

Social outcomes from sport events: An empirical analysis of large scale sport events in Australia 1993-2007

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Aim of paper and research questions

This paper aims to identify best practise sport event case studies to contribute to a framework for planning, implementing and evaluating social outcomes. This paper will provide analysis of social outcomes from 7 government-supported events held in Australia from 1993 to 2007. Underpinning this greater understanding of how to leverage events and evaluate broader social outcomes this paper seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What objectives have been set out, and what has actually been achieved for cities through sport event strategies?
2. Are there broader outcomes from sport events that have been omitted?
3. What are the policy and planning implications for maximising sport event outcomes beyond economic objectives?

Literature review

Sport events have become part of an urban entrepreneurial approach used by neoliberal governments predominantly for economic development (Carlson & Millan, 2002; Hall, 2004; Henry, 2001; Hiller, 2000; Lynch & Veal, 2006; Monclús, 2006; Ritchie, 2000) and urban regeneration (Gleeson & Low, 2000; Vaz & Jacques, 2006). This has largely been the case in the Australian context (Gleeson & Low, 2000; Kellett, Hede & Chalip, 2008). As several authors have argued, hosting a sport event will not bring about change unless that change is planned for strategically (Chalip, 2003; 2004; 2006; Preuss, 2007). Yet, the planning and evaluative focus of such policies has been largely isolated to economic outcomes and broader social outcomes are often poorly articulated and rarely evaluated (Carrière & Demazière, 2002; Misener & Mason, 2006; Sherwood, 2007; Searle, 2002).

The literature suggests several concepts that constitute social outcomes from sport events from civic pride and psychic benefits (Crompton, 2001; Ritchie, 2000), to increases in physical activity (Brown & Massey, 2001; Murphy & Bauman, 2007), through to varying degrees of social capital (Kellett et al., 2008; Misener & Mason, 2006). However, policy implications surrounding planning for and evaluating social outcomes has seen only limited development (Kellett et al., 2008). This paper seeks to empirically review where event strategies have focused planning, implementation and evaluation of social outcomes in order to contribute to a greater understanding of how to leverage events for broader social outcomes.

Research design and proposed data analysis

This research proposes to address this gap by reviewing event documents from 7 sport events staged in Australia from 1993 to 2007. The review will empirically investigate government

rationales and orientations in sport events and in doing so seeks to understand how social impacts are approached from planning, implementing and evaluative stages throughout an event.

The 7 case studies have been selected through a stringent criteria sampling process, from a broader population of 600 events. Within each case study, documents relating to the events have been collected through a criterion sampling method, including bid documents or summaries (where available), supplemented by media releases, and event evaluations. This sample allows consideration of objectives of the events; the strategies utilised in the event process; and actual event outcomes.

Data analysis will take form through a quantitative content analysis conducted through a framework developed with Veal's (2002) 12 rationales for government involvement in leisure, tourism and the arts. This is supplemented by Gratton, Shibli and Coleman's (2006) balanced score card approach, with 4 elements for event aims and evaluation. This paper will focus on the social outcomes evident within the 7 sport events that are apparent across the framework used for analysis.

Discussion of progress

The content analysis of event documents is being undertaken as this abstract is submitted. There are two main points for discussion that have arisen as a result of the content analysis. First, there are limitations to the evaluation of events through the inconsistency of evaluations for comparison. From the documents collected for the content analysis, only a small amount were geared towards a comprehensive event evaluation, that is, looking beyond economic impacts. Second, the variety of approaches to and evaluation of social outcomes through sport events indicate that the development of event evaluation has been limited to economic aspects that result in place marketing. Evaluations of social outcomes are less developed, relying significantly on anecdotal accounts by event organisers and media reports.

The implication for the management of sport events is that it needs to be realised that narrow policy foci can lead to a narrow range of outcomes from hosting sport events. Moving forward, there is a significant need for the development of a framework that contributes to understanding how to leverage sport events for social outcomes and evaluate these.

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