

How universities can leverage a major sport event: a strategic model

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Aim of abstract/paper

This research explored the legacy outcomes from collaboration between universities within three Commonwealth Games (Melbourne 2006, Glasgow 2014, and Gold Coast 2018) host regions and other Games' stakeholders, including the organising committee, city council, and government. The aim of this presentation is to introduce a model for how universities can strategically leverage a major sport event (MSE). As University-Industry collaborations (UIC) are often "managed informally" (De Wit, Dolfsma, De Windt, & Gerkema, 2016), this model is intended for future universities in MSE regions to use as a framework to identify key areas through which they can leverage the event.

Theoretical background

This project explored the legacy outcomes from collaboration between universities within three Commonwealth Games host regions and Games' stakeholders, including the organising committee, city council, and government. University legacies can be realised in many forms, such as increased interorganisational collaboration, new facilities, branding awareness, and student and staff opportunities. UIC refers to the formal collaboration (Bekkers & Bodas Freitas, 2008) between any aspect of the higher educational system and industry and is "increasingly perceived as a vehicle to enhance innovation through knowledge exchange" (Ankrah & AL-Tabbaa, 2015, p. 387). A combination of stakeholder theory and interorganisational relationship theory (IOR) was employed to identify the key goals of UIC and ways in which the Games can be leveraged in order to achieve positive outcomes.

Methodology, research design and data analysis

A qualitative multiple-case study approach was implemented for this research. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with key informants and document analysis of primary and secondary sources to examine UIC from three Commonwealth Games. One hundred and sixty eight documents were collected and analysed, including: official reports, bid documents, evaluation reports, newspaper articles, press releases, and websites. Sixty interviews were conducted with key informants from universities, organising committees, and government. Data were then inductively analysed in three stages.

Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

The results of this research suggested that universities are more aware of legacy in 2018 compared to in 2006. However, the evidence indicated that there was lack of strategic direction, planning, and support from the executive level to leverage the Games. Interviewees were aware that legacy does not occur without strategic planning that must start at least seven years in advance of the Games. For the 2018 Games, universities are now more willing to invest human and financial resources as well as proactively collaborate with other Games' stakeholders. At present, a preliminary model has been developed based on

components of Hede's (2008) triple bottom line stakeholder map and Chalip's (2004) model for host community event leverage. The complete and detailed model will be presented at the conference.

Key legacy areas that universities can focus on include: increase research collaboration, branding awareness, and student/staff opportunities. The primary result of the study was a development of a strategic model depicting how universities can leverage a MSE. Five themes emerged from the empirical data that provided the foundation for the model: 1) 'stakeholder relationships'; 2) 'strategic approach'; 3) 'leveraging obstacles'; 4) 'legacy'; and 5) 'missed opportunity'. Each theme impacted both interorganisational collaboration between universities and Games' stakeholders as well as any benefits realised by universities. The results indicated the need for a model in which future universities can use to leverage a MSE, to avoid UIC barriers of leverage, and limit any potential missed legacy opportunities. The strategic model offers the opportunity for knowledge transfer to future universities and MSE stakeholders.

Further, the model addresses ways in which universities can develop and/or increase interorganisational collaboration. Results may also advise organising committees, the Commonwealth Games Federation, and relevant government authorities about the complexities of stakeholders and IOR management.

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