
DETERMINING EVENT IDENTITY. MEDIA ANALYSIS ACROSS FOUR EVENT HOSTINGS: IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH GAMES AND COMPETING FOR ATTENTION AMONGST MEGA-EVENTS

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Type: Scientific

Category: F: Mega-events - Delivering legacies?

Abstract

ABSTRACT

The Commonwealth Games first held, under its original name of the British Empire Games, in 1930 has been repeated every four years, barring only the interruption of the Second World War. Renamed to the British Empire and Commonwealth Games, then British Commonwealth Games in 1970 before taking its modern title in 1978, the Games seeks to remain relevant to its participant nations whilst increasingly its origins and heritage is consigned to a different and seemingly distant era.

Much like its parent entity, The Commonwealth, it has sought to endure in a shifting geopolitical landscape. The extent to which the Games can prosper and compete for attention in a crowded sporting event landscape is founded on its ability to remain relevant to the competing nations citizens and athletes, and its ability to attract cities willing/desiring to bid for and host the event.

The IOC's decision to split the Summer and Winter Games cycles into asynchronous biennial events from 1992, placed the Commonwealth Games quadrennial cycle in direct competition with the Winter Olympic Games. In addition, the rise from the 1990's of the FIFA World Cup as the mega-event second only to the Olympic Games, intensifies the competition for attention by the public, the media and ultimately commercial interests on whom the broadcast and sponsorship revenues rely.

Recognition of past editions of the Commonwealth Games remains bound to hosting cities (Westerbeek and Linley, 2012), but despite the Commonwealth nations representing nearly 1/3rd of the world's

population, the desirability and value of seeking hosting rights to future editions of the event has been questioned. The lack of multiple competing bids, the value of its broadcast rights and removal from the broadcast anti-siphoning list in the UK; compounded by plans for the 2018 host to reduce the scale and investment in the event signals concerns for future editions. For the Commonwealth Games to continue the ability to draw favourable associations and attention to a potential host city is a key factor being attractive to future bidding cities.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Given the recognition that the media is a powerful force in garnering attention and profiling the hosting cities (Avraham, 2000), the focus of this research is on examining to what extent the media coverage creates and sustains favorable event associations, and which of the potential event benefits (Preuss, 2007) are common to the hosting of iterations of the Commonwealth Games.

As noted by Collins et al (2006) that the media influences on their audiences are complex and significant in raising the salience of issues, and the importance the public assigns to these issues and the ability to persuade the public regarding the issues they present.

METHODOLOGY

This study draws on a sentiment analysis of media coverage in relation to four immediately past iterations of the Commonwealth Games, viz: Kuala Lumpur (1998), Manchester (2002), Melbourne (2006) and New Delhi (2010). A study base of 1200 news articles over the intervening period to which an empirically-based methodological approach to the analysis is applied. A qualitative analysis is undertaken including content sourcing, content identification, semantic cluster analysis and the use of Leximancer, which is an analytic tool that is used to evaluate the content of textual documents (Smith & Humphreys, 2006), in this case primarily online newspaper articles.

Recognising the development of the online media environment has developed manifestly in the study period 1998-2010 the methodology mitigates that effect in two ways. Namely by limiting content sources to that of major newspapers that have operated over that period, and focusing on decoding article content associations rather than volume of articles per se.

In considering a bid for the event, identifying the associations that persist across event editions and those that are isolated to individual editions of the Games, positively and negatively, can provide critical information for prospective bidding cities.

FINDINGS

[Whilst a preliminary analysis has been completed and the indicators are that there associations with the Games, and in particular the weight of positive and negative sentiment shifts with the perceived success of that Games edition, this study is still in process. Reviewers should be confident that the study would be completed in time for a full paper to be submitted for the EASM conference].

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

[In creating this baseline view of the past iterations of the Commonwealth Games and their associations over time, a comparative study is planned following the conclusion of the 2014 Glasgow Commonwealth Games, with a particular focus on any impact the preceding host may have had on the Games associations or sentiment weight.]

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