
Pre - event community impact of a major sporting event: The Asian Cup 2015.

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Abstract

The worldwide growth of events and their use predominantly for generating economic outcomes has been well documented in the literature (Gratton & Taylor, 2000). Attention of event organisers and host community residents, more recently, has begun to include a greater focus on the social value of events (Jarvie, 2003; Misener & Mason, 2006). Joining people together around leisure-based activities offers a powerful illustration of community and the development of social capital (Arai & Pedlar, 2003). The social value that events create is grounded on the development of a heightened sense of community, which through celebration, enjoyment and performance can bring people from different social groups together. Smith and Igham (2003) stated that sporting events can help those involved rediscover a sense of community. While the importance of social value is now being identified, there is still very little understood about how civic regeneration strategies and tourism development are being used to develop social infrastructure in communities (Misener & Mason, 2006). Social infrastructure represents the supporting social structures (i.e. formal or informal associations) enabling interaction among community members and neighbourhood networks. In addition, the degree to which the local community fits into the plans of a city's pro-growth agenda has also been questioned (Whitson & Macintosh, 1996). Exploring how major sporting events can shape community social infrastructure can offer insights into the broader impact (beyond just the economic) that these events can offer. Much of the literature that explores event leverage suggests that event outcomes - whether economic or social - depend on the strategies and tactics that are implemented to obtain such outcomes (Bramwell, 1997; Chalip, 2004, 2006; Kellett, Hede & Chalip, 2008; Ritchie, 2000). Most of the research in this area of legacy or community impact is predominantly focused on the actual 'during / after the event' phase. This research identifies the pre-event community impact / legacy, event organisers (in this case defined as the governing bodies – state and federal and

including state football federations; National football federation; state governments and local councils, Asian relevant community groups) are seeking from this major sporting event. This represents a subtle but significant shift away from mere impact to focusing on (from the perspective of event organisers), the leverageable event assets, and how they intend to capitalise on them.

Focusing on the AFC Asian Cup Australia 2015, insights were sought from the event organisers into how they perceive the event will impact on different cultural groups within a specific community and how they plan to enhance the experience of the event on the respective cultural communities within their host city.

Research Aims:

- To gain an understanding of how those involved in conducting a major event view their local community, in terms of its diversity and needs and views with respect to (1) hosting a major football tournament and/or; (2) a visiting national football team;
- To understand the views of major event hosts about the role in supporting community building through hosting a major football tournament and;
- To determine whether a major football tournament provides opportunities for social engagement which can create awareness of difference and break down barriers for individuals and communities;

Method

Since events provide a catalyst to promote civic pride, self-confidence, and residence quality of life (Eitzen, 2005), two main data collection activities were developed:

1. Document analysis. Documents about the tournament, plans and reports from mainstream media, government reports, event manuals etc. were searched for identifiable descriptions and mentions of community impact statements about the tournament in the local area. Information in circulation regarding this aspect exists within the media (Aussie Lebanese football cup aims to promote local heroes – The Age, December 1, 2013) and on specific football related sites (Melbourne ambassadors appointed for Asian Cup – Football Federation Victoria, 29/11/2013).
2. Interviews (of approximately 30 - 60 minutes duration each) were undertaken with major stakeholders within the five host cities (government, local organising personnel, state football organisers and local Asian community groups [up to 6-8 people per host city]), in order to determine their views and understanding of what impact the event and visiting national teams has on their community. Questions identified the purpose and approach towards integrating event strategies into targeted communities.

The information gathered from the document analysis and interviews is to be coded to identify major themes and the stated direction of the event organisers and local community groups identified. The results will be available for presentation at the Conference.

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