

An analysis of the Impact on Sport Development Resulting from the Conduct of a Major Event

Danya Hodgetts, Central Queensland University, Australia, d.hodgetts@cqu.edu.au

Kerry Mummery, Central Queensland University, Australia

Mitchell Duncan, Central Queensland University, Australia

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Abstract

Research Aim

The aim of the current research is to investigate the impact that a major sporting event has on the development of that sport in the region.

Theoretical Background

While there has long been an emphasis on the economic and tourism impacts, there is increasing focus on other benefits from hosting major events, including leaving a legacy for the sport itself [1]. This sport development legacy might include increased participation, volunteers or coaching & officiating [1, 2]. It is not necessarily a matter of “build it and they will come”, a conscious, sustained effort is required in order for a sport to develop as a result of an event [3, 4]. In addition to this appealing concept of providing benefits for sport, there has been little research has been done to measure this aspect of an event’s impact [5, 6].

Methodology

A case study approach was utilised for this research project. The Australian Surf Life Saving Championships are an annual event with 6,000 competitors aged from 15 to over 70 and an estimated 100,000 spectators over the five days of the event. The championships are being held in Perth, Western Australia from 2007-2009. The 2007 event provided an AUD\$23m economic impact to the state [7], but there is no indication what impact the event has had on surf lifesaving in Western Australia. The isolated nature of the location provides an opportunity to measure the impact the event will have on the sport of surf lifesaving. In the initial phase, data were collected using in-depth personal interviews with key stakeholders in Western Australia.

The interviews were conducted 12 months after the 2007 championships to determine what impact the event has had on surf lifesaving in Western Australia. The interview notes and transcripts were analysed using Silverman’s four phase process [8] of data reduction, data display, conclusion drawing and verification.

Results and Discussion

Preliminary analyses indicate: an increase in profile through media promotion, a stronger reputation and relationship with government and other corporate partners, and, better competition opportunities for members. Membership has been increasing within the organisation, while this can't be attributed solely to the event itself, the increased profile and opportunities could be considered contributing factors to increased membership.

The interviews revealed that more could be done as part of the 2008 and 2009 event to create a legacy for sport development. The most prevalent were: to create better opportunities for local officials to be up-skilled and included in key event roles, encouraging local clubs to develop relationships with visiting clubs, and, making better use of local expertise to provide opportunities for improvement in event management.

The findings suggest that the event is generating some benefits in the area of sport development, but that further work is needed to create an ongoing legacy. Further research will examine the organisation's membership, coaching/officiating and competition statistics and survey the broader membership on the legacy the event has provided. These measures will be repeated for each of the three years of the event.

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