

Model Creation for Leveraging Sport Events for Sport Participation and Development

Marijke Taks, University of Windsor

B. Christine Green, University of Texas at Austin

Laura Misener, Western University

Socio-cultural

Thursday, May 30, 2013

**20-minute oral presentation
(including questions)
(Room 410)**

Abstract 2013-067

3:50 PM

Major sport events are often highly sought after by host cities, largely for their economic and tourism impacts. Yet there is little evidence of sustained economic and tourism legacies from these events (e.g., Baade & Matheson, 2001, 2006; Késenne, 2005, 2012; Leeds, Mirikitani, & Tang, 2009; Matheson, 2005, 2009; Porter & Fletcher, 2008; Preuss, 2005). Consequently, researchers and politicians alike have argued for investigation of the capacity of sport events to provide more sustainable impacts on their host communities (e.g., Brown & Massy, 2001; Ritchie, 1984). This has resulted in increased interest in the social impacts that can accrue to host cities (Chalip, 2006). Studies of the social impact of major sport events have examined a wide variety of social impacts, and, unsurprisingly have shown mixed results. Given the centrality of sport in these events, coupled with increasing public concern over the lack of physical activity across the population, stimulating sport participation is a desirable outcome of hosting sport events. Claims that sport events foster sport participation are indeed found in most bid documents of sport events, and are based on the notion of the so called “demonstration effect” (Weed et al., 2009) or “trickle-down effect”, which suggests that the successes of elite level athletes will inspire others to become more active and get involved, resulting in increased levels of sport participation and physical activity (e.g., Hindson et al., 1994). Evidence supporting this ‘trickle-down effect’ is largely anecdotal (Coalter, 2004), and is mainly focused on major sporting events (Bauman et al., 2001; Hindson et al., 1994; SportScotland, 2004). Weed and his colleagues conducted a worldwide review of evidence about the impacts of mainly large-scale sport events on physical activity (2009; 2012). This review suggests that events do have the capacity to enhance sport participation, but the effects are limited at best and are more likely to enhance retention than to recruit new participants into sport.

It is important to note, however, that these studies have been focused on outcomes and legacies of major sport events. This is problematic in two ways: (1) large-scale events occur infrequently, therefore their ongoing use as a tool to increase active participation is limited, and (2) the legacy framework assumes that the event, in and of itself, is sufficient to produce the desired outcomes. More recent work has shown this approach to be insufficient (Chalip, 2004, 2006). Instead of assuming that the event will produce desirable outcomes, theories of event leverage highlight the importance of strategic planning to develop and implement tactics based on the event and the activities surrounding the event in order to ensure that the desired benefits accrue to the host city.

The purpose of this research was to bring together experts to consider potential leveraging strategies and tactics that would be necessary to create or enhance sport participation and development via the hosting of mid-sized sport events.

A task force of experts was identified and invited to participate in a one day brainstorming session to consider the challenges and prospects of leveraging sport events for sport participation and development by local organizations. The panel of experts was comprised of 12 experts from a variety of organizations that would (or could) be involved in (and benefit from) leveraging sport events for participation and development. The panel consisted of two marketers, two public school representatives, two event experts, three (public sector) sport executives, one parks and recreation executive, one university sport administrator, and one community development specialist. The 12 experts were assigned to one of three smaller groups. A dialectical decision-making process was used. The day began with an introduction with the entire panel. Small group break-outs then began with nominal group technique, followed by a brainstorming session, and ending with a group discussion. The groups chatted informally over lunch, then the break-out groups repeated the morning procedures based on a new set of prompts. All groups presented their ideas to the full group at the end of the day, which was followed by a group discussion. Three trained facilitators enabled the brainstorming sessions in which the following questions, addressed in hierarchical order, guided the process: (a) What we have available: opportunities / resources / points of leverage; (b) what could get in the way: barriers / constraints; (c) how we might proceed: strategies & tactics; and, (d) how to make it happen: implementation. The research team recorded the outcomes of each step in the process. The notes from all sessions

2013 North American Society for Sport Management Conference (NASSM 2013)

were content analyzed, resulting in the development of a model for leveraging sport events for sport participation and development.

The model consists of three elements: (1) a series of concentric circles representing the hierarchical nature of the context, (2) three slices representing the three types of organizations with a stake in the leveraging process, and (3) three rays representing categories of resources needed. The center of the model reflects the core of any leveraging effort – the sport participation and development (SPD) goals of three types of organizations (the event, the sport(s), and/or non-sport entities). It is important to note that the SPD goals can be driven by any one of these entities or can be shared goals. However, the goals must, at minimum, be in alignment with one another. The goals are context specific and are expected to vary based on the type and scope of the event, as well as the community and geographic context of the event. All other aspects of the model will affect the strategies and tactics to support the goals: the systems and structures (of the event, the sport, and the non-sport entities); as well as the resources (physical, human, and knowledge-based) that are mobilized to implement the strategies and tactics. It is important to note that these resources are three dimensional, indicating that the resources (can) pertain to each entity, or even overflow entities (i.e., event, the sport, and/or the non-sport). The concentric circles represent the hierarchical nature of the context. Structures and systems are developed, accepted, and sustained in response to attitudes and opinions, which are in turn influenced by the broader cultural values in which they are embedded. Each of the contextual factors represented by the concentric circles both affects and is affected by the resources available – physical, human, and knowledge-based resources. Thus, these resources are represented as rays that cut across and interact with each level of the model, but also with each entity.

The model suggests the need to work cooperatively with other sectors to develop strategies and tactics that are aligned across the community. Importantly, the model extends beyond the local event organizing committee to include other sport and non-sport entities. This is particularly important for implementation of leveraging tactics, as the local event organizing committee is so focused on event operations, there is little ability to implement programs in ways that will be sustainable. The model provides specific guidelines for strategic planning and implementation.