Examining Successful and Unsuccessful Bids of Olympic Games Host Cities: The Case of The 2016 Summer Olympic Games and the 2018 Winter Olympic Games

Ari Kim, University of Florida
Kyriaki Kaplanidou (Advisor), University of Florida

Following Persson's (2002) study on the Olympic Games site decision making process, who suggested that the winning sites reflect a good fit between the views of the IOC voting members and the bid propositions, this study aims to examine the discourse associated with proposed legacy outcomes of Olympic Games candidate cities. A comparison will be performed between the winning city and the runner-up city on the bid components focusing primarily on legacy aspects for the most recent Summer and Winter Olympic Games host city elections. This will be performed in order to focus on the importance of specific legacy outcomes (as found in the winning bids) versus less important ones (as found in the unsuccessful bids). However, the files will be also examined holistically in terms of overall goals and objectives the cities presented to explore where legacy discourse fit with the rest of the candidate city profile.

Legacies of mega events such as the Olympic Games have been discussed extensively in the sport and tourism literature, primarily because of the importance of such events for worldwide exposure of the country and of its catalytic nature but also their uncertain legacy outcomes (Cashman, 2005; Kaplanidou & Karadakis, 2010; MacAlloon, 2008; Preuss, 2007; Searle, 2002). The bid cities propose their legacy programs to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) through their candidate city files who then evaluates which city best serves the Olympic movement ideology and holds promise for a wider societal intervention in the host city and country (Carey, Mason, & Misener, 2011). A comparison between the elected city and the runner-up city for both Winter and Summer games will shed light in the current views and discourse of the IOC regarding the overall direction of the candidatures and the fit of legacy programs in the overall profile of the successful and unsuccessful candidate city.

The current study has built on the review of bid books of the candidate cities and related IOC documents. In order to see the legacy of the Olympic bids, two candidate cities (one winning city and one losing city) of the latest bids for each the Summer Games and the Winter Games were included for the analysis. For the selection of the competing city, the candidate city which got the second largest numbers of votes (the runner-up) was chosen to be compared to the winning city. Consequently, the Rio de Janeiro (Rio) 2016 bid, the Madrid 2016 bid, the PyeongChang 2018 bid, and the Munich 2018 bid were reviewed. A set of 11 technical criteria assessed by the IOC Evaluation Commission – Government support/legal issues/public opinion, General infrastructure, Sports venues, Olympic Village(s), Environmental conditions and impact, Accommodation, Transport concept, Safety and security, Experience from past sports events, Finance, Overall concept (IOC Factsheet, 2009; IOC Factsheet, 2011) – has been analyzed for identifying the factors contributing to the successful selection outcome.

The clarity of overall vision and concept turned out to be the most influential winning factor for both winning cities, Rio and PyeongChang. Rio 2016 showed the vision of using sport as a catalyst for social integration of the country which is similar to PyeongChang 2018’s vision to accelerate growth of winter sports participation, particularly amongst youth in Korea and throughout Asia. The venue plan and the environmental project called 'Sustainability Management Plan' were also key winning factors of Rio 2016, which closely aligned with the overall vision of the Games to help disadvantaged communities throughout the Games. In case of PyeongChang, economic and sociocultural legacies resulting from the 2010 and 2014 Olympic bids had a key role to award the Games. Especially, ongoing educational programs since the first bid for the 2010 Games was well associated with PyeongChang's vision to provide winter sport opportunities to youth from countries with limited access to winter sports. Strong government support and public support was another key winning factor for PyeongChang. For both winning cities, recent mega sport event experience was considered as a proof of their strong ability to hold another mega event such as Olympic Games. For both losing cities, lack of the clarity of the vision is the most crucial factor for their unsuccessful bids. In addition, both candidate cities failed to convince the IOC of their sports venue preparation which is considered as a fundamental factor the Olympic bids. The IOC Evaluation Commission indicated that village plans of Munich 2018 were preliminary and lacking in detail. For Madrid 2016, the IOC Evaluation Commission reported that the city of Madrid might face financial challenges with the city’s venue construction plan. Both winning cities and runner-up
cities were well prepared in terms of general infrastructure, accommodation, transport concept, and financial support, which implied that these factors are not critical for the host city decisions of the Olympic Games.

The result from the review of the bid books and IOC documents suggested the candidate city for the Olympic bid to deliver solid vision, especially along with social integration and helping unprivileged population in the world. Venue plan, environmental policy, and post-game legacies accompanied by the vision are also the critical criteria to win the recent Olympic bids. In other words, lack of vision and concept for the Games would cause uncertain delineation for each factor, and eventually it makes the candidate city to be unsuccessful for the bids. The current research is, however, based on the review of bid books and reports from the IOC Evaluation Commission and does not include other sources. The analysis is solely focused on the technical criteria assessed by the IOC. Further research will investigate additional factors which could affect host city elections for the Olympic Games by reviewing supplementary documents or interviewing interested parties such as IOC members or administrators of National Olympic Committees of the candidate city.