

Sport and regional economic regeneration: A Case Study of Cornwall

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Introduction

Both in Europe and North America, it has been cities over the recent past rather than regions that have adopted sport-related economic regeneration strategies. Although many cities have implemented, or are considering the implementation of, economic regeneration strategies based on sport, there is considerable variation in the nature of these strategies from one city to another. There is also a notable difference between the strategies adopted in North America and those adopted in Europe.

In North America, Indianapolis, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Baltimore and Denver are examples of cities that have adopted sports-orientated economic regeneration strategies. Most of these strategies have been based on professional team sports, in particular, American football, baseball, ice-hockey, and basketball. In Europe, however, economic regeneration strategies based on sport have had a broader base than professional team sports.

Several cities in the UK (Sheffield, Birmingham, and Glasgow) have used sport as a lead sector in promoting urban regeneration. They have all invested heavily in their sports infrastructure so that each has a portfolio of major sporting facilities capable of holding major sports events. In addition to facilities, each city has a supporting structure of expertise in event bidding and management to ensure quality bids with a high probability of success and to guarantee high quality event management. Events are a major vehicle for attracting visitors to the city and hence contributing to urban regeneration.

The creation of Regional Development Agencies in the late 1990s with primary responsibility for regional economic regeneration provided another opportunity for sport to take on a major regenerative role. Most of the Regional Development Agencies have funded research projects aimed at using sport for economic regeneration. This paper reports on one such project funded partly by the South West Regional Development Agency that analyses the economic importance of sport in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Methodology

There are three components to the research methodology:

- 1 An estimate of the economic size and nature of the sports economy of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly based on the Sport Industry Research Centre (SIRC) economic importance of sport model.
- 2 The second component to the methodology analyses official data on employment collected in the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) following the guidelines of the Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) Regional Cultural Data Framework.
- 3 The third approach involves direct primary data collection through consultation with sport businesses and key stakeholders in the sport industry in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly.

Results and Discussion

The research revealed the following results:

- Sport accounts for a larger share (2%) of total economic activity in Cornwall than in England as a whole (1.5%)
- Although an underestimate of total economic importance to the sports economy (see below) the result for the study area is particularly significant, given its rural nature, as research elsewhere shows that sport tends to take a larger share of economic activity in cities

- Primary data collection needs to be extended to cover the peak tourism season in order to measure the demand side, especially the impact on related accommodation and food sectors. Until this is done, the economic importance of sport to the study area is likely to be a severe underestimate
- Key sports investigated were chosen as the most likely to provide measurable economic outputs
- The research for Cornwall has highlighted the fact that Government statistics (DCMS) only identify about 50% of sport related businesses because of the reliance placed on SIC codes which mask a number of sport related businesses
- The report confirms continued demand from manufacturing and service businesses for additional expansion land and premises which, if met, would underpin the value of their recent strong growth.

Since Cornwall is an Objective 1 area the results provide a basis for proposals to put sport at the centre of an economic regeneration strategy for the region.

References

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