We Got The Big Ones! Comparing Brazilian’s Support for The 2014 FIFA World Cup and The 2016 Summer Olympic Games

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Brazil is going to host two of the most important sport mega events in the next five years. The 2014 FIFA World Cup (WC) will be host in twelve Brazilian cities and the 2016 Summer Olympic Games (OG) will happen in Rio de Janeiro. The sport governing bodies responsible for these events (FIFA and IOC) usually look for strong popular support before granting countries and cities the right to host (Cashman, 2002; Preuss, 2004). Ritchie, Shipway and Cleeve (2009) proposed that managers and sport mega event organizers should know not only the level of popular support, but also the reasons for such support. Two sociological theories could explain the reasons why people support or oppose sport mega events in their regions. Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960) proposes that individuals interact with other individuals (or organizations, Levine & White, 1961) because they expect to receive some benefits from this relationship. Theory of social representation (Moscovici, 1981) suggests that individuals create representations about everything based on the interaction between received information from outside means (e.g., media) and their own values. Based on social exchange theory, perceptions of local residents about legacy should affect their support for the event. Legacy, a multidimensional construct, has been defined as structures (benefits) that are consequences of hosting a sport event, and remain after the event (Hritz & Ross, 2010; Kim & Petrick, 2005; Preuss, 2006; Yoon, Gursoy, & Chen, 2001). Based on social representation theory, evaluations of local residents about the work of the organizers (government and organizing committees) should affect their support a sport event. Considering the social and cultural importance of soccer for Brazilians, social representation theory could also explain differences in support for the WC and the OG. We expected more support for the WC than for the OG. Considering both theories, the objectives of this research were: To explore and describe the relationships among the work of the organizers, perception of legacy, and support for hosting WC and OG in Brazil; second, to compare Brazilians’ support for these two events.

This research intends to survey different strata of Brazilian population in different stages. For this first stage of the research we chose undergraduate and graduate students. This is an important stratum because only 13.9% of Brazilian population has access to higher education. Higher education students and graduates look for and receive information that is usually not accessed by other strata of the Brazilian population. A sample of 3,688 Brazilian students was randomly divided into two halves. The first half received a questionnaire asking about the OG. The second half received a questionnaire asking about the WC. The questions of both were identical, except for the terms “Olympic Games” and “FIFA World Cup”, which were exchanged depending on the sample. We received 446 (26% of response rate, 142 emails bounced back) and 468 (27% of response rate, 119 bounced back) usable questionnaires from the OG and WC samples respectively. Respondents were mainly females (60.4%) and were, in average, 24.9 (SD = 5.2) years old for both samples. We compared early to late respondents to control for non-response bias (Miller & Smith, 1983). None of the variables showed significant differences.

Scales of this study were previously submitted to a panel of experts for content validity analysis. Evaluation of the work of the organizers is a second-order latent variable, represented by five first-order variables (facilities, transports, communication, security, and personnel), which are represented by three manifest variables (items) each. Perception of legacy is a second-order latent variable, represented by seven first-order manifest variables (economic, tourism, environmental, infrastructural, social, cultural, and psychological legacy), which are represented by four manifest variables each. Support is a first-order latent variable represented by three items. All items have the response format of a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). After testing the measurement model in a calibration sample, using CFA, we dropped three items and tested the same model in a validation sample (MacCallum, Roznowski, & Necowitz, 1992). Measurement model showed good fit indices in the validation sample (CFI = .958; TLI = .951; RMSEA = .056), OG sample (CFI = .948; TLI = .940; RMSEA = .059), and in the WC sample (CFI = .964; TLI = .958; RMSEA = .057). All scales presented good internal consistency for both OG (Cronbach’s alpha varying from .717 to .908) and WC (Cronbach’s alpha varying from .719 to .892).
Using SEM, we tested three structural models. All models had similar fit indices for both samples. However, the total variance explained in the dependent variable in the fully mediated model ($R^2_{OG} = 44\%$; $R^2_{WC} = 52\%$) was larger than that explained in the partially mediated ($R^2_{OG} = 41\%$; $R^2_{WC} = 50\%$) and in the direct effects ($R^2_{OG} = 44\%$; $R^2_{WC} = 50\%$) models. Moreover, the path coefficients from evaluation of the organizers’ work to support were not significant in either the partially mediated or the direct effects model ($\gamma = .069; p = .135$) for the WC sample. The same path coefficient was significant, but its effect size was quite small for the OG sample ($\gamma = .187; p < .001$). The fully mediated model was preferable for both the OG (CFI = .950; TLI = .947; RMSEA = .052) and the WC (CFI = .962; TLI = .959; RMSEA = .051) samples.

Descriptive statistics showed that Brazilians students (a) do not strongly support the country to host the sport mega events ($M_{supOG} = 4.8; SD_{supOG} = 1.7; M_{supWC} = 4.4; SD_{supWC} = 1.9$), (b) do not believe the organizers have done a great job (means of the constructs varying from 3.6 to 4.4 in the OG sample, and from 3.2 to 4.0 in the WC sample), and (c) do not have a highly positive legacy expectation (means varying from 3.1 to 5.2 in the OG sample, and from 2.9 to 5.1 in the WC sample). Contrary to our initial expectation, the means of all thirteen latent variables were higher for the OG sample than for the WC. A MANOVA, using all latent variables as dependent variables showed that only the means for infrastructural legacy were not significantly different between OG and WC samples. However, for legacy comparisons (except for social and cultural legacy) the power of the test was quite low.

Results of the current research showed that the better the respondents perceived the work of the organizers, the more they believed in positive legacy of sport mega events, and the more they expressed their intentions to support. Consistent with the literature, social exchange theory explained the relationship between legacy and support (Miloch & Lambrecht, 2006; Ritchie et al., 2009; Yoon et al., 2001). Like other studies (e.g., Zhou & Ap, 2009), this study found that the social representation people had about the work of the organizers can affect their intentions of supporting a sport mega event. The current investigation extended the literature by examining the mediational role of perception of legacy between evaluation of the work of the organizers and intention to support a sport mega event. This mediation model is an important addition to the literature of sport mega events. Since legacy is a far distant expectation, people seem to use more tangible clues (such as the work done so far) to express their perceptions of legacy and, consequently, their support to the events. From a practical point of view, these results highlight the importance of (a) the work of the organizers of sport mega events, and (b) an effective marketing plan to inform people about this work. Negative publicity about FIFA and WC organizers might explain the larger support for the OG, confirming theory of social representations.