
THE BROAD IDEOLOGICAL LINES OF STRATEGIC ORIENTATION OF THE INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC COMMITTEE: THE GIGANTISM OF THE OLYMPIC GAMES

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Synopsis:

Abstract:
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The growth of the Olympic Games, known by some as “gigantism”, was many times, through history, treated wrongly and given a negative connotation. However, without this growth the International Olympic Committee (IOC) could not have the funds to support the sport development. This shows the existence of an ideological framework that has involved the IOC organizational structure (Costa, 2014). In this study, ideology is considered as an interrelated set of principles, values, beliefs and concepts that adjust the organizational behavior in order to achieve specific goals. According to Pires (2003), the ideology of the IOC organizes a system of values that should guide its strategic actions and the development of sport worldwide. Drucker (1993) supports this statement by saying that the strategic process reflects the organizational thinking and the direction the organization wants to take. When properly structured, strategies put in order the operations of an organization (Mintzberg, 1994). However, the strategic process must be studied in its complexity. If a strategy is analyzed separately from the ideological and organizational process that formed it, a reliable assessment will be compromised. Currently, the IOC, through its ideological framework, provides a structure of ideas, beliefs and concepts that determine the strategic direction to be followed, providing the necessary guidance to ensure coherence between efforts and results of the Olympic Movement and the IOC itself.

AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to identify if the positions against gigantism, as well as those which were in favor of an appropriate management of the growth of the Olympic Games, structured together a broad ideological line of strategic orientation of the International Olympic Committee.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a documentary research in a qualitative socio-historical approach. The data analyzed consisted of 122 IOC minutes from 1894 to 2011, which were collected at the Olympic Studies Centre (OSC) in Lausanne, Switzerland. The time frame, beginning at the foundation of the IOC, was determined by the documents available in the OSC at the time of the data collection. These documents were used as reference due to the fact that the IOC meetings bring together the strategic apex of the institution and the members representing the IOC in their own countries. Furthermore, at the IOC sessions decisions are taken and important issues discussed shaping the development of Olympic sport worldwide. To achieve the aim of the study, the documents were analyzed through content analysis. The topics covered by the IOC sessions were categorized and classified according to their occurrence and relevance, generating the broad ideological lines of strategic orientation of the IOC.

RESULTS

Results show that the lines against gigantism, as well as those which were in favor of an appropriate management of the growth of the Olympic Games, both structured an IOC broad ideological line of strategic orientation. This Olympic ideological line of strategic orientation can be evidenced by the IOC presidents' management perspectives. Pierre de Coubertin's, from 1896 to 1925, limited the Olympic Games growth due to financial and organizational weakness. The complexity between different cultures was another issue. Later, from 1952 to 1972, Avery Brundage continued opposing to gigantism based on three major issues: anti-professionalism; anti-commercialism; sports apolitism. From 1972 to 1981, Michael Killanin argued that the term "gigantism" did not belong to the Olympic Movement lexicon because of its negative connotation, initiating a changing process. Between 1981 and 2001, Antonio Samaranch, with a well-established management organizational structure, consolidated an ideological framework that considered the growth of the Olympic Games from a positive perspective. Jacques Rogge, IOC President from 2001 to 2013, boosted a new management model by introducing important strategic changes, such as the decisions centralization in the Executive Board and the greater ease in Olympic Program voting procedures. All this process played an important role structuring properly the growth of Olympic Games, and left a positive legacy to society whenever the mega event was well-organized.

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