

Harmonizing Political and Marketing Aesthetics: Insights from The Chess Olympiad 2022

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Abstract

This article explores how the Government of Tamil Nadu, India, utilised strategic mass communication methods that emerged from a fusion of political and marketing strategies to create an aesthetic approach that elevated Chess Olympiad 2022, an event typically less in the public eye, into a spectacle that captured widespread attention by focusing on the event's impact on their cultural identity and the subsequent construction of a narrative of global cultural leadership. The marketing strategy of the Government of Tamil Nadu, India may be considered an aesthetic application of the theory of symbolic interactionism, as it employed literary, musical arts and visual arts across Chennai, that ensured active engagement of individuals in the city with the government's aesthetic representations. These visual representations acted as symbolic cues, inviting interaction and sparking the curiosity of the the whole host city, the Government of Tamil Nadu, India succeeded in turning Chess into a spectator sport, and by doing so, forged a key place in the national identity for Chess by building a narrative of collective linguistic and cultural identity. Since all citizens do not have an expert level knowledge on government policies, the media narrative that is built around any government policy determines its perceived success. The media narrative of Chess Olympiad 2022 was the narrative of India emerging as a global leader in cultural diplomacy - a soft power approach that is shaped by aesthetics. In dissecting the intricate interplay between mass communication, aesthetics, and societal identity formation, this study elucidates the transformative role of these strategies during the Chess Olympiad 2022, highlighting their profound implications within the socio-cultural landscape.

Keywords: Cultural Aesthetics, Media, Sports, Diplomacy, Marketing, Chess

INTRODUCTION

The Chess Olympiad 2022, hosted in Chennai, India, showcased a transformative spectacle orchestrated by the Government of Tamil Nadu, India reflecting a promotional strategy that was a fusion of marketing and political principles to create an aesthetic approach with profound implications within the socio-political-cultural landscape. During the World Chess Championship coverage in November 2013, The Guardian observed that “Chess as a spectator sport is growing fast, so the global audience could approach a million” (Barden 2013). The national headlines (in India) due to the event's exceptional level of public engagement has caused the BBC to dub the event “marquee chess” suggesting that it was not just an ordinary spectator sport but one in which the entire state was involved in the event. Taking into consideration that “sports events are regarded as an effective tool for regional marketing and destination image promotion” and that they “play an important role in the people’s social and cultural life” it becomes evident that the marketing strategies implemented by the event's sponsor, the Government of Tamil Nadu, India, played a pivotal role in transforming Chess into a bona fide spectator sport (Duan et al. 2020). These strategies extended beyond the mere promotion of the event and they engrossed the entire state in a compelling narrative of shared linguistic and cultural identity, thereby cementing Chess as an integral component of the nation's cultural identity (Duan et al. 2020). Marketing an international sports event like the Chess Olympiad 2022 holds implications beyond the sporting arena, especially concerning the political and diplomatic positioning of the host nation. The marketing strategies for the promotion of Chess Olympiad 2022 succeeded in creating a narrative emphasising India as a global leader in cultural diplomacy i.e., a soft power approach that is shaped by aesthetics.

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Background to the Event

The Government of Tamil Nadu, India succeeded in creating an irresistible appeal to the Chess Olympiad conducted between 28 July and 9 August 2022. With the prestige of the Olympics attached to it, the Chess Olympiad is considered the most elite team tournament conducted in Chess which means that the logistics of organising the event is highly complicated even with years of preparation. The announcement from FIDE, the World Chess Federation, on November 11, 2019 that the Chess Olympiad would be co-hosted by Moscow and Khanty-Mansiysk from 29 July to 17 August, 2022 had to be withdrawn following the Russian-Ukraine war (The Russian Chess Federation, FIDE press release). With only a few months left until the event, FIDE announced that it was looking for bids from other countries but because of the short duration to host the event, such a task was considered almost impossible by many countries. On March 1, 2022, the Government of Tamil Nadu, India formally placed a bid to host the Olympics in Chennai which was approved on 17 March, 2022 (Shah 2022). It should be remembered that “usually, the hosting rights of a Chess Olympiad is given four years in advance” but the Government of Tamil Nadu, India “put together an event of such a magnitude in around four months” (Rao 2022) in Mamallapuram, Chennai. This article argues that the promotion of the event even with only around four months of planning was successful because of the use of aesthetic principles in marketing. These marketing principles are termed aesthetic because the artist (the Government) ensured that the artwork (Olympiad) would have the complete appreciation of the audience (citizens). Since the appreciation of the viewers was also an identity building (nation-building) exercise on the global arena, the Chess Olympiad 2022 organised in Chennai proved to be an achievement in the diplomatic front.

Framework

It is important to define aesthetics in the context of the marketplace before analysing the strategies of marketing aesthetics. “Aesthetics in the marketplace, to some extent, may be defined as the study of the buyer’s cognition, affective and behavioural response to media, entertainment and arts.” (Baisya 2008, p. 44) This definition of aesthetics focuses solely on the viewers thereby making all the principles of marketing aesthetics focus on the response of the viewers. In the case of the Chess Olympiad, the general public in the state of Tamil Nadu and India may be said to be the primary ‘buyer’ as the state is the largest sponsor of the event (Rs.92.13 crore). The other sponsors are NLC India Ltd. (Rs.7.50 Crore), Tech Mahindra (digital sponsor), Smartwater (beverage partner), Indian Oil, Titan, Indorama Corporation (Rs. 50 lakh), State Bank of India (Rs. 50 lakh), Chessable and chess24.

One of the drawbacks in a multi-party democracy is that criticisms from the opposition (and other political parties that have not been elected) are fueled by an anti-incumbency stance purely on principle and not on its merits. It is the duty of the government to prevent polarisation i.e., government schemes have to gain the approval of the opposition for it to be really successful. “Marvin Minsky, the creator of the idea of artificial intelligence, has suggested that the experience of beauty is a temporary way of blocking the mind from negative knowledge” which is to say that “when we experience beauty, our brains receive a signal that suspends all forms of evaluation, choice, or criticism” (del Blanco 2020, p. 4). In other words, it can be said that aesthetics plays a fundamental role in governance and in maintaining the fabric of democracy intact. While it is taken for granted that “a product’s aesthetic design can influence consumers’ perception of the quality of the product”, the role that aesthetic design plays in influencing consumers’ (citizens) perception of the quality of the product (government schemes) is not taken into account (Shiu 2017, pp.32-44). It is only natural that the consumers who “are often sceptical and distrusting of a firm’s motives to engage in social causes” should be even more sceptical when it is the Government that is the chief sponsor which would be expected to lead to an increase in “fan scepticism” that studies attempt to calculate “by measuring the perceived sincerity of the relationship between the sponsored property and sponsors” (Nichols et al. 2020). But because of the Government’s symbolic interactionist marketing strategies that promoted a celebration of cultural heritage, this scepticism was not encountered even in the opposition parties. And since Chess was a niche sport, the number of non chess players in the country who were motivated to play chess because of the government’s advertisements proved to the fans the sincerity of the Government’s sponsorship.

Any international event that is organised has to factor in the element of tourism in its calculation. Tourism does not include only the visitors from other countries but also the residents in the place where the event is organised as “in the context of tourism experience design, residents simultaneously become the beneficiaries and the source of beautiful environments” (Kirillova and Wassler 2019). Therefore, residents and not just foreign delegates and visitors should also be treated as the beneficiaries of the event in all matters of design. Aesthetic work or design “designates the totality of activities which aim to give an appearance to things and people, cities and landscapes, to endow them with an aura, to lend them an atmosphere, or to generate an atmosphere in ensembles” (Biehl-Missal and Vom Lehn 2013, p. 237). The marketing of Chess Olympiad 2022 was focused on the service quality of the event such as the aesthetic experience of chess related design throughout the city keeping with the findings from previous studies that describe service quality in the sports context as “consumers’ judgment regarding the overall excellence or superiority of ancillary services that are provided in the service encounter as complementary parts of the core sports product” (Ma and Kaplanidou 2020).

In an ideal democracy, citizens should engage directly with government policies by reading original documents, but this requires expertise not everyone possesses. Consequently, citizens often rely on media narratives to form opinions on policies, greatly influencing their success or failure. Government policy becomes merely a product to be consumed by citizens “as an experience that is enjoyed purely for its own sake, without regard to other, more practical considerations” which is the definition of aesthetic appreciation (Hirschman 1983, p. 51). “Consumers use such products not to achieve some pragmatic or utilitarian goal but rather for the experience itself” holds true in the case of the Chess Olympiad as “the emotions aroused by an art work or the intellectual stimulation gained from comprehending a philosophy can be intrinsically satisfying” as it involves the stimulation of historical, national and linguistic identities (Hirschman 1983, p. 51).

An international sports event is not set in isolation but is built along with other consumption spaces such as “shopping malls, a variety of stores, and locations for services” which are referred to as “architectures of seduction” by Böhme who states that “as products of aesthetic work” their purpose is to “further intensify people’s ‘desire’ in a continuous theatrical staging of life through consumption” (Biehl-Missal and Vom Lehn, 2013, p. 239). Not only does the Olympiad become a performance in which 1,737 chess players took part but also the surrounding businesses and by extension, the entire city. Since the entire city was filled with chess related symbolic cues and since those cues were also attached to feelings of patriotism, linguistic and cultural pride, the continual interaction transformed the city even to the inhabitants as their previous city has acquired a new meaning, as according to symbolic interactionism “repeated, meaningful interactions among individuals come to define the makeup of ‘society’” (Carter and Fuller). This assumption is also supported by the tourist destination hypothesis. The ‘consumption’ of the event may be different for each individual and so the success of such an event, which will be analysed, can be measured in various ways (i) by the public response as reported by the media, (ii) the feedback given by the participants that is the goodwill generated on the international arena that is crucial for diplomacy and (iii) economic activity after the event has been organised.

Guillet de Monthoux notes that there is a recognition that “the dynamics of business economics are to be found in aesthetics” and that that is the reason why “businesses are not only supporting aesthetic development but begin to look at their firms as works of art operating on an aesthetic space” creating a scenario where “the managers are the artists managing the development” (Guillet de Monthoux and Strati 2022). The same principle holds true in nation economics too. The aim of the Government of Tamil Nadu and India is to make businesses view the country as an aesthetic space woven with hospitality making it easier to do business. The current economic system which is termed as the postmodern stage of capitalism by Jameson “is essentially aesthetic and located within the single protean sense of the visual” and that it is only “through the visual that post-modern capitalism is able to penetrate into the psyche, and it is the psyche that is the locus where individuals transform themselves into commodities designed for their own consumption” (Spais and Konstantinacos 2007, p. 159). The visual promotion ensured that the audience viewed themselves as the host which made them more focussed on consuming their own behaviour of welcoming the world to Chennai.

Sensory marketing is defined as “an application of the understanding of sensation and perception to the field of marketing - to consumer perception, cognition, emotion, learning, preference, choice, or evaluation” (Krishna). The use of Tamil, the classical language which is the first language of the state of Tamil Nadu is

extremely effective in forging a strong emotional bond with the event as research demonstrates that “the primary (or first) language is likely to have high levels of “belongingness” associations which connote a stronger sense of closeness and in-group associations” (Krishna 2022).

The torch relay “which is part of the Olympic tradition but was never done in the Chess Olympiad” was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The torch relay that covered 75 Indian cities is also an acknowledgement of India’s cultural history. FIDE’s decision to start the Olympiad torch relay from India in future events is a tribute to India’s cultural history and as a global power, which is a triumph for India’s soft power cultural diplomacy.

“For India, giving attention, encouragement and active support to the aspects and products of Indian society and culture that the world would find attractive not in order directly to persuade others to support India, but rather to enhance our country’s intangible standing in their eyes” (Tharoor 2011).

During the cold war, Chess was associated with the might of the Soviet Union which is why, according to The Guardian, the 1972 World Championship match between the American Robert Fischer and the Russian Boris Spassky “remains the most famous of all world championship matches” as supremacy in chess was, and still is, considered analogous to sophistication, culture and genius, making it a war for intellectual assertion on the world stage fought during the cold war (Barden, March 2022). The starting of the Olympiad torch relay from India for all future Olympiads surely “enhances India’s intangible standing” in the global arena and marks the official reclaiming of the origins of Chess in India.

Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic Interactionism revolves around the idea that meanings are generated through interactions with others and society, continuously evolving as people interpret and engage in social interactions. It has been observed that “symbolic interactionism is manifested in consumer behaviour in the form of symbolic purchasing behaviour.” (Leigh and Gabel). In this context, the symbolism of Chess to indicate intellectual prowess is accepted and is merged with the use of possessive pronouns which means that interactions with the transformed city is an acceptance of the Government’s narrative that India is a global cultural leader. The Government of Tamil Nadu’s promotional marketing with slogans such as “Namma Chennai, Namma Chess” (Our Chennai, Our Chess) and “Namma Chennai, Namma Chess, Nammadhu Perumai” (Our Chennai, Our Chess, Our Pride) and other variations involving ‘Chennai’, ‘Chess’ and ‘Pride’ meant that Olympiad was viewed as a cultural celebration by the people of India, making them collectively brand ambassadors of the event. It succeeded in silencing the voices of opposition parties because criticising this government project would be equated by the people to disowning the cultural and national identity of the people. Therefore, not only was political opposition silenced but a strong cultural identity was also built (reclaimed) with the Prime Minister, the Chief Minister and the ruling political party (BJP in India and DMK in Tamil Nadu) rightfully taking the credit for the same. It is not only the citizens who took pride in the government and the event but also foreign visitors and media who developed a positive attitude towards the sponsor which is the Government of Tamil Nadu, India. This is the reason why Chess Olympiad 2022 is a major milestone in India’s path towards establishing herself as a leader in soft power diplomacy.

Product, Price and Place

The Government of Tamil Nadu’s bid of 10 million USD is the price paid for the Chess Olympiad to be conducted in Chennai by the taxpayer. The United States of America has allocated a total of around 17.7 billion dollars (17,724.68 million USD, to be exact) for diplomacy (excluding defence and discretionary spending) and roughly ten billion dollars (9,348.09 million USD) for diplomatic programs (US Congressional Research Service Report). In contrast, India’s allocation of Rs. 17, 250 crores (2.112 billion USD as per exchange rate on 29 November 2022) to the Ministry of External Affairs for all its diplomatic programs does not seem to be sufficient for a rising global power. It should be noted that the budget for the Chess Olympiad was paid for in whole by the Government of Tamil Nadu and not by the Ministry of External Affairs which means that effectively, it is the residents of Tamil Nadu who bore the cost of the event. While it is true that Tamil Nadu takes immense pride in celebrating her Chess heritage, it alone is not sufficient to silence political opponents

from criticising government spending. According to *The Hindu*, “Chess and Tamil Nadu are inseparable” for not only does the five time World Champion Viswanathan Anand who is fondly called the Tiger of Madras (Chennai) reside here but Tamil Nadu also has 26 grandmasters, some of whom such as GM Rameshbabu Praggnanandhaa and GM Gukesh frequently appear on television. A celebration of the achievements of the state’s chess players is also not sufficient to silence political opponents. That is why the focus of the marketing was entirely on reclaiming chess history and in shaping the cultural identity of the state, thanks to symbolic interactionism. Such an approach proved to be highly effective not only in silencing political opponents but also in gaining their approval. “The music and the art forms from across India performed at the inaugural had the same theme – that of unity in diversity” and the other cultural events “centre-staged Tamil Nadu’s heritage and pride as a civilisation that pioneered many new technologies and which had breached frontiers in all walks of life” (Radhakrishnan 2022). Edappadi K. Palaniswami, the interim leader of an opposition political party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) welcomed Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he landed in Chennai for the opening ceremony. The leader of Tamil Nadu Congress, Selvaperunthagai, congratulated the efforts taken by the DMK government to organise the event in the state” and made it clear that “that the party was boycotting the event only because of the Centre’s anti-democratic activities and it was not to be construed as a boycott of the Chess Olympiad” (Koushik 2022). Other political parties also showed enthusiastic support as, according to Ashok, they viewed it as an opportunity to strengthen “Tamil identity”. In his speech, Stalin mentioned another symbolic cue that has emotional ties with Indians - Keeladi, an important archaeological site in the state - where several pieces that were used to play a version of Chess which archeologists estimate to be from the 6th century, had been excavated (Chakravarthi et al. 2022). It is clear from the lack of a vocal opposition by the political parties in the state that the price of 10 million USD was deemed a fair price to pay for the product which is a success in cultural diplomacy in the form of Chess Olympiad in Chennai.

Promotion, Processes and People

For the reasons mentioned in the previous paragraph, Chess Olympiad had the endorsement of numerous celebrities. *The Times of India* reports that Rajinikanth, a prominent actor referred to as a ‘superstar’, is said to have released it first on social media and that several celebrities have shared it on social media which ensured that the song received a wide audience. Exposure is a key factor that determines the attention of the general public and consequently, the increase in ‘positive’ neurotransmitters in their brains. Novel stimuli results in an associational effect that the positive feelings for the exposure to stimuli is interpreted as positive feelings for Chess Olympiad - the event - and also Chess as a sport. The symbolic cue associated with the naming of the mascot, a chess knight, Thambi is also significant because the word ‘Thambi’ means ‘younger brother’ in Tamil, the state language. The emotive factors associated with it also reflect FIDE’s motto ‘Gens una sumus’ (we are one people). In the opening ceremony, Chief Minister MK Stalin quoted Kaniyan Pungundranar, a 6th century Tamil poet, “Yaadhum Oore Yaavarum Kelir” (“we are citizens of the world, all people are our kin”) to stress how important hospitality is to Tamil cultural identity (Indian cultural identity). It should be noted that Former President Abdul Kalam also used the same quotation in his European Union address in 2007 and Prime Minister Narendra Modi stressed on the cosmopolitan nature of Indians by using the same quotation in his address to the United Nations General Assembly, making the quotation a diplomatic statement representative of the nation’s identity (Prime Minister Narendra Modi, *Business Standard*).

Evolutionary biology holds the view that familial ties are considered very important by the brain and any label that tugs at such a powerful emotion creates an identification with the mascot by the individual. The presence of wall murals and statues of Thambi in various poses throughout Tamil Nadu served as ‘selfie spots’ for the public, which meant that there was a continual interaction with the symbolic cue of the event. One of the goals of having numerous selfie spots is to acclimatise the people to the idea of playing a host to the top chess players in the world and at the same time, to make them take personal pride in the historical origins of chess in India. In this context, selfies also include photos and videos that are shot by friends and family that are then uploaded on social media with the event’s hashtags. The hashtags became so popular that international news networks like the BBC reported that “social media is awash with the event’s hashtags” (Ninan 2022). A contest was conducted for photos taken with the mascot uploaded on social media with prizes to the opening ceremony of

the event. In a study comprising Indian university students, it was found that the six main motivations for taking selfies are “environmental enhancement, social competition, attention seeking, mood modification, self-confidence, and social conformity” (Balakrishnan 2018). Building a strong online identity involves social conformity to a certain degree so that there is a sense of identification by the viewers and then drawing attention to the novel features of their identity (attention seeking) and getting more ‘likes’ and ‘shares’ on social media (social competition). The other three motivations involve a personal fulfilment, a personal reaction to the environment (environmental enhancement) which would result in the improvement of one’s mood (mood modification) thereby leading to an increase in their self-confidence. The organisers commissioned twenty eight 10.5 feet tall statues of Thambi to be placed in important areas in Chennai that already had an emotional connection with the people of the country such as Marina Beach which is the second longest urban beach in the world, the Ripon Building which is the headquarters of the Greater Chennai Corporation and seen as a symbol of Chennai. Business Standard reports that “Thambi has quickly become an omnipresence in the state, gracing giant cut-outs, billboards, statues, and posters” (“In the run-up” Business Standard). Promotional advertisements included stickers, banners, statues and were placed on numerous buses, trains, almost all major bus stops and railways stations in Chennai and Tamil Nadu. It is not an exaggeration to state that the entirety of the state of Tamil Nadu was given a chess-themed makeover. Thambi, who was dressed in Vetti (an Indian attire that has strong a cultural and emotional bond with the people) and had his hands folded in the traditional gesture of ‘Vanakkam’ (a symbolic cue that is a sign of respect used as a form of greeting and honouring), blends with the local culture while still being faithful to the representation of the chess piece to a mediaeval European knight. Vanakkam, like the salute, is a gesture that is almost always reciprocated which is why most of the images taken with the mascot have people holding their hands in the same sign of a respectful and cheerful greeting. The subconscious reciprocation meant that the receptiveness of people was increased, clearing away cynical close mindedness to government programmes and replacing it with a subtle sense of assuming responsibility as a host which becomes a matter for personal as well as national pride and identity. These selfie spots can be said to have had a significant role in contributing to the personal identification and emotional investment of the people of Tamil Nadu and India in Chess Olympiad 2022.

To ensure that there could be no criticisms on any grounds, the promotional processes employed by the Government of Tamil Nadu was not extravagantly unnecessary but aesthetically engaging such as the promotional advertisements on Aavin milk packets. Since plastic covers had to be printed everyday, using it to celebrate the event involves no waste and is definitely eco-friendly. Aavin, a government operative of the state of Tamil Nadu, succeeded in finding “the perfect way to reach the common masses” by featuring the mascot, various slogans, chessboard, the logos of FIDE, Government of India, Tamil Nadu and pictures of chessboards on its milk packets (Raj 2022). On a proposed initiative to feature advertisements on milk packets, it has been reported that “65 lakh (6.5 million) milk packets are supplied daily” and that “placing of the ads could reach nearly 2 crore (20 million) people” (“Soon commercial ads” The Hindu Business Line). It is evident that the promotional advertisements on the milk packets ensured brand visibility of Chess Olympiad and since advertisements on the milk packets are extremely rare (the plan is still under proposal as of November 2022), the novelty aspect of the milk packets garnered more attention with photos of the milk packets being circulated on social media with excited influencers with eager anticipation to see the packets the next day. An analysis of the slogans on the milk packets is interesting. “Idhu Namma Chennai Namma Chess” (“It’s our Chennai, our Chess!”) was featured on some days written in English in some packets and in Tamil in others. The day after this was printed, another slogan “Namma Chess Namma Perumai” (Our Chess, Our Pride) was featured against the backdrop of the stone temple in Mahabalipuram on the packets. It plays on the subconscious association of the stone temple which is widely celebrated in India as it is an important cultural symbol. The historical origins of Chess in India is understood immediately with a glance at the historical monument in the promotional advertisement.

Hospitality was the main feature of the promotional campaign as the act of welcoming other countries builds an united front in the country. The principle of hospitality on which the aesthetics of the nation is built is further strengthened. 'Welcome to Namma Ooru (Our City) Chennai' composed by the Oscar and Grammy-winning music composer, A. R. Rahman was not only seen as an anthem for International Chess Olympiad,

2022 but also as a song celebrating India's top Chess players and Indian cultural heritage as is seen in the numerous comments of the song on YouTube about their pride in being an Indian and a host to the Olympiad. Rahman who is regarded as a national treasure appears in the video along with other national treasures such as the five time World Chess Champion Viswanathan Anand, India's first International Master Manuel Aaron, the prodigy GM Praggnanandhaa R who has received international coverage and other grandmasters. The presence of the Chief Minister MK Stalin in the video warmly smiling and gesturing 'vanakkam' also serves to highlight the responsibilities of the host. Another important point that should be noted is that all the national treasures who appear on the video gesture 'vanakkam' which serves to reinforce the idea of a warm, welcoming host and the part that the listeners are set to play in being the host.

The song is filled with 'Varuga Varuga Tamizhnattukuu Varuga' (Warm Welcome to Tamil Nadu) in a catchy beat, the repetition of which would result in an open listening attitude in the listeners. Just as humanitarian propaganda songs "by triggering certain emotions... ..have contributed to the de-politicization of certain aspects of contemporary humanitarian action", this song triggers a welcoming emotion in the listeners which the repetition of the phrase 'varuga varuga' (which can be translated to mean 'please come', 'wonderful to have you' and 'I'm delighted to welcome you!') reinforcing their expected role of the host (Pufleau 2014, p. 7). Music has been "considered an efficient and effective means for triggering moods" which is why it "has become a major component of consumer marketing" (Bruner 1990). Research suggests that "aspects associated with the aesthetic experience of music may influence the aesthetic experience of visual art" (Braun Janzen et al. 2023). Images of Thambi and Mahabalipuram used in promotional advertisements that were omnipresent in Tamil Nadu in the background of the song have the effect of carrying over the mood of the song when images in the song are seen. That is to say, the mood of welcome and the refrain 'varuga varuga' is associated with all such promotional advertisements. Taking into consideration that "studies have shown that music stimulates numerous regions of the brain all at once, including those responsible for emotion, memory, motor control, timing and language", it is evident that the Olympiad anthem by using the same images used in promotional advertisements would have had an effect of associating the emotion of warm, open welcome with emotional memory of welcome as well (Gaidos 2010). Listeners to the Olympiad anthem are more receptive to the event as resistance in their emotional memory has been replaced with one of warm welcome and national pride. The message of the Chess Olympiad is clear: Indian hospitality is open for everyone, including global investors.

Physical Evidence

Even though tickets were sold for Chess Olympiad 2022, the event (the playing halls) itself was not the product sold and so the physical evidence does not include the online platforms created to sell tickets but the whole city and the parts of the state that were decorated with symbolic cues to commemorate the event. In other words, Chennai, Tamil Nadu and India were rebranded. According to Warnaby, place branding can be "accomplished through the processes of projection and introjection" with projection defined as "a process of projecting personal memories, sensory reactions, intentions and other meanings into spaces of consumption" and introjection defined as "the internalisation of meanings communicated by spaces" (Warnaby and Medway 2017 p. 219).

The process of projection is successfully utilised as is shown in the enthusiastic way in which people responded to the decoration of the city in a highly personal manner by taking videos and photos with the new decoration and posting them on Instagram, which is clearly a success of the symbolic interactionist aesthetic marketing approach. Introjection is not a one time process but an effect for future experiences as well "in this specific context, walking through urban space might remind someone in a nostalgic way of previous visits... and experiences enjoyed" even if "the shops are vacant" or in this case, even after the Olympiad has been organised.

Even though in the postmodern stage of capitalist art, "the distinction between art and marketing has all but dissolved", there is no question of 'selling out' as the marketing of the chess olympiad was purely perceived as the heightening of the cultural heritage of the country (Brown 2001). Cultural production also involves the celebrations of culture and so the central premise of the cultural production process - "that culture itself is constructed and negotiated by cultural actors (producers, intermediaries, consumers)" mainly through "an interplay of symbolic and sensory modes of experience and their concomitant meaning systems in which the

cultural actors are engaged” holds true to the marketing of the Chess Olympiad as well (Venkatesh and Meamber 2006).

The success of the visual directly resulted in the engagement of “social leaders (trendsetters)” and influencers who “are more socially visible and have more social connections than ordinary age group peers” whose videos and posts on social media platforms have “an increased ability to affect the behaviour of trendsetters may have a ‘trickle down’ effect on more mainstream consumers” (Hendlin et al. 2010). The visual appeal of the chess-themed decoration of the city resulted in videos of the same becoming viral. For example, the Napier bridge which had been painted as a chessboard became the distinguishing point of the promotional campaign and a video of the same by Drone Captures on Instagram received over 3.4 million views (Drone Captures, 2022). The decoration of Napier Bridge succeeded in “transforming space into an individualised place of consumption’ through the interpretive act” which is the epitome of successful marketing campaigns of a place (Warnaby and Medway 2017 p. 219). The New Indian Express reports that “hundreds of people parked their cars and bikes along the bridge to take photos” which meant that novelty might have played a significant role in capturing the attention of the citizens and in getting their approval of the Government’s decision to host the event in Chennai (The city police).

The Hindu Business Line states that India is “making big moves” and quotes the President of All India Chess Federation (AICF) Sanjay Kapoor: “If 1983 was the game-changer for Indian cricket, this Olympiad is going to be the game-changer for chess in India.” The multi-billion dollar cricket sector directly results in India’s economic growth, for instance, “IPL generated \$3.2 billion in economic value as per the study of the UN General Assembly for Peace and Development” (Shankar 2021). Sports sectors are not standalone enterprises and they contribute directly to a substantial growth in tourism and hotel industry, advertisement and viewership in the media, and cultural diversity contributing to celebration of national identity within India and the soft diplomacy placing India firmly on the global platform. As a way of sponsors, big brands invest in “non-cricketing sports” achieve greater “brand visibility” thanks to “India’s commendable internet penetration in recent times” that “has also helped erstwhile less-popular sports match up to cricket by way of interest and eyeballs” (Sannith).

Indian hospitality, which is a significant part of its cultural diplomacy, achieved greater recognition on the international arena with top chess grandmasters and journalists praising the organisers. It should be noted that all the main focus of the promotional advertisements was in welcoming the world to Chennai.

The following points sum up the aesthetics of marketing principles that were successfully employed in organising the Chess Olympiad 2022 that had an impressive nation-building on the international arena.

A narrative of leadership can be achieved with a narrative that is aesthetically pleasing. The dominance of cultural, national, linguistic identities is readily asserted when it is presented as aesthetically pleasing narratives with repeated interactions with symbolic cues. A nation with masterful cultural diplomacy though regarded as a soft power has the potential to become a global superpower.

A national identity is built through a strengthening of individual identities (marketing) resulting in a political identity built on cultural and linguistic identities of its citizens which would directly lead to a national identity on the global stage, the perception that has to be built in relation to the national identities of other nations which is the aim of diplomacy.

Soft power or cultural diplomacy is a driving factor for hard power. A narrative of cultural stability is an invitation to the global markets to invest in the country and the subsequent economic growth would in turn directly lead to military strength.

As far as marketing is concerned, the role of aesthetics is to increase receptiveness in its audience. Visual arts (paintings, statues etc) along with literary and musical arts (slogans, jingles, songs etc) have a demonstrable impact on lowering resistance and increasing receptiveness when it is deemed aesthetic by the audience.

Receptivity towards a cultural model would result in political parties adhering to it. In other words, there is a lack of polarisation. The unanimous support of the political parties is proof of stability. Just as similarity with

identification and awareness of a brand contributes to consumer retention, familiarity with a cultural model is an indication of stability which is considered a positive trait for governments as it contributes to consumer retention i.e., global investors.

Limitations: These aesthetic principles were effective as it was focused on linguistic, cultural and national identity building. The same effectiveness could not be achieved for products and projects that do not meet such criteria.

While it is true that the Chess Olympiad “dwarfs any other chess event in history” (The Guardian) and immediately reclaims India’s rich cultural history, it would take longer for the economic benefits of the event to become apparent (Barden 2022). The coming decades will demonstrate whether India would emerge as a global leader but it is undeniable that, to quote the Financial Times, “India’s grandiose Chennai Olympiad is a bid for global status” (Barden 2022).

CONCLUSION

Aesthetic principles used in marketing Chess Olympiad 2022 in Mamallapuram, Chennai, India ensured that viewers were able to forge a relationship between their personal identity with the event. The utilisation of aesthetic principles in the marketing of the Chess Olympiad 2022 fostered a unique and lasting connection between spectators and the event, contributing to its overall success. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister MK Stalin successfully demonstrated that Tamil Nadu, India is a welcoming global destination for investors as hospitality is the cornerstone of Tamil and Indian cultural identity. This article demonstrates that the Chess Olympiad served not only as a nation-building exercise with significant impact on its economic development but also resulted in strengthening the linguistic, cultural, political and national identity of its citizens which directly resulted in placing India as a thought leader in cultural diplomacy.

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