

# STRATEGIC LEVERAGING OF THE SPORT EVENTS: THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN THE LOCAL PUBLIC EVENT ORGANIZATION AND THE EXTERNAL EVENTS ORGANIZATIONS

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## Abstract

Aim of abstract/paper - research question

This paper aims to examine how relationships between local event organizers and external event organizers influenced the leverage process of different nautical sports events (Kite Masters Portimão World Tour, Formula Windsurfing World Championship, Sailing Audi Medcup, P1 Power Boats World Championship, Portimão Global Ocean Race, F1H2o World Championship) hosted in a tourist community of the Algarve. It focuses on interaction, links between practices and meanings, beliefs and activities of the different actors (Regnér, 2003). The analysis of commonalities and differences in practices and meanings between a local public event organization and the external events organizations, as well as the interplay of them gives some insight into the development of the leverage process. It also examines the activities and beliefs of the individuals because this dimension imprints changes along the process.

## Theoretical background

Research on events leverage has the focus on a strategic approach to events (Chalip, 2004). In our opinion, the strategic process in events development occurs in the interactions between diverse strategic views and actions. This process is developed by individuals and groups of individuals inside the organizations and sometimes in cooperation with external actors. The strategy-as-practice approach, as a conceptual framework, may help us to understand the phenomenon. This line of research has been pursued in studies on the roles in practice, and has sought to understand who is a strategist beyond traditional roles. It analyses the different ways in which strategies unfold over time, and tries to include external actors such as consultants, media, experts and institutional actors in the research agendas (Jarzabkowski,

2004). The strategy-as-practice approach shows how meanings change in interaction with external stakeholders (Roleau, 2005) and how managerial activities are closely linked to meanings and knowledge structures in strategy development (Regnér, 2003). Regnér (2011) suggests a focus on some subparts of the strategic process: activities and practices, beliefs and meanings. The importance of examining this is to have a detailed interplay between micro-conditions and the contexts in the development of the strategic processes.

## Methodology, research design and data analysis

We have considered a longitudinal real time embedded multi-case studies design to fit our research objectives. Fieldwork ran from June 2008 to December 2009, developed by direct observation during the events and through qualitative interviews prior to and in the course of the events. The informants were carefully chosen to include managers from the local event organization and from the external event organization in the different events. These managers held strategy-related positions (e.g. group strategy director, strategy manager) as well as non-strategy-related posts (e.g. marketing director, event coordinator).

Qualitative data was analyzed in two phases. In the first phase, a detailed event case was developed and in the second phase we focused on a cross-case analysis. The analysis consisted of multiple readings of the interview transcripts and field notes using a qualitative contents analysis approach. The coding procedure consisted in the identification of the respondents meanings, practices, activities and beliefs and the interplay between them in the development of the leverage process of the events. This data was systematically and progressively coded using NVivo 9 by QSR International. During this phase, data triangulation and inter-coder reliability checks were used to ensure the reliability of the data collection and analysis.

## Results, discussion and implications/conclusions

In the leveraging process of an event there is a plurality of actors which provides heterogeneity of strategic objectives and means. This research identified that acting and cognition (in an organizational or individual dimension) is influenced by a convergence of marketing, sportive and political factors between local and external event organizations. However, as far as the interests of the external events organizations more dynamic practices and activities were developed. This is an important finding as it may help sport event managers to be more attentive to the role they want the event to have in the community. Managers should be thoughtful about practices and meanings, explore alternative practices and meanings, and ask external actors to do the same in the searching of a broader and shared vision of the leveraging process and the benefits of the events for the communities. The development of the strategic leveraging process should take into account the historical social context in which the sport events takes place.

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