

Political support for the 2016 Summer Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro

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Aim

The objective of the current research is to explore and describe relationships among evaluations of the work of the organizers, perceptions of legacy, and political support to host the 2016 Olympic Games (OG) in Rio. Specifically for this paper, Brazilian politicians will be surveyed. However, this research is part of a larger investigation where different strata of Brazilian population were/will be surveyed. In a previous stage, Brazilian students were surveyed. In the final stage of this investigation, the author intends to survey a random sample of Rio's population.

Theoretical background

Sport governing bodies responsible for sport mega-events usually look for strong popular and political support before granting countries/cities the right to host (Preuss, 2004). Sport mega-event organizers have to know not only the level of support, but also the reasons for such support (Ritchie et al., 2009). Two sociological theories could explain the reasons why people support sport mega-events in their regions. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) proposes that individuals interact with other individuals (or organizations, Levine & White, 1961) because they expect to receive some benefits from this relationship. Theory of social representation (Moscovici, 1981) suggests that individuals create representations about everything based on the interaction between received information from outside means (e.g., media) and their own values. Based on social exchange theory, perceptions of legacy should affect support for the event. Based on social representation theory, evaluations of the work of the organizers (government and organizing committees) should also affect support.

Methodology

Considering the population of interest, political affiliation (right-wing vs. left-wing parties) of the respondent will be considered as a control variable. Questionnaires will be sent to all Brazilian national congressmen ($n=513$) and senators ($n=80$), Rio state representatives ($n=70$), and Rio city councilors ($n=50$), to get information from three different political levels – country, state, and city. Data collection will happen during April/May 2012.

Scales of this study were previously submitted to a panel of experts for content validity analysis. *Evaluation of the work of the organizers* is a second-order latent variable, represented by five first-order variables (facilities, transports, communication, security, and personnel), and three manifest variables each. *Perception of legacy* is a second-order latent

variable, represented by seven first-order manifest variables (economic, tourism, environmental, infrastructural, social, cultural, and psychological legacy) and four manifest variables each. *Support* is a first-order latent variable represented by three items. All items have the response format of a 7-point Likert scale. Data will be analyzed using Anderson and Gerbing's (1988) two step approach. Three structural models (fully mediated, partially mediated, and direct effects models) will be compared using SEM technique via Mplus.

Results

Results of this second stage (sample of politicians) will be compared to the results of the first stage of the investigation for the oral presentation. In the first stage (sample of 446 students), measurement model showed good fit indices (CFI = .948; TLI = .940; RMSEA = .059). All scales presented good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha varying from .717 to .908). All models had similar fit indices. The total variance explained in the dependent variable in the fully mediated model ($R^2 = 44\%$) was larger than that explained in the partially mediated ($R^2 = 41\%$) and in the direct effects ($R^2 = 44\%$) models. Descriptive statistics showed that Brazilians students (a) do not strongly support the country to host the Olympic games ($M = 4.8$; $SD = 1.7$), (b) do not believe the organizers have done a great job (means varying from 3.6 to 4.4), and (c) do not have a highly positive legacy expectation (means varying from 3.1 to 5.2).

From a theoretical point of view, the current investigation extended the literature by examining the mediational role of *perception of legacy* between *evaluation of the organizers* and *intention to support* a mega-event. Legacy is a far distant expectation of reality. People might use tangible clues (such as the work done so far) to express support. From a practical point of view, many important aspects, such as budgeting for construction of venues and infrastructure improvement, recruitment of volunteers, and people displacement, depend on support of politicians and society as a whole. Therefore, knowing the level of support from different strata of the hosting society in advance can help organizers to manage this support while preparing to host the event.

References

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