Residents’ Experiences and Socio-Economic Outcomes from Hosting the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games, Ten Years Later

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Facilities/Events - Sustainability (Olympic Sport)
20-minute oral presentation (including questions)
Session: Live Q&A for Facilities/Events (Asynchronous)
Saturday June 5, 2021, 3:50 PM - 4:50 PM

Abstract 2021-298
Mode: Asynchronous

Introduction & Literature Review

A growing discussion (and debate) amongst sport management academics and practitioners is the effects hosting major Games can have on host communities (Anderson & Taks, 2019). This discourse often focuses on event legacies (Misener et al., 2013) and the (lack of) evidence provided to show lasting effects from hosting major Games (Chalip et al., 2017). To date, scholars have sought to understand legacy typologies (e.g., economic, social, political; Leopkey & Parent, 2012) and measure potential tangible (e.g., economic; Gratton & Preuß, 2008) and intangible (e.g., social; Gibson et al., 2014) changes stemming from hosting.

However, another key aspect of legacies is their temporal nature; some legacies may be readily apparent and last for various periods of time, while others may take longer to emerge (Preuß, 2015). Despite their temporal nature, legacy investigations have largely been conducted over short post-event timeframes (the average primary data collection is four months post-event; Köenigstorfer et al., 2019). While some exceptions exist, they focus on one legacy (e.g., health behavior; Kaplanidou, 2017) or non-host residents (e.g., Hoff & Leopkey, 2019), rather than a multifaceted legacy understanding of host residents. Thus, the purpose of this study was to explore host residents’ long-term experiences and associated socio-economic outcomes after hosting a major Games.

Methods

The 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games address the need for longer-term legacy studies, and offers the context for the study. Data are currently collected through semi-structured interviews using a purposeful sample of 10-15 Vancouver residents, or until theoretical saturation is reached (Holt, 2016). Participants had to be 18-years or older during the event’s 2003 referendum and have lived in Vancouver since. This ensured all participants were legal voting age during the referendum and are able to reflect on their experiences over the lifespan of the potential socio-economic impacts of the Games. Interviews are transcribed verbatim and analyzed through Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six thematic analysis steps.

Preliminary Findings & Discussion

At the time of submission, nine interviews have been conducted and the “searching for themes” phase of the thematic analysis is ongoing. Preliminary findings reveal three themes: (a) value of hosting; (b) positive versus negative outcomes; and (c) want versus need. These finding indicate one’s perceived value of hosting can change over time, from discussions exclusively based on perception before and around the time of hosting to post-event anecdotes based on experiences. Outcomes that resonate with residents a decade later include intangible (e.g., community pride) and tangible (e.g., infrastructure) positive outcomes, and tangible negative outcomes (e.g., resident riots). Finally, beliefs that structural changes would have occurred without hosting suggest the event was more of a want than a need and highlight a “rich get richer, poor get poorer” narrative.

Conclusion

The study provides sport management scholars empirical data on the realities of event legacies and their lifespan, and advances our conceptual understanding of events and their (potential) legacies (Preuß, 2019). It also provides practitioners evidence to make informed decisions regarding future major Games bids, funding, and hosting.