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# **Investigating the place marketing objectives and activities of Business Improvement Districts in South Africa**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Businesses in city centres are faced with the problem of attracting customers due to competition from suburban shopping centres, decayed environments, crime and grime. The Business Improvement District (BID) model is implemented for ceasing and reversing decline in the economic health and environmental quality of city centres, redirecting investment to those areas, and improving perceptions. Despite the efforts implemented by BIDs in South Africa, declining footfall and negative perceptions continue.

The objective of this research was to investigate the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa and to make recommendations in order to improve the effectiveness of their place marketing strategies. Non-probability, judgement sampling was used to select research participants. Data was collected by conducting in-depth interviews with managers who were involved with the BIDs' place marketing strategies. A sample size of nine research participants was realised.

The results indicated that the primary place marketing objectives of BIDs included in the study are to attract desirable stakeholders, communicate the value of services offered and to improve negative perceptions. Furthermore, only 5% of their annual budget is allocated towards place marketing activities that primarily comprise of social media marketing.

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**Key phrases**

*Business Improvement Districts; place marketing; South Africa and urban regeneration*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Businesses in city centres are increasingly faced with the problem of attracting customers due to competition from suburban shopping centres (Cook 2010:462; De Magalhães 2012:146). Moreover, the lack of sufficient funding for local municipalities prevents them from providing adequate public services, and as a result, is unable to keep these areas from further decay (Morcöl, Vasavada & Kim 2014:799). Areas that are in decline and with heightened levels of crime and grime prevent desirable customers from frequenting the area, and as a result profitability levels of businesses in the area are adversely affected (Dorritie 2010:Internet). According to Kennedy (2016:Internet), the rise in popularity of BIDs can be attributed to the abandonment of city centres, the inefficient funding of local municipalities, and stakeholders' increasing search for finding alternative means to public service provision.

Morcöl and Wolf (2010:906) describe BIDs as legislated associations that are established and managed by local property owners and that employ self-financing mechanisms in order to provide supplementary services to its members so as to maintain delineated urban environments and keep them free from crime and grime. In essence, BIDs function as a mechanism for regenerating urban areas that have been left in disarray due to severe economic decline and decay.

According to Mbatha (2018:Internet), South African city centres have become dysfunctional and poorly integrated. The local municipalities of towns and cities across the country do not have the necessary means and capabilities to provide clean, safe and attractive urban environments. According to Peyroux (2012:185), in addition to decentralisation and the loss of related employment, the decline of South African cities can be attributed to the shift in a majority of the commercial activity to the suburbs from the 1970s onwards; this was compounded by the relocation of large retailers from the city centre to the suburbs in the 1980s; and the 1990s saw the relocation of major companies to the suburbs as a result of heightened crime levels, poor infrastructure and vagrancy prevalent in the Central Business Districts (CBDs). As a result, buildings located in CBDs were unoccupied, property owners were not receiving rental income, property values dropped and as a result, municipal rates followed suit which led to the inability of municipalities to finance the provision of public services to the area (Peyroux 2012:185). Since the 1990s, BIDs have been established in

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South African cities to aid in the regeneration of declining urban areas and to provide public services in town and city centres where local municipalities do not possess the necessary finances to do so (Didier, Morange & Peyroux 2013:121-125).

According to Ellicot and Pagan (2012:18), BIDs attract support from relevant stakeholders providing supplementary public services to a delineated business area. Dorritie (2010:Internet) and Lippert (2010:481) add that the services offered by BIDs usually include traditional public services such as security, trash collection, landscaping and infrastructure. In addition, there has been an increasing recognition of the potential of BIDs to achieve more ambitious outcomes such as education, employment and environmental initiatives. BIDs are also becoming more involved in strategic planning activities such as urban planning and devising place marketing strategies (Grunwald, MacDonald, Stokes & Bluthenthal 2013:622; Maraftab 2012:293). Technological advancements in public transport and perforated trade barriers have led to places around the world fiercely competing for visitors, residents, skilled labour, investment and other resources in order to achieve their respective economic, social and commercial objectives (Hanna & Rowley 2011:458-459). It therefore seems that the question currently facing places is not whether to implement place marketing strategies, but how to effectively implement and control these place marketing strategies and the activities they comprise of.

Place marketing activities are used by BIDs to obtain various place marketing objectives. These objectives include, *inter alia*, the development of positive perceptions of a place; shaping and improving the perception of once decayed city centres; promoting city centres as a place to live, work and play; and to attract capital (i.e. businesses, tourists, residents, customers and investment) from elsewhere (Fox 2013:15; Niedomysl & Jonasson 2012:225-226). As such, place marketing is not merely implemented as a promotional tactic focused at developing positive perceptions, but also as a component of a marketing-led development of BIDs. BIDs operate on the assumption that their place marketing activities contribute towards positive changes in the perceptions of the district that should, in turn, translate to the district becoming a more welcoming place for both customers and investors. However, BID stakeholders as well as academic researchers have come to recognise that there are often still negative perceptions of a district that does not reflect the positive changes brought about by the establishment of BIDs (Fox 2013:22). In order for BIDs to attract more customers and investment, and to improve negative perceptions of BIDs, effective and efficient place marketing activities must be implemented (Anderson, Chakrapani & Hernandez 2009:126; Maheshwari, Vandewalle & Bamber 2011:209).

To date, no research has been conducted on the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa. This is despite the fact that place marketing is regarded as one of the most important interventions within BIDs today. In order to improve the place marketing effectiveness of BIDs, this study aimed at identifying the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa so as to deduce whether or not the current place marketing activities are, indeed, achieving or have the potential to achieve the BIDs' respective place marketing objectives. The insight gained by conducting this study allowed for recommendations to be made with respect to improving the place marketing strategies of BIDs in South Africa. In addition, the identification of the BIDs' place marketing goals, objectives and activities greatly contributes towards devising a strategy for measuring the place marketing effectiveness of BIDs in South Africa (Sousa & Aspinwall 2010:485-487; Wibisono 2011:111-112).

## 2. PLACE MARKETING

Places have been differentiating themselves from each other for many years by accentuating their unique characteristics, designing distinct place identities, and promoting them to both internal and external markets in order to benefit their own operational needs and to achieve various economic, political and/or social objectives (Govers 2011:227). The promotion of a place's distinctive features with the aim of attracting stakeholders and capital to the area is known as place marketing (Hospers 2011:370). Niedomysl and Jonasson (2012:225) define place marketing as measures taken by appointed stakeholders to govern a place and to improve its competitiveness with the primary aim of attracting capital from elsewhere.

### 2.1 The significance of place marketing

The significance of place marketing has rapidly increased over the past few years as a result of the necessary change in the ways in which places present themselves with a more market-oriented approach (Brown & Campelo 2014:424; Niedomysl & Jonasson 2012:228). With the commodification of a place into a product (Warnaby, Medway & Bennison 2010:1365), the concept of marketing plays an increasingly vital role in improving the saleability and the competitive position of the place product in the market (Pawaskar & Goel 2014:256-257). Similar to that of a stereotypical product, places need to engage in marketing activities in order to draw favourable attention to them in an increasingly competitive global arena. To this end, places implement various place marketing activities to promote themselves effectively to their target markets (Zhou & Wang 2014:27). Malachovsky and Kiralova (2015:394) confirm that a place must differentiate itself favourably from competitors in order to be marketed successfully. As such, place marketing can be regarded as a

competitive tool that is used by places to achieve their objectives of improving their competitive position and for differentiating themselves effectively from the competition.

### ***2.1.1 The objectives of place marketing***

The significance of place marketing is related to the various place marketing objectives that the implementation of place marketing activities strive to achieve. By considering the significance of place marketing, the following place marketing objectives can be identified: (1) strengthen the place's competitive position in the market through effective differentiation tactics; (2) attract capital in the form of stakeholders by satisfying their respective demands; (3) improve the perceptions of a place, which could, in effect, contribute towards urban regeneration; (4) construct a suitable place identity and image; and (5) create an effective and sustainable place brand.

### ***2.1.2 Place competitiveness***

Storper (cited by Huggins & Thompson 2017:398) defines place competitiveness as the ability of a place to attract capital and to improve the standards of living for its stakeholders. Considering the large variety of places around the world, places are increasingly competing with each other and are implementing place marketing strategies with the aim of differentiating themselves from competitors in order to improve their competitiveness, and as a result, to acquire an economic advantage by attracting various stakeholders and inward investment (Sepe & Pitt 2017:10; Zenker & Martin 2011:32). McManus and Connell (2014:108) affirm that the differentiation of a place is therefore regarded as crucial. It is for this reason that improving place competitiveness is one of the primary objectives of place marketing.

### ***2.1.3 Stakeholder satisfaction***

With reference to place competitiveness and the concept of place marketing, places seek to devise strategies that can enhance industries, expand export markets, and can attract capital in the form of tourists, new residents, investors, businesses and a qualified labour force, collectively referred to as the stakeholders of a place (Kalandides 2011:289; Zenker & Martin 2011:32). Freeman (2010:53) defines a stakeholder as any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of business objectives. According to Brunetta and Calderice (2014:4), places depend on their stakeholders for environmental, social, cultural, and economic well-being. It is therefore that one of the primary objectives of place marketing is to attract stakeholders to a place (Connell & McManus 2016:37).

#### **2.1.4 *Urban regeneration***

Place marketing is regarded as a contributing factor and an essential driving force in the improvement and regeneration of places, and is often used to improve the perception of once decayed urban areas (Michel 2013:1015). According to Anderson *et al.* (2009:126), even though the development and regeneration of a place is mostly associated with physical upgrades, its success is often measured in terms of how well these regeneration efforts improve the perception of a place. Place marketing, when devised and implemented effectively and efficiently, can indeed alter the perceptions of a place (Jiwa, Coca-Stefaniak, Blackwell & Rahman 2009:155). Boisen, Terlouw & Van Gorp (2011:141) confirm that the perceptions of a place become the cornerstones of a projected, specific, and inclusive place identity. To improve the perceptions of a place is therefore one of the primary objectives of place marketing, with the ultimate goal of achieving urban regeneration.

#### **2.1.5 *Place identity***

Kalandides (2011:286) describes the identity of a place as the way in which various open-ended trajectories intersect at a specific point. In addition, place identity involves the people of a place, leadership, language, culture, heritage and symbolism (Govers 2011:230; Remlinger 2009:118). According to Hespers (2004:274), the process of place marketing closes the gap between how a place would like to be perceived by stakeholders (desired reputation), how stakeholders currently perceive the place (place image), and what the place actually is (place identity). A place's identity plays a crucial role in the practice of place marketing, specifically in terms of differentiating between objectively similar places (Pawaskar & Goel 2014:256). Therefore, the construction of a unique place identity is one of the key objectives of place marketing.

#### **2.1.6 *Place branding***

One of the fundamental components of a place marketing strategy is place branding, which is said to have evolved from the place marketing phenomenon (Asserat & Shoham 2017; Eshuis, Klijn & Braun 2014:154; Govers 2011:227; Zenker, Braun & Petersen 2017:16-17). Place branding informs place marketing, and according to Govers (2011:230), functions as a strategic compass for place marketing activities. Place marketing differs from place branding in the sense that place marketing concentrates on the processes and techniques of promoting, selling, and distributing the place product, whereas the place branding approach regards the purposeful symbolic embodiment of information about a place in order to create associations and expectations around it (Lucarelli & Berg 2011:21). Blain (cited by Pike, Bianchi, Kerr & Patti 2010:437) states that another major objective of implementing place

marketing activities is to engage in effective place branding because place branding supports the creation of a unique name, symbol, logo, word mark or other graphic that readily identifies and differentiates a destination; consistently conveys the expectations of a memorable travel experience that is uniquely associated with the place; serves to consolidate and reinforce the emotional connection between the visitor and the place; and reduced consumer search cost and perceived risk.

### ***2.1.7 Place marketing activities***

With various developments in the public transport sector, the ease of international trade barriers, and further problems imposed by retarded economic growth rates, places are in fierce competition with each other on a global scale (Hanna & Rowley 2011:458; Milichovsky & Simberova 2015:211; Wibisono 2011:108). In order to improve their competitiveness in the global arena, places must create and promote an environment that is conducive for attracting capital in the form of visitors, residents, businesses, and inward investment; and in so doing, stimulating local economic development (Hanna & Rowley 2011:458; Zenker 2009:24). Jacobsen (2009:71) claims that it is for this reason that places invest a considerable amount of resources in their marketing activities in order to promote themselves effectively to their target markets, improve their competitive position and to achieve their defined place marketing objectives (Pawaskar & Goel 2014:256; Zhou & Wang 2014:27). Yanzheng, Zengxiang & Changhong (2015:21) claim that a place can guarantee an improvement in its competitive position through continual investment in place marketing activities.

By considering the significant contribution of place marketing to the improvement of a place's competitive position, BIDs have been increasing their investment in their place marketing activities. Michel (2013:1015) claims that BIDs are concerned with the effective management of a place, the development and improvement of a place, as well as the promotion and marketing of a place. The marketing of a safe, clean and visually pleasing place is important because it reinforces awareness of crime and grime as antithetical to the current regeneration ethos (Coleman 2009:29). Ruffin (2010:26) emphasises the importance of creating a clean, safe and attractive environment and then to engage in aggressive place marketing tactics to promote the BID as a desirable area for stakeholders to work, live and play. BIDs aim to achieve their place marketing objectives through the implementation of various place marketing activities.

### 3. BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS

Businesses in South Africa's city centres are increasingly faced with the problem of attracting customers due to competition from suburban shopping centres. Moreover, the lack of sufficient funding for local municipalities prevents them from providing adequate public services, and as a result, is unable to keep these areas from further decay (Dorritie 2010:Internet). De Magalhães (2012:146), as well as Cook (2010:462), propound that the establishment and expansion of new retail formats in suburbia, coupled with large scale decentralisation, present profound implications for the owners of properties and for those who operated businesses in CBDs. As inner-city residents and affluent consumers relocated from the decaying urban environments of CBDs to the burgeoning suburbs, rental income for property owners decreased as the demand for inner-city properties declined, and concurrently, profitability levels of businesses located within CBDs diminished due to the lack of affluent consumers in these areas. This, in turn, had an adverse effect on local governments' tax revenues. Due to a declining tax base, local governments were unable to meet administrative and financial challenges, and as such did not possess the necessary resources to provide public services to CBDs. As a result, further deterioration and decay of urban environments ensued (Morcöl *et al.* 2014:799).

According to Didier *et al.* (2013:121), the BID model has been adopted in South Africa as a tool to support the implementation urban regeneration plans and strategies. The decision to implement the BID model in South Africa addressed a shared concern in both the public and private sectors over economic and business decline within South Africa's urban environments and the related drop in property values and tax base. In order to implement effective urban regeneration strategies, and to act as ad hoc and micro-local solutions, the South African government and organisational leaders in the private sector encouraged and led the establishment of BIDs in the early 1990s (Didier *et al.* 2013:125; Michel 2013:1014). Morcöl *et al.* (2014:799) assert that BIDs were established to promote and protect the interests of business and property owners by regenerating urban environments, with the focus on CBDs of major towns and cities in South Africa. The primary motivation for the implementation of urban regeneration plans in South Africa is to regenerate urban environments, specifically CBDs of towns and cities, by making them more viable and conducive to business practice and improving overall profitability levels, and also to make CBDs safer, cleaner and more resilient (Cook 2010:458; Grunwald *et al.* 2013:624; Horn 2011:Internet; Paasche 2013:260). Ozuduru, Varol & Ercoskum (2014:145) argue that the sustainability of towns and cities greatly depend on the viability and resilience of their respective CBDs.

### 3.1 Services offered by BIDs

Ellicot and Pagan (2012:18) affirm that BIDs attract support from relevant stakeholders by providing supplementary public services to a delineated business area. The majority of BIDs concentrate their work on those services regarded as most effective in increasing the value of real estate and the turnovers of businesses in the particular area (Peyroux, Putz & Glasze 2012:111-112). Dorritie (2010:Internet), as well as Lippert (2010:481), assert that the services offered by BIDs usually include traditional public services such as security, trash collection, landscaping and infrastructure. In addition, there has been an increasing recognition of the potential of BIDs to achieve more ambitious outcomes such as education, employment and environmental initiatives. BIDs are also becoming more involved in strategic planning activities such as urban planning and devising place marketing strategies (Grunwald *et al.* 2013:622; Maraftab 2012:293).

It is becoming increasingly important for BIDs to plan and implement effective place marketing activities. Fox (2013:22) argues that there is still a negative perception of CBDs that does not reflect the positive changes brought about by the establishment of BIDs. One of the main objectives of implementing place marketing activities is to improve the perception of BIDs with a view to increase the public use of BIDs and to attract more customers to these areas (Monk 2012:31). Eshuis, Braun & Klijn (2013:507) propound that place marketing has therefore become a strategy widely used by municipalities and regional authorities in the governance of cities, towns, and districts in order to increase the competitiveness of places and to attract targeted stakeholders. Some of the place marketing objectives of BIDs include promoting and creating positive perceptions, and also *product development* in the sense of developing the place in a way that responds to the demands of target audiences. According to Sousa and Aspinwall (2010:480), the measurement of place marketing performance is important for the improvement and development of the place product.

#### 3.1.1 Place marketing performance of BIDs

According to Pergalova and Angulo-Ruiz (2011:Internet), despite the importance of place marketing for BIDs, the practice of determining place marketing performance of BIDs has not received sufficient attention in academic literature. Extant place marketing literature mainly considers the outcome of place marketing efforts (i.e. perceptions, image or brand attitudes formed) without examining *how* the relevant place marketing strategies have performed in achieving the results. By measuring place marketing performance, BIDs would be able to identify strengths, weaknesses, and constraints, and ultimately develop responsive place marketing strategies, either exploiting strengths or correcting or compensating for

weaknesses (Aaker & McLoughlin 2010:99). According to Ashworth and Kavaratzis (2009:525), place marketing's focus has shifted from being a construct implemented towards improving the promotion of a place to be considered as an integrated management tool – one that required effective performance measurement.

Gao (2010:9) defines marketing performance as the business's proficiency in identifying and employing available marketing resources to achieve the business's market-related goals, turnover and market share. By considering the definition of marketing performance, it is argued that the performance related to place marketing refers to the ability of a place to identify and implement its place marketing activities in order to achieve its place marketing objectives, with the ultimate aim of improving its competitive position in the market. Therefore, in order for BIDs to determine their place marketing performance, it is necessary to identify their place marketing objectives and their respective place marketing activities that they have planned and/or implemented in order to realise their objectives.

This study aimed at identifying the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa. The information obtained by conducting this study will allow place marketers to deduce whether their objectives are attainable through the implementation of their respective place marketing activities. At the time of conducting this study, the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa have not yet been identified. This study will provide insight as to whether BIDs indeed have place marketing objectives and activities in place or not, and whether these practices are sufficient. In addition, the identification of the place marketing goals, objectives and activities will contribute towards the development of a comprehensive strategy for measuring the place marketing effectiveness of BIDs in South Africa (Sousa & Aspinwall 2010:485-487; Wibisono 2011:111-112). Theoretically, no research has previously been conducted on the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs, not only in South Africa, but on BIDs around the world. Therefore, the results of this paper provides the necessary theory in terms of the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in South Africa, that is both an important and necessary prerequisite for devising a strategy for measuring the place marketing performance of BIDs in South Africa (Wibisono, 2011:111-112).

## 4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 4.1 Research paradigm

This exploratory study adopted a constructivist paradigm to gain multiple and subjective perspectives of the BIDs' operations and place marketing activities from the experience of BID managers and executives.

## 4.2 Sampling

Non-probability judgement sampling was used to identify nine sampling elements. The sampling elements were identified based on the following criteria: (1) the sampling unit (BID) from which the sampling element was selected should be located in the Republic of South Africa; (2) the sampling unit (BID) should be a ratified and legislated establishment approved by the city council in which it operates in terms of the municipal Property Rates Act, Section 22 (Special Rates Areas [SRA]) and the South African SRA bylaw, in which complementary top-up services are provided in addition to those rendered by the BID's primary partners; (3) the sampling element must be involved with, or have an influence on, the place marketing strategy of the BID; and (4) the sampling element that was selected should have voluntarily agreed to participate in the research study, and as such, informed consent was attained.

Judgement sampling was used to select nine sampling elements from BIDs across South Africa. Managers from three BIDs in the Gauteng province; three BIDs in the KwaZulu-Natal province; and three BIDs in the Western Cape Province were included in this study.

## 4.3 Data collection

A total of nine semi-structured interviews were conducted with BID managers who were responsible for, or involved with the BIDs' place marketing activities. The point of diminishing return (saturation) was reached when interviewing the eighth sampling element; however, the interviewer pursued to conduct an additional interview in order to validate the point of diminishing return. An interview guide was used to direct the conversation and to collect the relevant data by asking questions and recording responses provided by participants. The interview guide used in this study was devised by considering the secondary data and information obtained from the literature study; reviewing questionnaires used in studies of a similar nature; and considering the specific objectives of the study. A professional transcription service company was used to transcribe the data collected by means of audio recording devices during the in-depth interviews.

Specific questions were based on various aspects of the BID, specifically focussing on place marketing and the measurement of place marketing performance. Questions were asked pertaining to the following areas of the BID: (1) the formation, structure and scope of the BID; (2) the BID's place marketing strategy; and (3) the performance evaluation of place marketing strategies. The duration of each interview varied between 55 to 60 minutes.

#### 4.4 Data analysis

The Morse and Field (1996) approach to analysing qualitative data was implemented in this study. This approach comprises four steps, namely (1) comprehension; (2) synthesis; (3) theorising; and re-contextualising of data. Prior to data analysis and coding, the transcriptions were adequately prepared and were checked for accuracy by comparing the transcripts with the original recordings. Coding of each transcript was done by using the line-by-line analysis approach recommended by Morse and Field (1996:104). The Atlas.ti 8 qualitative data analysis software was used to code the collected data and to apply category analysis so as to identify the relevant categories and themes.

Four criteria proposed by Guba (1981) were implemented in order to establish trustworthiness, namely credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. The methods used in this study to establish trustworthiness included member checking, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, direct quotations, audit trails, audio recordings, transcription of interviews and reflexivity. Member checking was implemented by returning the interview transcripts to five of the research participants, which allowed them to rephrase their narrative by omitting certain extracts which they may feel no longer represents their experience, or that they feel may present them in a negative light. With regards to prolonged engagement, the researcher was immersed in the topic under study since 2013 and involved in the academic literature for four consecutive years. Peer debriefing was implemented by submitting all findings and interview transcripts to two experienced researchers in the field of qualitative studies. Reflexivity was achieved when any biasness whilst conducting the in-depth interview was overcome by maintaining a neutral stance and not introducing personal perceptions and/or interpretations during data collection.

## 5. RESULTS

A sample composition of the study is presented in Table 1.

TABLE 1: Sample composition

Business Improvement District (BID)	Year of legal ratification	Area size	Annual budget
1. Ballito Urban Improvement Precinct	2015	15 km <sup>2</sup>	R12 million
2. Florida Road Urban Improvement Precinct	2013	1.6 km <sup>2</sup>	R3 million
3. Hatfield City Improvement District	2013	4 km <sup>2</sup>	R9.5 million
4. Illovo Boulevard Management District	1997	-	R3.5 million

Business Improvement District (BID)		Year of legal ratification	Area size	Annual budget
5.	Kramerville Management District	2004	-	R2.3 million
6.	Northpine City Improvement District	2017	40 km <sup>2</sup>	R1.9 million
7.	Observatory Improvement District	2009	-	R5.7 million
8.	Umhlanga Urban Improvement Precinct	2010	12 km <sup>2</sup>	R10 million
9.	Voortrekker Road Corridor Improvement District	2012	4 km <sup>2</sup>	R18.6 million

Source: Based on collected data

The BIDs included in this study varied according to the year of legal ratification and area size. In addition, BIDs differ greatly with regards to their annual budgets. The reported annual budgets ranged between R1.9 million and R18.6 million. The results indicated that the primary source of income for BIDs is the imposition of an ad valorem levy on property owners located within the BIDs' boundaries. Other funding mechanisms include contributions from BID members and non-profit organisations, as well as government grants and subsidies.

The results further indicated that a very small percentage of the BIDs' annual budget is allocated to its place marketing activities. Four of the nine BIDs included in this study indicated that less than 5% of their annual budget is allocated to its place marketing function, and one BID stated that 25% of its annual budget is awarded towards its place marketing endeavours. Two BIDs were unable to provide an estimation pertaining to the percentage allocation of their annual budget towards place marketing activities. The resource allocation towards place marketing is trivial in comparison to that of other services provided like security and cleaning services. This was made clear by some of the BID managers:

*"There's no money for marketing" (Participant 6).*

*"5%...you've got to get the fundamentals in place first" (Participant 3).*

*"Got to be safe and clean...to get people to come to the place" (Participant 4).*

None the less, place marketing is regarded as one of the most important interventions within BIDs (Marquardt & Füller, 2012:154). The majority of BIDs included in this study indicated that place marketing is one of their core functions. Eight of the nine BIDs included in this study emphasised the importance attached to their respective place marketing activities, with only one BID (Participant 7) indicating that it does not attach any significance to the practice

of place marketing. The importance of place marketing was accentuated by BID managers as follows:

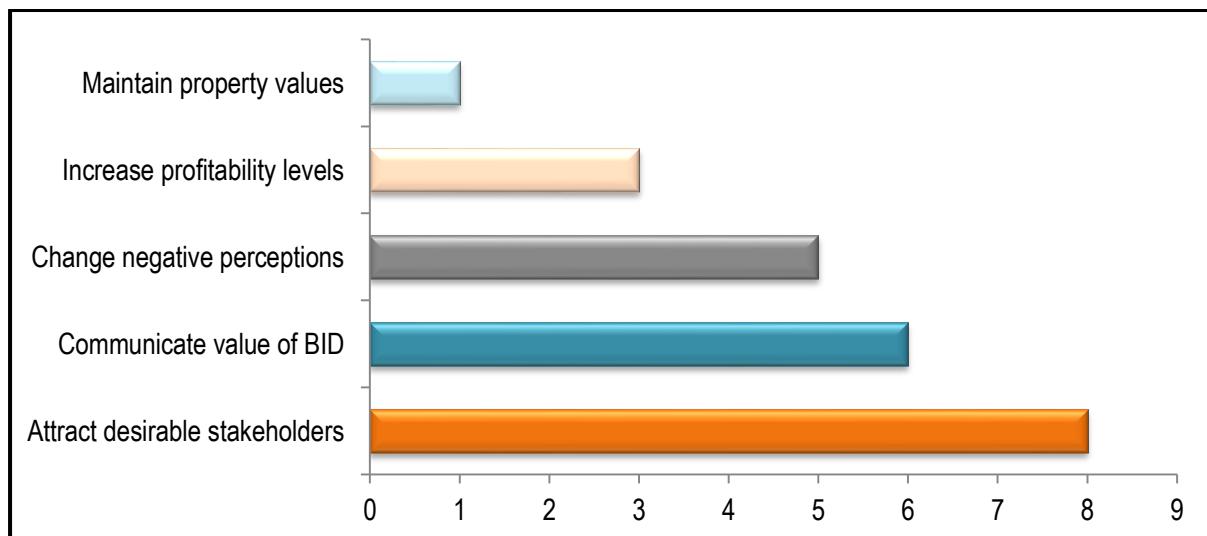
*“Place marketing is a fundamental part...it is critical” (Participant 1).*

*“We’re quite keen to continue to market ourselves as a neighbourhood and to attract good quality restaurants” (Participant 7).*

*“I would say that it is an important function...it’s definitely a priority for us” (Participant 9).*

Place marketing activities are implemented by BIDs in order to achieve various operational and place marketing objectives. The place marketing objectives of BIDs included in this study are quite diverse. Figure 1 presents the results in terms of the primary place marketing objectives of BIDs included in this study.

**FIGURE 1: The place marketing objectives of select BIDs in South Africa**



Source: Based on collected data

Eight of the nine BIDs stated that their primary objective with regards to place marketing is to attract desirable stakeholders to the area. Six BIDs stated that their objective is to communicate the value that the BID offers to its members, and to reassure them that the ad valorem levy imposed on them in order to fund the BID’s various operations is put to good use. Five BIDs indicated that their objective is to change negative perceptions of the area in which it is established. Three BIDs stated that their place marketing objectives include raising profitability levels of businesses located within the BID, and one BID stated that its place marketing objectives include maintaining the value of properties located within the BID’s boundaries. BID managers emphasised their objectives in terms of place marketing as follows:

*“To communicate primarily to the levy paying members what they’re getting for their money”*  
(Participant 1).

*“We communicate to the public what is happening, who is doing it, why it’s being done”*  
(Participant 2).

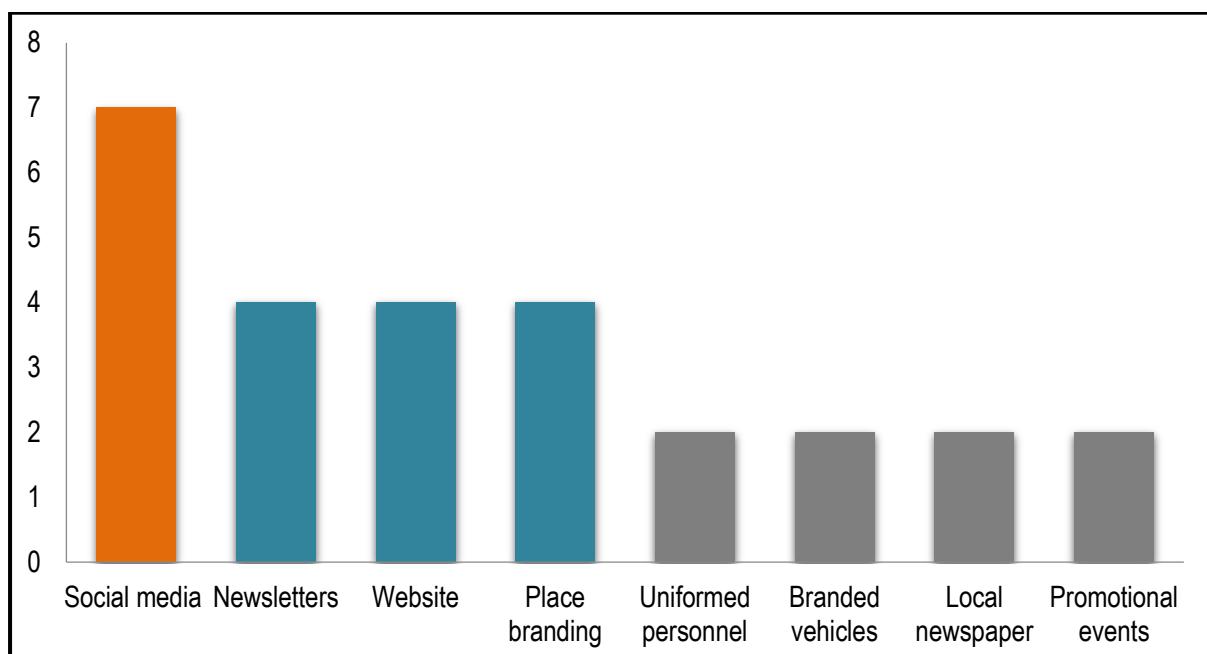
*“Also, very importantly is to create a perception of positive investment in spaces, positive belief in spaces...”* (Participant 8).

*“To bring foot traffic into the district”* (Participant 5).

*“So it’s to bring in revenue to the existing people, to bringing the right property owners and to escalate property values”* (Participant 4).

Given the various place marketing objectives of BIDs, specific place marketing activities need to be implemented in order to realise these objectives. The results indicated that a small variety of place marketing activities are primarily favoured by most BIDs. The primary place marketing activities of BIDs included in this study are presented in Figure 2.

**FIGURE 2: The place marketing activities of select BIDs in South Africa**



Source: Based on collected data

Seven of the nine BIDs included in this study stated that they make use of extensive social media marketing to communicate with BID members and other stakeholders and to attract desirable stakeholders to the area. Four BIDs stated that they make use of monthly newsletters to keep them stakeholders abreast of developments. In addition, four BIDs

stated that they have setup a website for the BID in order to communicate with stakeholders, and that they engage in extensive place branding activities (i.e. having devised a unique logo for the specific BID). Two BIDs indicated that they publish articles and advertisements in local newspapers, engage in community and promotional events (i.e. street festivals), and that they have uniformed personnel and branded security vehicles patrolling the streets, with the BID's unique logo clearly visible on the uniforms and vehicles. The place marketing activities were highlighted by the BID members as follows:

*“...a fun walk...to get the community involved with projects” (Participant 6).*

*“The dedicated security vehicle is branded accordingly” (Participant 4).*

*“...all the social media, from Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, everything” (Participant 5).*

*“We have a wonderful website...I do a quarterly newsletter” (Participant 5).*

*“We contribute to a part of the local community newspaper” (Participant 7).*

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Place marketing objectives of BIDs in South Africa

One of the primary goals of this study was to explore the place marketing objectives of BIDs in South Africa. By conducting a review of the literature pertaining to place marketing, it was emphasised that formulating a vision and various place-specific goals and objectives are necessary during the place marketing planning phase. Defining the BID's vision, mission and strategic objectives with regards to its place marketing strategy is an important step in devising an effective and efficient place marketing strategy.

BIDs with a clearly defined vision, mission and strategic intent of their place marketing strategy are prone to outperform those who do not have such statements (Moutinho & Southern 2010:337-338). The vision and mission of the BID is considered when the goals and objectives of the place marketing strategy are established (Sousa & Aspinwall 2010:486). Wibisono (2011:111) concurs by stating that the BID's mission must be aligned with the goals and objectives of its place marketing strategy, and these strategic statements should form the basis from which the key performance indicators (KPIs) are selected.

Some of the place marketing objectives of BIDs found within the literature include improving its place competitiveness (Pawaskar & Goel 2014:256-257), improving the levels of stakeholder satisfaction (Connel & McManus 2016:37), assisting in the regeneration of decayed urban areas (Fox 2013:14; Hanks & Harker 2013:10), establishing a unique place identity and image (Basile, Dominici & Tani 2016:472), engaging in various place branding

activities (Kaplan, Yurt, Guneri & Kurtulus 2010:1288), maintaining property values (Ellicot & Pagan 2012:Internet), and increasing footfall to the area which in effect will raise profitability levels of businesses established within the BID (Baxter 2010:9).

By considering the results of this study, it can be concluded that the primary place marketing objectives of BIDs in South Africa are to attract desirable stakeholders to the area, communicate the value of the BID and its respective service offerings to BID stakeholders, and to change negative perceptions which may exist of the area in which the BID is established.

It is important for BIDs to have clearly defined goals and objectives with regards to their place marketing strategies, and for these goals and objectives to be closely aligned with the overall vision and mission of the BID. It is against this backdrop that the following recommendations are provided:

**Recommendation 1:** BIDs in South Africa must have clearly defined place marketing goals and objectives to which their place marketing activities should be aimed.

**Recommendation 2:** The place marketing goals and objectives of BIDs in South Africa should be closely aligned to the overall vision and mission of the BID in order for the BID's place marketing function to contribute effectively towards achieving the overall goals and objectives of the BID.

**Recommendation 3:** The place marketing goals and objectives of BIDs in South Africa should be considered when selecting KPIs used to measure the BID's place marketing performance.

**Recommendation 4:** BID's place marketers should be able to indicate how the BID's place marketing strategy contributes towards achieving its place marketing (and therefore overall) goals and objectives, and in doing so, strengthen the position of place marketing within the BID's structure.

## 6.2 Place marketing activities of BIDs in South Africa

A review of the literature indicated that place marketing is regarded as one of the primary functions offered by BIDs in South Africa (Didier *et al.* 2013:128). BIDs are actively involved in conducting marketing research in order to gain more information on their respective target markets, and then implementing various place marketing activities to reach their target audiences effectively and efficiently and to reach their specific goals and objectives (Anderson *et al.* 2009:136; Mello 2014:Internet).

BIDs repackage the area in which they are established as a *place product*, which infers that a BID markets a place similar to that of a business marketing its product to its respective target markets. The *place product* comprises various different factors including the environment (i.e. economic, political and cultural); the facilities offered (i.e. infrastructure, transportation and educational facilities); the various identities, images and brands of the place (i.e. place logo); and the human resources the place offers (i.e. labour force) (Zhou & Wang 2014:28).

Place marketing is regarded as a primary function of a BID due to its significance in achieving the developmental goals of a place. Place marketing enables a BID to improve its place competitiveness; achieve stakeholder satisfaction; assist in urban regeneration; create a unique place identity and image; and engage in effective place branding strategies. Place marketing strategies implemented by BIDs to market themselves to their various stakeholders include, *inter alia*, engaging in effective place branding activities such as creating a distinct logo for the BID; devising slogans; setting up a website; sending out newsletters to stakeholders; and hosting outdoor events like street parades, festivals and concerts. BIDs often host cultural events and entertainment attractions in order to enhance the area's liveliness and to sustain the growth in profitability levels of businesses in the district by luring consumers and tourists to the area (Gross 2013:355; Mello 2014:Internet).

Even though BIDs in South Africa regard place marketing as a primary function (following that of safety and sanitation), very few BIDs have a formally devised place marketing strategy in place, and, on average, allocate less than 5% of their annual budget towards their place marketing function. Most BIDs make extensive use of social media platforms to actively market their areas to chosen target markets. A number of BIDs also have their own websites which they use to communicate relevant information, and some disperse monthly newsletters to their stakeholders in order to inform them of the latest developments. BIDs also engage in place branding activities by devising logos and slogans for their respective areas. A small number of BIDs have uniformed personnel and branded vehicles as part of their place branding strategy. Newspaper articles and promotional events are seldom used to promote BIDs.

Some of the primary objectives of BIDs are to improve their place competitiveness, attract desirable stakeholders to the area, and to promote a unique place identity and image. In addition, BIDs strive to improve negative perceptions of the areas in which they are established. The implementation of effective place marketing activities can help to achieve these objectives (Anderson *et al.* 2009:126; Maheshwari *et al.* 2011:209), and as such, BIDs

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in developed countries have increased their expenditure on place marketing activities (Gross 2013:360). It is against this backdrop that the following recommendation is provided:

**Recommendation 5:** BIDs in South Africa should consider and be made aware of the significance on place marketing, and the link between place marketing and overall place development must be clarified and emphasised.

**Recommendation 6:** BIDs in South Africa should allocate a greater percentage of their annual budget towards place marketing activities, and if the funds are not available, seek alternative methods to accumulate income in order to finance place marketing efforts.

**Recommendation 7:** BIDs in South Africa should implement place marketing activities that are aligned with their place marketing goals and objectives. More place marketing activities should be implemented that are aimed specifically at attracting desirable stakeholders to the area, communicate the value of the BID to current and prospective stakeholders, and to improve perception.

**Recommendation 8:** BIDs in South Africa should devise formal place marketing strategies in order to improve the effectiveness of resource allocation and to implement and control place marketing activities more effectively and efficiently.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though this study was carefully devised and achieved its objectives successfully, some unavoidable limitations can be noted. Whilst conducting the literature review for this study, it was noted that very little information pertaining to the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs is available. At the time of conducting this study, literature available on the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs within the South African context was not available at all, and therefore literature pertaining to BIDs within the international arena had to be used. Due to the fact that no sample frame of BID managers in South Africa was available, non-probability judgement sampling was used to select the sample population of the study, which implies limited generalisation of the results to all the BIDs in South Africa.

By using a probability sampling method, the results of this study could have been representative of the entire population and not only the research participants included in this study. In order to obtain a true and accurate representation of the target population and its geographic characteristics, future research should comprise a larger sample size. This study is of such a nature that it can transcend national boundaries and could be used to conduct a comparative study regarding the place marketing objectives and activities of BIDs in various countries around the world. Further research can be conducted to determine how BIDs can

improve the performance of their place marketing activities in order to reach their specified goals and objectives more effectively and efficiently.

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