

BOCOG's road to success: How national identity, organizational identity and perceived mega-event benefits committed BOCOG employees to success for the Beijing Olympic Games

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Utilizing large-scale sport events as means of promoting national identity has been a key motivation whereby countries bid for and host mega-events (e.g., Booth, 1996; Javie, 1993; van der Merwe, & van der Westhuizen, 2007). The phenomenon is especially common in the bid and host of the Olympic Games (e.g., Waitt, 2003; Tzanelli, 2004; Xu, 2006). The prestige of mega-events spills over to the Organizational Committee (OC), thus making the OC a focal point through which the symbolism associated with the event is experienced and materialized (Xing & Chalip, In Press). The symbolism may be particularly salient to the OC employees who possess a strong feeling of identity to their country. The perceived significance of the Games may accord their job a sense of mission, thus mitigating the negatives of the job, promoting identification with the OC, and motivating them to contribute to achieving the primary organizational objective (i.e., the successful delivery of the event). Research has shown that employees may identify with their organization, which renders a sense of oneness with the organization and personalizes the performance of the organization as one's own (Mael & Ashforth, 1989).

Organizational identification, in turn, has proven to have a positive influence on many different concepts, such as loyalty, job satisfaction and performance (Meyer & Allen, 1991; Steers, 1977). Examining the identity of the OC employers provides valuable insights on their relationship with the organization, and impacts on their interpretation of job benefits and satisfaction. According to Xing and Chalip (In press), work at OC is often stressful, tedious, and mundane. It can be argued that the employers' satisfaction with their jobs may be compromised based on these conditions. Yet, work for a mega sport-event can render unique benefits to the workers. Aside from the symbolic value of obtaining a sense of being part of the history through work, a sport mega-event provides the workers with functional benefits to develop themselves and to learn the society by interacting with various stakeholders through the job; which is treated as an investment for the future (Xing & Chalip). This study examines the effects of event workers' identity with their country, organizational identity, the perceived benefit of working for a mega-event on their job satisfaction and performance during the Games' time. Each component might influence the willingness of the workers to put in an optimal performance. This is particularly critical during the Games' time as the successful delivery of the event is the ultimate measure of the organization's success.

Specifically, it is hypothesized that Event workers' perceived interconnection with their country (INTERCN) will positively affect their organizational identity (BOCOG ID) (H1), the extent to which they perceive the job has offered them benefits specifically related to sport mega-event work (BENEFITS) (H2), and the extent to which they commit themselves to the successful delivery of the event (CGS) (H3). Further, BOCOG ID will positively affect BENEFITS (H4), CSG (H5), and the overall satisfaction with the job (ALLSAT) (H6). Finally, BENEFITS will positively affect CGS (H7), and ALLSAT (H8), and ALLSAT will positively affect CGS (H9). 303 BOCOG paid employees participated in this study, evenly split in gender. The average age of the participants was 31.6 years old. On average, the participants had worked for BOCOG for 28 months (Minimum=1, Maximum=106, and SD=20.5). Existing scales were adopted to measure national identity, organizational identity (Heere & James, 2007), and job satisfaction (Voss, Parasuraman, & Grewal, 1998). Two new scales were developed to measure sport mega-event work benefits, and commitment to organizational success. AMOS 7 was used to test the hypotheses. The measurement and structural models were tested simultaneously. The initial model achieved a moderate fit (chi square/df ratio=390.853/161=2.428; CFI=.939; RMSEA=.069). In order to improve the fit, two problematic items were removed from the measurement model. The path coefficients related to H5 and H9 were insignificant (.618≤p≤.986) and subsequently deleted from the structural model. The fit indices for the final model were improved (chi square/df ratio=261.026/128=2.039; CFI=.939; RMSEA=.069). Path coefficients related to H1, H2, H3, H4, H6, H7, and H8 were significant (.001≤p≤.019).

The findings demonstrated the BOCOG employees' felt identity with China exerted profound effects on their identification with BOCOG, their focus on benefits uniquely derived from work, their overall assessment of the job, and finally their commitment to the success of the Games. Moreover, this study revealed that while the symbolic value of the event undergirded the overall work experience, the workers' perceived identity with China, their identity with BOCOG, and the extent to which they perceive their job offer symbolic and functional benefits attributed to their commitment to achieving the overarching organizational objective, that is, the successful delivery of the Beijing Games after seven years of preparation and planning. Remarkable was the absence of any effect from BOCOG employees' satisfaction with their job to their commitment to the Games' success. This is counterintuitive, as one would assume a satisfied worker would be more motivated to contribute to the success of the organization. It is likely that characteristics of the sport mega-event work setting may be responsible for this demarcation of job

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satisfaction and commitment to the organizational success. The significance of the Beijing Olympic Games for China may orient the workers to the superordinate goal, that is, the symbolic significance of the Games for the nation and its people (Xing & Chalip, In press). This may mobilize them to work hard on the successful delivery of the Games and suppress influences from their individual work experience. The presence of the relationships between the different phenomena emphasizes the importance of nurturing a sense of mission in OC by leveraging the event's symbolic significance in order to motivate the event workers to perform their best during the event's time. Even if workers were not satisfied with their work, and their work was found to be mundane and boring, the symbolic value of fulfilling a service to the nation, and the chance to be a part of something historical, made sure these workers were committed to the organizational goal of the BOCOG to make the Beijing Summer Olympics a success.