

Olympic Values And Population's Support For The Hosting Of Olympic Games

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Aim of the paper

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has been criticized for not relating Olympic Values to attitudinal and behavioral measures in populations (Milton-Smith, 2002). We assess the influence of Olympic Values on consumers' attitude toward Olympic Games and their support for hosting Olympic Games in their home country, depending on perceived corruption of the IOC. The measurement of corruption in the context of sport organizations and mega-sport event hosting is important, as many consumers associate opportunism and corruption with actors that stand behind these organizations and events (Mieth, 2007; Müller, 2015).

Theoretical background

Based upon the Theory of Self-Serving Behavior (Johns, 1999), which postulates that the mechanisms of self-serving behaviors in individuals, groups, and organizations can be explained by assessing incentives for identity protection as well as pursuit and protection of resources, we predict differential effects of three Olympic Value factors — appreciation of diversity, friendship relations with others, and achievement in competition — on both consumers' attitude toward Olympic Games and consumers' support for hosting Olympic Games depending on perceived corruption of the IOC. Specifically, we hypothesize that individuals who perceive high (vs. low) corruption levels within the IOC will have a lower attitude toward Olympic Games with increasing levels of achievement in competition, because the value relates to self-serving (vs. serving others). The perception of corruption likely makes consumers more skeptical about the concept of winning in sport. Appreciation of diversity and friendship relations with others are directed at serving others (vs. selves). Here, identity protection and protection of resources should be of little relevance. Thus, perceived corruption is not expected to influence the relationship between appreciation of diversity and friendship relations, respectively, and the dependent variables.

Methodology, research design, and data analysis

To test our hypotheses, we conducted representative surveys in three countries. 1,133 US-American, 1,149 German, and 1,145 Brazilian residents took part in the studies in 2015. They were members of a market research panel. In the online surveys, participants rated the extent to which 12 Olympic Value items could be used to describe the Olympic Values, measured on a 7-point scale from 1 = "does not describe the Olympic Games at all" to 7 = "describes the Olympic Games very well." Four items were used to measure corruption of the IOC (e.g., "I see no difference between FIFA and the IOC in issues concerning corruption"), anchored at 1 = "I do not agree at all" and 7 = "I fully agree." Attitude toward Olympic Games was measured using Simmons and Becker-Olsen's (2006) three semantic differentials ($\alpha = .95$; e.g., "negative vs. positive"). The validity and reliability of all scales were at satisfying levels. We also asked residents whether they support hosting the Olympic Games in a host city in their home country (yes, no, I don't care; Rio de Janeiro for Brazil [2016], Boston and Hamburg as potential host cities [2024] in the USA and Germany, respectively).

Results, discussion, and implications

We conducted a regression-based analysis to assess whether perceived corruption of the IOC increases the effect of achievement in competition (but not the effect of appreciation of diversity and friendship relations with others) on consumers' attitude toward Olympic Games and support for hosting Olympic Games, respectively. The three value factors (factor scores from the CFA after controlling for stylistic response behavior), perceived corruption (mean-centered), and their interactions were used as independent variables; attitude toward Olympic Games and support for hosting Olympic Games were the dependent variables.

The results showed that achievement in competition related negatively and appreciation of diversity and friendship relations with others related positively with attitude toward Olympic Games. There was a significant interaction between achievement in competition and perceived corruption (all other interactions were non-significant). The results could be replicated using the support for hosting Olympic Games as the dependent variable: at high levels of perceived corruption, residents who perceived high achievement in competition tended to rather not support the hosting. The likelihood was significantly higher when residents perceived low achievement in competition. At low levels of perceived corruption, however, high (vs. low) achievement in competition had no effect.

Despite recent evidence that more and more consumers question the necessity of hosting Olympic Games in their home country, which has been attributed to a loss of values in sports in general and in the Olympic

Movement in particular, the measurement of Olympic Values and the assessment of their predictive power are an under-researched area. We hope to contribute to partially fill this research gap and provide managerial implications to the IOC.

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