Understanding the Role of Consecutive International Sport Events on Sport Participation: A Study with Different Age Segments

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Increased sport participation is among the most important reasons for cities and countries to host international sport events, due to various benefits including social- and health-related (Colberg et al., 2016; Hartmen & Depro, 2006), ultimately leading to economic benefits through reducing healthcare costs and losses from physical inactivity (Kohl et al., 2012). Nevertheless, the role of international sport events on sport participation are inconclusive (Weed et al., 2015) and this could be due prior focus on single sport events. Previous studies have not examined the impact of hosting international sport events consecutively in a city, which implies a strong effort form the organizers in the preparation stage (e.g. Tokyo 2019-Rugby World Cup; 2020-Olympic Games). Also, most studies have focused on increased sport participation among the general population (e.g. Cleland et al., 2019), and there is dearth of research on how these events may have differential effects on specific population segments.

Based on existing studies and associated gaps, the purpose of this study is to explore how older and younger segments of the population would change attitudes and behaviours towards sport participation when international sport events are hosted consecutively in their cities. The focus on these segments is justified by the fact that youngsters are more likely to be inspired by sport performances (Ramchandani et al., 2012), while healthy aging represents a key concern of cities due the aging population trend that is expected worldwide (WHO, 2018). The current study will focus on the two events hosted in Tokyo (2019, 2020) and critically analyse how the event planning, unfolding and post-event may affect sport participation among young and old people, and the associated spill-over effects from one event to another.

A conceptual framework is being developed to help explaining how hosting consecutive international events may affect sport participation among these population segments. Ramchandani et al. (2017) suggests that people’s pre-event behaviour towards sports often influences how they feel inspired from the teams/athletes competing in the events. Inspiration represents an important factor for increasing event satisfaction and change attitudes towards sports (Bottger et al., 2017). Weed et al. (2009) further argue that inspiration generated by sport events can be categorized into demonstration and festive effects. Demonstration effect happens when people are inspired by athlete and team performances (Potwarka et al., 2018), while festive effects are generated by the event atmosphere and supplementary events in the city (Cleland et al., 2019). Inspiration generated from the event and post-event often affects attitudes towards sport participation (Gucciardi & Jackson, 2015), subsequently leading to increased behavioural intentions and actual behaviours of sport participation.

Using this framework as a guide and following a longitudinal approach, semi-structured interviews will be firstly conducted in Tokyo after the 2019-Rugby World Cup. Then, new rounds of interviews will be conducted before and after the 2020-Olympic Games. This study aims to contribute to a better understanding of the role of hosting international sport events consecutively on attitudinal and behavioural changes of young and old individuals towards sport participation.