

Session: **Research for management and marketing VII.**

Abstract nr: **EASM-0180**

Mega sport events and marketing places. The new identity and attractiveness of Turin after the 2006 Olympic Winter Games

A. Guala¹, P. Bondonio²

¹*University of Torino, Dipartimento di Scienze Sociali, Torino, Italy*

²*University of Torino, Dipartimento di Economia, Torino, Italy*

alessandro.guala@unito.it

Background

In the last 15-20 years, Olympic research devoted major attention to the implication of the Games on the hosting cities: these implications create brief and long term effects, with very different impacts. They affect the economy and the local development process (Preuss, Brunet), the urban shape and regeneration (Essex and Chalkley, Cashman), the territory and the environment (Spilling, Hiller), the communication, the image and the local identity (De Moragas, Roche), the citymarketing strategies (Kotler); a special attention is devoted to tourism, often related to the Winter Olympics; tourism some times is very important also in the Summer Games, as Barcelona 1992 shows. Olympic movement underlined this strategic issue in the 2002 Lausanne Symposium, whose title was "Planning the Legacy": this means two main problems, the *material Legacy* (buildings, facilities, accommodation...) and the *immaterial Legacy* (values, symbols, new image and identity...). The Lausanne Symposium investigated also the process of changing identity of hosting cities, with the aim to transform themselves into new ones, creating new facilities and infrastructures for tourists and city users, and betting on culture, "high quality free time", and mega sport events: the improved offers and facilities that can be useful for visitors and local population at the same time, and increase the overall quality of the city. This is the road followed by Turin 2006.

Introduction

Turin, the first capital of a unified Italy (1861), became in the XX century the automotive district of Italy and a typical "one company town", but in the last fifteen years reshaped itself into a recognized "cultural city", increasing facilities and attractions both for its citizens and visitors. The paper will discuss how the XX Olympic Winter Games, hosted in Turin in 2006, played a strategic role in that transformation, as can be evaluated both from data and opinions (gathered from citizens' and visitors' surveys). Before and after the Games a longitudinal survey, carried out from 2002 to 2007 by OMERO (Olympics and Mega Events Research Observatory, a special Centre of the University of Turin), investigated the attitudes of the population (900 cases each poll), and especially main expectations, fears, troubles, evaluation of the Games, participation; data showed increasing pride, a positive vision of the future, a better image of the city based on culture and tourism offer. Beyond this research it was interesting to verify if the trend was steady some years after the Games ended: new polls in Italy and abroad (in 2008 and 2009) confirmed this better Turin's image; tourism data (arrivals and nights) confirmed the positive trend of the city, after the OWG.

Methods and main results . Surveys on the new image of the city

Two surveys were carried out in 2008 and 2009; they used telephone interviews. A first survey was carried out in three Italian cities (2200 interviews, from Milan, Turin and Genoa – the vertices of the old “italian industrial triangle”), investigating the quality of life as evaluated by their inhabitants: items were the evaluation of the main services, the desire to remain in the city, the expectations about local economy, the symbols and values of the three cities as judged by their inhabitants. Data showed that Turin was much better considered than in the past, as verified by the previously quoted surveys about the post Olympic implications after 2006. This “new image” is related with the regeneration process that affected Turin in occasion of the Games; that process involved the collective mind; people discovered a new Turin, far away from the stereotype of the “one company town”. A second survey investigated 2100 people from France, Germany and Great Britain; item dealt with the degree of knowledge of ten Italian cities (within them Turin, Milan and Genoa), the travel to Italy (experience done vs desire to go), the appeal of visiting Italy, and a listing of positive and negative items (main goals, opportunities, stereotypes).

Data showed that Turin was improving its ranking in the world arena, but in the international imaginary Rome, Florence and Venice, and also Verona, were still too strong competitors: culture and tourism were positively associated to Turin, but great efforts in promotion and city marketing had still to be developed and implemented in the future.

The changing image of the city is a real turn in evolution of research on Turin: in 1989 a research on Turin’s cultural consumptions and quality of life showed that the identity of the city was mainly “industrial”, totally related to the automotive system; this evaluation was coherent with a previous research (1986), that described Turin as a city “too simple”, because structured like a *One Company Town*, and for this “too frangible” when the Fiat faced the deindustrialisation process during the ‘80s. The identity of the city has been changing: in 1990 Turin was mainly related to Fiat Company, Agnelli Family and Juventus soccer team, but now (2008) the surveys discovered new symbols diffused among the inhabitants, such as Egyptian Museum, Movie Museum, and the ancient Royal Palaces network: industrial symbols are fading, although the traditional economic core is still working, and new symbols are ruling.

Tourism as an effect of the regeneration process. Secondary data and main results

The second part of the presentation explores the post-Games increased tourism inflows in Turin, adopting both a comparative perspective and an impact analysis point of view, i.e. trying to ascertain to which degree they occurred *because* of the Games, and not just *after* them. If one limits oneself to analyzing hotel facilities, the offer of Turin increased by 28% in the last six years in terms of number of businesses/hotels (with a slight decrease in 2007 compared to 2006) and by 36% in terms of number of beds. Considering arrivals and nights, data show that arrivals and nights increased in Turin when compared with years 2002, 2003 and 2004 (before the Games), but decreased when compared with 2005 and 2006. Seen from an impact analysis perspective, however, Turin behaved better than three comparable Italian cities (Milan, Verona and Bologna); in addition, Piedmont region registered a considerable rush of arrivals, the best in 2008 compared to all other Italian regions. The trend is confirmed in 2009: this is an interesting result, considering the “life cycle” studies about Mega Events, which say that only after 5 or 6 years after the event it's possible to understand if the effects are “stable”, as suggested by the theoretical debate.

Discussion: what Turin can teach cities hosting mega events

The final reflection of the presentation will discuss how Turin has succeeded so far in transforming the XX OWGs' intangible legacies into a tangible and long lasting one. To do so, we must consider the main events (of sport, culture, or entertainment nature) that have been hosted since 2006, or are planned in the next years. The cultural and tourism "Renaissance" for Turin is founded also on projects of urban regeneration, promoted by Mayor Castellani and continued by his successor Chiamparino: the projects are related to the new Master Plan of the city, the recovery of abandoned areas, and the strategies for culture and tourism; this was the end-result of a process involving the active participation of many parties (public institutions, special interest groups, experts). The lesson we can learn from Torino 2006 is that Sport Events, and especially the Olympic Games, are a formidable occasion of visibility and promotion, but only if the project is carefully planned, paying attention to the long term material and immaterial Legacy. The Turin's lesson is that a mega event is useful only if it works as catalyst of urban change (Essex, Chalkley, Cashman), and if it really affects and drives the local re-development model (Preuss, Hiller). Future research perspective will investigate the role of middle and small events in the local communities at a regional level, and will define a set of social indicators to confirm the recent trends in tourism and culture consumption.

Specific references on Torino 2006 OWGs

- P. Bondonio, A. Mela, "Which legacies of Torino 2006 OWGs for the Olympic movement and the local society?", in J. Kennell, C. Bladen and E. Booth (eds), *The Olympic Legacy. People, Place, Enterprise*. Proceedings of the first annual conference on Olympic Legacy, 8 and 9 May 2008, University of Greenwich, London, 2009: 31-44
- P. Bondonio, C. Guala, A. Mela, "Torino 2006 OWG: Any Legacies for the IOC and Olympic Territories?", in Barney R. K et al. (eds), *Pathways: Critiques and Discourse in Olympic Research*, 9th International Symposium for Olympic Research, held at Capital University of Physical Education on August 5-7, 2008, Beijing, ICOS, London, Ontario (ISBN 0-7714-2518 – X), 2008: 151-65
- P. Bondonio, C. Guala, "Is hosting the Olympics worthwhile? Tourism effects of Torino 2006 OWG", in B. Wu and N. Dang (eds), *Mega Events & Urban Tourism*, Proceedings of the 2nd ITSA Bi-annual Conference, Shanghai, 6-9 Nov. 2008 (ISBN 978-988-17951-17-3), 2008: 15-40
- P. Bondonio, N. Campaniello, "Torino 2006: What Kind of Olympic Winter Games Were They? A Preliminary Account From an Organizational and Economic Perspective", *Olympika. The International Journal of Olympic Studies*, vol. XV, 2006: 1-33
- C. Guala, D. M. Turco, "Resident Perceptions of the 2006 Torino Olympic Games – 2002-2007", in *Choregia - Sport Management International Journal*, vol 5, n.2, 2009: 21-42

