Sustaining Olympic Legacy Through Strategic Resource Management in the Post-Games Phase: A Resource-Based View

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Abstract 2021-300

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

Olympic organizing committees and event stakeholders strive to create positive legacies (Leopkey & Parent, 2012). However, creating and sustaining legacy is challenging, especially after the event. Public support for post-event investment in legacy programs is frequently lacking (Gammon, 2015). Organizational, political, and personnel instability (e.g., organizing committees quickly disband after the event) also creates challenges in the post-event phase (Bell & Gallimore, 2015); as a result, legacy programs can become unsustainable. Despite potential challenges in the post-Games legacy phase, little is known about the strategies used to sustain event legacies following the conclusion of the event.

This study explores post-Games legacy sustainability strategies through the perspective of strategic resource management. This study employs the Resource-Based View (RBV), which suggests that organizational resources can be the foundation for strategies to achieve sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Given this understanding, this study utilizes the three levels of strategies proposed by La Piana (2008): organizational (cultivating the overall direction of the organization), programmatic (creating programs to achieve the organization’s specific goals and outcomes), and operational (developing systems and personnel). Specifically, this research addresses the following research questions: (1) What post-event legacy resources do event stakeholders gain access to by hosting the Olympic Games?; (2) What strategies do stakeholders employ for the use and management of these resources?; and (3) How do these strategies affect the sustainability of event legacies?

A single case study of the 2018 PyeongChang Winter Olympic Games was conducted (Yin, 2014). Since the conclusion of the Olympics, discussion as to how to sustain positive event legacies has continued. Thus, this case is a rich environment in which to examine how stakeholders can develop strategies to sustain legacies. Archival materials (e.g., legacy-related policy documents) and interview data (n=17) with key stakeholders (e.g., the central/local governments, sport organizations, a post-Games legacy organization) were collected. Data analysis involved inductive and deductive content analysis (Miles et al., 2014).

Five types of valuable, rare and inimitable resources emerged in the data analysis: physical (e.g., infrastructure), financial (e.g., the Olympics’ revenue), reputational (e.g., peace Olympics), human (e.g., event management knowledge), and intellectual (e.g., Olympic mascots). By using the image of peace Olympics, stakeholders developed organizational strategies for establishing post-event long-term goals, which influenced sustaining the Games’ momentum. Stakeholders also developed programmatic strategies (e.g., hosting sporting events, redeveloping symbolic Olympic sites) based on post-Games legacy resources, which directly influenced the development of sport, cultural, and tourism legacies. Finally, stakeholders employed operational strategies (e.g., strengthening institutional support, and knowledge management) to increase organizational and financial stability, which facilitated the management and sharing of post-event legacy resources.

To our knowledge, no study has employed the RBV to examine event legacy. This study employing the RBV enhances our knowledge of strategic management of event legacy by identifying different types of resources that can be useful for sustaining event legacies. Moreover, identifying three levels of post-event legacy sustainability strategies provides implications of how to facilitate the use, management, and sharing of post-event legacy resources to sustain legacies.