
MEDIA ANALYSIS OF EVENT LEGACIES IN RELATION TO THE 2010 FIFA WORLD CUP IN FOUR KEY SOURCE MARKETS: IMPLICATIONS FOR SOUTH AFRICA AND OTHER MEGA-EVENTS

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Abstract ABSTRACT

As the costs associated with bidding and hosting of mega-events continues to escalate, the need to establish the benefits of these undertakings rises in step with governments coming under increasing scrutiny over the impact of these events (Preuess, 2007). The hosting of the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa was likewise associated with a significant amount of media attention and linked to a range of expected impacts, which continues to be debated and contested.

Given the recognition that the media is a powerful force in garnering attention on specific matters, the focus of this research is on examining to what extent the media coverage raised the issue of event legacies, which potential legacies of the 2010 World Cup (Swart & Bob, 2012) were addressed and whether they carried a positive or negative sentiment for South Africa.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Collins et al (2006) note that the media influences on their audiences are complex and significant effects main effects including; informing audiences, agenda setting through raising the salience of issues, and the importance the public assigns to these issues, the selection of certain parts of an issue by the media to highlight a particular aspect and the ability to persuade the public regarding the issues they present.

This study draws on a sentiment analysis of media coverage in relation to four key tourism source markets for South Africa: viz: UK, Germany, the Netherlands and USA. Capitalizing on the data sources used in

Swart et al. (2012) to apply an empirically-based methodological approach to the analysis of selected media sources the study deconstructing the media coverage's influence on mega-event legacy assessment. A qualitative analysis is undertaken including content sourcing, content identification, semantic cluster analysis and the use of Leximancer, which is an analytic tool that is used to evaluate the content of textual documents (Smith & Humphreys, 2006), in this case primarily online newspaper articles. For each of the source markets identified 400-600 articles were extracted and were analyzed over four periods: pre (two to one year prior), lead-up (one year prior), during and post.

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Mentions of the event and potential legacies for South Africa increased progressively across the time periods of the study from pre to post event. The media's influential role in framing the event legacies is evident in that the most frequent mentions of legacy occurred in the year prior to the tournament – the lead-up period rather than during or post the event. That is, setting the context for the assessment prior to the event. Indeed, following the event's conclusion, the lower rate of media attention seen in prior studies revealed an increased focus and intensity of legacy scrutiny.

The findings show that the media coverage included both positive and negative sentiments associated legacy concepts but that the event's success is reflected in the bias towards positive sentiment in legacy associations for the nation and the event.

Whilst the dominant legacy concepts in the media coverage centered on infrastructure and the stadia (with associated costs) the breadth of legacy concepts reflected in the media identified a view beyond a simplistic 'white elephants' narrative. Clustered close to the nation concept of South Africa, associated legacy concepts included economic, social, tourism, sporting and destination legacy concepts, establishing the media's ability to present and influence perceptions of the event's success across a dynamic range. In addition, soft concepts of pride and future opportunities legacy were also captured in the post period acknowledging the depth of resonance the event had on the cultural landscape of the host nation.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

As the first developing nation to host a FIFA World Cup the concerns of capability to deliver and potential legacies drew significant attention from the international media. That the assessment of legacy was not selectively isolated to infrastructure alone was encouraging, with further research over a longer post-event period of time required to assess whether these identified legacies were sustained. The extent to which the pattern of attention and breadth of legacy concepts may be repeated

in the media coverage of other hosts, is an artefact of the event, or host nation is not known. Further research undertaking comparative studies from other events and hosts could determine the extent to which the findings from this study can be generalized for mega-events in the future

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