complement each other.... there are a large chunk of people who have tried to come to the sevens or have never come to the sevens because of what they perceive it to be , who might otherwise want to come.....I think there is absolutely a latent audience out there. We just haven't been able to tap into it. We haven't been able to appeal to them, because we haven't been able to make that promise it will be the environment they want.
F	Depends on the fan, some want sport, others want party, a small number want both.
G	The experience is fan led at the sevens and I think what they are looking for is the ability to continue that fan led experience , but not on their own. No one likes to be the first one to a party , you know. Its always awkward when you are first to the party. They are looking for an environment, where they can be that extra fun version of themselves, have a fun time, but in a cohesive and packaged way.
H	Escapism, fun, party., time with friends
I	Nil

25	How much do you think national and / or regional factors have impacted on the creation of a brand identity for the Wellington Sevens? What are your thoughts on the relative importance of: (1) geographic location; (2) access to public transport, (3) other PESTLE factors?
A	Best location in NZ. Access to public transport is mandatory.
B	Look I think we have a really good... stadium , but we have to invest aesthetically in parts of the structure . The reality is we do have a stadium that is physically part of the CBD, or very close to the CBD, a close to regional transport.... real positive for us. From the point of view of technology, Wellington is increasingly becoming more user friendly . You know the ability to go online, access wireless is strengthening, but not at the stadium yet so from that point of view, a lot of supporting events and venues internationally have responded to that, and we haven't yet. So I think that is a challenge and an opportunity all in one. Just being able to access supporting and complementary content during the event. It's already there, but we're just not there. Most NZ venues are the same, but we're just not wired yet in the way we want to be. It's the idea of being able to experience it on TV or the sky coverage and get additional information and stats . So yeah, I think that's going to get bigger for us and sooner or later we have to expect it.
C	The location of the stadium has contributed to the success of the event due to the geography . There is a natural progression from public transport and down the concourse into town after the event. Within the stadium the con-course means that the part can also be self-contained.
D	Technology – we had cameras and one thing we introduced with Telecom in 20014 was text a screen, So spectators could text messages to the screen and we had them scrolling up on the screen and telecom loved it. So we empowered the fan to be part of the entertainment . And they really embraced it and loved it. What's happened now, we had a really nice mix of fans, they came, older and younger, but now its got to be more showing off the flesh – more younger people, more about the socializing rather than the rugby and I think the brand now needs to evolvebut that as a tournament has been (trying to) pull back on the party and focus more on the rugby . I.... don't think you can do that by the messages and marketing – you fundamentally need to change the format of the tournament to force people to focus on the rugby. And hopefully with the Olympics now some of these well known players being part of the mix . More emphasis will go on the rugby.
E	The location of the stadium helped build it . I don't think you can replicate that in any other city and I include Akld in that. The problem is that the way the people go from the city to the stadium is a massive strength, but as we've evolved it has become a weakness , and we see this with a number of people coming through the gates and the times there are coming in. Because they can stay in the city, and come and go easily, or just time drifts and all of a sudden its 5pm and I haven't made it to the stadium yet. Whereas, if you were at a stadium 30k out of time you would have to get out there. And there are probably there from the outset...
F	New Zealanders enjoy enjoying themselves in Wellington . In the growth of the tournament I think 'Wellingtonness' in these factors would have helped. Right now I think it may have turned a corner and be a hindrance.
G	N/A
H	Downtown stadium location very important. Access to public transport is important. PESTLE factors- Not much
I	Nil

26	What factors do you think influence consumer demand and the ability of the Wellington Sevens to compete with substitutes such as the NRL 9's or the homegrown concert? (eg; competitive intensity, market potential, demographics...)
A	The largest influencing factor of 7s is how good a time the people had at the last event . This will determine whether they return or not . Getting the correct balance between entertainment and rugby at venue is critical . Weather important too as is media coverage. If it is priced correctly and there are potentially other activities that may influence ticket buyers, ie associated events that may influence ticket sales.
B	I think the Sevens has the challenge of any annual or regular event, its far easier to run a one off event and to achieve success, than to run a recurring event and achieve ongoing success. So there is some fatigue in demand challenge is getting the repeat spectators back and selling out. The status thing [being a sellout] used to be a pretty powerful driverLast year it was just 'bang' – from one extreme to the other. ...
C	The sevens cant compete with the star power of the NRL 9's . This might change when it becomes and Olympic sport . And the changing face of the entertainment industry means that there are more entertainment options
D	So the NRL 9's have taken more of a family approach... They've gone sat / sun which lends itself to a different type of behaviourleague has is a very strong emphasis on family... those clubs are very family focused and you support the same club for life. ...Whereas we don't have that in 7's. I think there is the natural alignment with family which the NRL have an advantage on. ... they actually ended up creating a really nice family environment and part of that is instead, when we first started sevens it was 'what are we going to do? We want people to come to wellington, so we cant do a sat / sun thing, because they gave to get back, but they may take Friday off as opposed to Monday', mentally so lets do fri / satwhat the sevens need to do as a minimum is start earlier and so people aren't as intoxicated as they have been and consider going sat / sun.
E	So competition – there are far more one of events that we are competing with . So the competition form rugby hasn't increased. What has increased is the festivals, concerts and the advent of the 9's which is a similar event. ... increasingly seen more competition for the entertainment dollar . And its not coming from traditional sports. We are suffering because there are so many other offerings. Increasingly because it is a 2-days event we see that as a factor . We don't sell a lot for Friday. We sell a lot for Saturday. People committing to 2 days is hard, I mean its 18 hours of rugby – it's a lot. I do it, but it's a hell of a lot to ask of a fan.
F	New Zealanders have lots of opportunities to spend their disposable income. All these things compete. The more there is the stiffer the competition.
G	And also you have to remember that the product hasn't actually changed since year dot. The demographics, even is the last 3 years have changed . There is the right of passage market – the 18 years olds first big weekend out with their mates, or young uni students. So if you think of you 18 years olds – do they still like rugby like they used to? Not really there is no retention strategy . The product itself has been the same the whole way through, and yet we cannot keep spectators . Its odd for an annual event . We also have to kind of pay homage to the fact that they haven't needed a retention strategy. There have been signs and you should at least tip your hat to it and think about it. And those sorts of recommendations were put forward a couple of years ago, but they were ignored.

H	Scale: there is no two-day festival event of this scale that takes over a city. International. Olympics
I	Nil

27	What forces of change do you think the OC of the event need to consider when shaping the brand identity for the event?
A	Unsure
B	... primary one is that challenge... is that we are 15 years old . We are a very mature event by most standards. I mean I wouldn't put \$5 on the fact that the NRL 9's will be here in 10 years, so that it's a great initiative, but the test is really the standing the test of time.
C	I think with the IRB they will put more pressure... due to it becoming an Olympic sport . The new alcohol legislation has also seen increasingly police and public pressure around the drinking culture at the event.
D	We think we need to introduce a concept called sessionalisation – so lets make that first session about that fan base . It'll be alcohol free and start at 1030 am and for the first round of 8 games it'll be family friendly. Bring your kids and don't be worries about drunken idiots dropping bear on you and being offensive. And then we'll clear everyone out and bring those (young) people in later , because they're busy socializing downtown and we thought that was a great concept. But the board weren't and wanted to stick with the status quo . And I just think they haven't had the vision to realize the product needs to evolve with the times...When you look at the product you've got these fantastic athletes, I mean they are amazing athletes, their fitness, and skills level and world class . I mean some of these guys – you realize how fantastic they are. Where you have a format of 20 odd games throughout the day – the chance to have music and party and socialize throughout the day – it's a really nice format for the event. But.... if you have a 10 or 11 hour day – ...– as time demands increase and everyone is starved of just that leisure time, I think the product needs to shorten itself. So carving it off and having a family session, and a mixed session. The product isn't the problem, it's the fact you have the same people .
E	I think the alcohol one , I know we've talked aout it, but the sponsorship of the event by alcohol brands. They way that alcohol is served in the stadium at events is all evolving you know. Advertising generally. And societal expectations are changing . Similar in a way to the way that tobacco was banned from sponsoring, there will come a day when alcohol will not be allowed to sponsor...
F	I think the event needs to move itself away from being a very adult party to be a celebration of NZ's national game that can be enjoyed by all .
G	... never been a plan for brand longevity . It's just evolved....And being fluid is fine. ...you can see the section of work that has happened, but you cannot see the overall and overarching brand story per se the sevens brand it was quite disjointed in its journey . And not having solid creative partners that carried that work throughout You know there are all these different people and their different interpretations of what the use of the brand should be . Yeah. This year is finally the first time where we have had a cohesive approach. A positive step, but one that had to happen some time ago.
H	Now and Olympic sport. Star player availability. Tell the Sevens story more. More knowledge an content around the world sevens series. Move away from alcohol
I	Nil

28	<p>What is the relative importance of contextual factors regarding the nature of the event, such as:</p> <p>- Recognition of sevens as a sport?- The presence or absence of a worldwide brand for 'Sevens'? - Previous event success, history and impact?- Media coverage?</p>
A	<p>With 7s now a part of Olympics this is critical. A worldwide brand not essential in NZ as rugby is so well accepted here, however if a worldwide sponsor came on board that could bring something special apart from banking services then that might be a positive factor. It's hard to get excited about HSBC in NZ. This should count for plenty, however I feel it is losing it's appeal a bit. Media coverage has a huge impact on the event.</p>
B	<p>Recognition of sevens as a sport does have an impact on branding. It is on the increase, particularly on the back of the Olympics. I think the 2016 tournament will be, there will be some advantages...The fact that it is the first tournament that All Black and Super Rugby players that are selected for Rio will be the first tournament that they will run out. The fact that its Sevens, not 15's. ...so it gives us a real opportunity, not just for 2016, but to reposition what our offerings and our brand. The worldwide brand for sevens is important. Being part of an international circuit gives us status. ...What we have here is national teams representing countries. So we have a global event with international teams. The event's previous success and the role the media play in fueling perceptions are also important.</p>
C	<p>I think this will be increasingly important, and see that unless the tournament evolves, it will be a real lost opportunity to grow the sport of Sevens in NZ and educate the NZ public about it. Globally, it is a young sport, but it has been hugely successful at the commonwealth games, especially Glasgow. It is only going to get bigger, especially as countries in Asisa and non-traditional rugby sports come on board and pour money into the game. We are already rugby mad as a nation, and given the move of other sporting codes towards short format games, I think this is a natural progression.</p>
D	<p>My perspective in looking at other tournaments.... You know they are all completely different stadia and different life cycles, so it'll be interesting to see if you can actually get some common ground. All of them aspired to be like Wellington, and yet now they will be saying, that's a lesson – lets manage it.</p>
E	<p>Recognition – there are real opportunities as people start to see sevens as it's own sport – not just a hybrid of 15's. As stars become more and more visible – you know, we'll get a boost in 16 because Sonny Bill will run out onto the middle of the field....So people will flock to that because they will see the stars. So – it's about realizing these guys are the stars of sevens...choosing between Sevens and 15's – there will be sevens specialists. But I guess its getting people to see them as the stars of sevens rather than they couldn't make it is 15's so they are just playing sevens. The IRB...re-branding, so they are going to call themselves "world rugby". ... this is the last tournament under the current structure. They are centralizing a lot of the commercial properties, s.... we will benefit out of that. that's where I think the brand will become more obvious, so you'll have consistency of sponsors across that. They'll re-brand everything. The schedule will be a lot better. So we just need to get to that. Because at the moment, were caught little bit</p>

F	Sport recognition should be really important to the NZRU. Having a visible worldwide brand for 'Sevens' is not important in NZ.... But important if NZ 7s stars are to be held up as stars like the AB's are. Previous event success, history and impact is not as important as it was as there's now more competition. Media coverage is very important.
G	As per QN 23.
H	We need to shift public perception more towards the sport. Global branding needs more consideration. IRB looing to centralise sponsorship and build stronger global brand... creating interest....it's coming and who these athletes are and start creating stars. Because, at the moment, we don't have any. ... I think there will be much closer alignment from all the Sevens circuit, a much stronger involvement from the IRB. Greater consistency in the branding of the whole tournament across the circuit. Recognition that it is an Olympic sports. Commercial partners that will cover the globe, and I think that is very healthy. ... a large part of the pitch would be using Wellington... as examples of how popular the sport is. It is about finding the balance. (we dont want to) tell people not to come along and have a good time....NZ'er do not like being told what to do, and they will react accordingly if you try and do that. I think we need form a mktg and comms perspective, we need more focus on the event itself and what's happening on the field of play. The Olympics give us this once in a life time opportunity to be able to change that focus. For years, the previous event success drove an insatiable demand for tickets. However huge shift in past few years given event no longer sells out and public don't need to rush to buy tickets. Media have perpetuated and fed the party story over the years with little coverage of the sport
I	Nil

29	Has Wellington Sevens OC been able to fully leverage long-term relationships, the ticket base and existing stakeholder relationships to increase consumption value for spectators and sponsors and increase revenue?
A	No. too many personnel changes haven't helped here.
B	You can always do better. Yeah you bet. Holding on to spectators and sponsors is important and we could have done that better. ... The situation we are in now with the sevens is that we have to be positive and clear on what we want to achieve in terms of the strategy , which you've had a look at. Equally – we have to be real with ourselves. So, if we think this is as good as it gets, then we need to go back to the start to the attributes that we think are important and the leadership aspect again, which is just critical for the sevens.
C	Obviously not – I mean they haven't been able to secure a naming rights sponsor. And they have turned their back on the loyal rugby fans and people that used to attend, but are now turned off by the behavior and what goes on there.
D	The last couple of years, I've found with the NZRU..... they just weren't interested in helping with the commercial success of the tournament. That does need to change. ...people that have left Wellington rugby.the tournament will have an issue with the way its run (and) is now at risk if you starting losing knowledge and losing all these people with stress...
E	To a certain extent no– we have relied on the high demand to carry us through and alienated some of our loyal fans and sponsors from early days
F	Historically yes. But that is getting much harder.
G	No, we havent kept in contact with fans that have traditionally attended.
H	I mean we have a lot of people attend over the years,(this year) we are actually ... targeting those that have attended before. It's almost the lowest of low hanging fruit when you think about it. You go back to your exisiting customers as the first opportunity. We've not been able to cultivate that audience over time... creating a membership culture and mentality,...while the membership is an emotional one. ... provide 12 months of content... but there is a lot of stuff happening in the off season. The sevens ... there is a lot of content out there in terms of the Sevens Circuit around the world and sevens becoming and Olympic sport. I don't think we've been taking advantage of that and constantly pushing content out there to our fans and 12 months of content around this event. The first time they hear from us is every year when we go on sale with tickets.
I	Nil

30	Is there anything else you would like to mention, anything that I should have asked but did not?
A	No
B	No, I think I'm happy with what you've covered.
C	No
D	No
E	No
F	No
G	I wish we had this conversation 5 years. That holistic approach has been missing – you don't just move from year to year – you need something to hand your hat off, and you have to believe it.
H	... The issue for sevens is going to be deep change.But that said, the changes we're introducing next year and for those who are coming along to have a good time, they aren't going to notice a big change. Its really targeting those who are pre-loading and those coming to the stadium just to get pissed.
I	Nil