

Image Contribution of Youth Tournaments – An Overlooked Opportunity for Hosting Associations

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Aim

For a sports association hosting a youth tournament there is always the challenge of identifying positive effects of the tournament. Due to limited media interest, youth tournaments are usually investment cases, which can very often only be justified with the development of young players. The aim of this study was therefore to use the example of the UEFA European Under 19-Championship held in Baden-Württemberg in July 2016 to assess the image impact of tournaments of the U-19 national teams on the organising association – in this case the German Football Association (DFB). In addition to the overall impact, target group-specific hypotheses have been established: In terms of image enhancement, it is particularly possible to reach younger football fans - the first target group of such tournaments - and also the fans living in the "football periphery" (i.e. away from first league Bundesliga clubs and large stadiums), who are typically not offered senior national team football in their home region.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The potential image gain for the organizing association is a so far little researched effect. Common frameworks of event image transfer (Novais & Arcodia, 2013; Neijens, Smit and Moorman, 2009; Nufer, 2002) address the image transfer to sponsoring companies. Another set of studies investigates the event impact on the economic conditions and the (destination) image of a specific region (Preuss, 2007). This study builds on the image transfer models referred to above and enters the organizing association as the recipient of the image transfer. Thus, the extent, if any, of a positive image transfer and the reach of such an effect is to be investigated.

Research Design and Data Analysis

The image contribution of the UEFA U19 European Championship is based on several surveys carried out before, during and shortly after the UEFA U19 European Championship, which allows to determine the difference in image values. In order to isolate the contribution of the event and to eliminate influences outside of the event, control groups outside Baden-Württemberg (especially Hesse) were interviewed and compared with the results from the European U19 Championship environment, whereby a survey of stadium visitors was evaluated separately. In addition, further surveys were conducted almost one year after the event (legacy survey) in order to gain insights into the durability of the image effect. The questions were composed of both 5-Likert scales for measuring the image (negative to positive) for quantitative analysis and polarity profiles for determining the perception of the characteristics of the DFB image.

Overall, n=1104 data sets could be included in the study (adjusted), with individual survey series consisting of 180 to 260 participants, which, with the determined sample variance of the pre-test of $s=0.73$, allowed the targeted confidence level of 95% to be achieved in each case (Kexel, Pfeffel, Lee & Ratz, 2017). The data were first evaluated descriptively and then used to test the hypotheses and for multifactorial variance analysis.

Results and Discussion

The research question of whether junior tournaments have a positive effect on the image of the organising association was answered positively in the study conducted. The data collected in the context of the UEFA U19 European Championship (Baden-Württemberg, July 2016) suggests that the positive effect of the junior tournament on the image of the DFB in the case of conservative interpretation is + 2.4 %, in the best case with up to + 14 %. However, the tests of the above hypotheses on adolescents and peripheral inhabitants refute these hypotheses. For example, the variable age on its own was not significant in the variance analysis ($p = .139$). In the multifactorial analysis of variance, the involvement in the tournament was determined as a key driver of the subjective image assessment of the DFB. Pupils at schools that were addressed by the DFB with local campaigns before the tournament (DFB, 2015) have assigned significantly higher image values for the DFB than pupils at other schools. The biggest increase in image was recorded among stadium visitors as those attended the stadium showed significant differences in the post-hoc tests of the variance analysis compared to all other groups ($p = .000$).

Conclusion and Implications

The stadium visitors' high positive image value supports the assumption of the influencing effect of such an event. Because of the usual "class by class spectator acquisition" at these youth tournaments, one can assume - with undoubtedly some limitations - that they represent a random sample of the entire pupil body. In addition to that the good news for the organizing association is, that the school campaigns pay off - and thus that the reach of such a tournament can be increased significantly beyond the - theoretically limited - stadium capacity through suitable communication strategies.

References

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