Development and Pilot Test of a Mega-Sport Event Leveraging Toolkit

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Facilities/Events - Other (International Sport)
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Background
The prospect of creating enduring legacies has become one of the primary motivators for cities and nations to host mega-sport events (MSEs) (Preuss, 2007). MSEs require substantial investment by their hosts and attract considerable media attention (Horne, 2007). The rising cost of hosting MSEs, controversies over host government spending, allegations of corruption, and increased scrutiny by a variety of stakeholders have led to concerns over the ‘sustainability’ of MSEs. This has resulted in a shift in focus from the short-term impacts of MSEs to a growing interest in the longer-term ‘legacies’ of these events.

Most evaluations of MSE legacy have focused almost exclusively on the outcomes of an event (i.e., whether legacies have occurred or the types of legacies experienced after the event). However, recent work in this area has emphasized increasing our understanding of how legacy outcomes were or were not achieved (O’Brien & Chalip, 2007). This approach represents a shift from conceptualizing legacy as a concept occurring solely due to the presence of a MSE, to focusing on how institutions, groups, and communities leverage MSEs at a local level to achieve desired legacy outcomes (Chalip, 2004). The underlying assumption of leveraging is that legacy outcomes are best facilitated through multi-level collaboration between macro-level (e.g., host committees or governing bodies) and micro-level actors (e.g., community groups, sport clubs, businesses). According to Chalip (2006), legacy plans are often not realized because organizing committees do not activate local networks to leverage the event.

Purpose
While the initial conceptual framework for leveraging was introduced by Chalip (2004, 2006), O’Brien (2006), and others, more empirical work is needed to systematically assess its multiple dimensions. Thus, the purpose of this study was to develop and pilot test a leveraging toolkit to examine how English rugby clubs leveraged the 2015 Rugby World Cup (RWC) to meet strategic commercial, social, and sport development objectives aligned with proposed legacy goals of the Rugby Football Union (the event’s local organizing body).

Previous research on leveraging has been primarily qualitative and focused on small-scale case studies. Thus, the degree to which grassroots organizations leverage MSEs and for what goals is not fully understood at a generalizable level. This study represents the first attempt to measure leveraging activities for a MSE on a larger quantitative scale.

Methods
The leveraging toolkit is based on extant theoretical frameworks related to components of social (Chalip, 2006), business (O’Brien, 2007), and sport development (Veal et al., 2012) leveraging. Questions were developed based on key activities associated with the implementation of these strategies. Respondents were asked in indicate how frequently potential activities were conducted on a scale from 1 (Never) to 5 (A great deal). Example activities included “Implemented special promotions around the [Event] targeted at increasing sales of products or services offered by the club (e.g., tickets, memberships, club merchandise” (business); “Created themed social spaces to celebrate the [Event] at your club or within your community” (social); and “Staged rugby demonstration programs within schools or local communities related to the [Event]” (sport development). A 4-item scale measuring perceptions of the amount of support provided by relevant governing bodies (financial support, technical support, promotional support, and product support) to achieve club objectives was also included. Finally, items assessing perceptions of short-term impacts of the RWC on club objectives (financial, social, and sport development) were included.

After developing the initial leveraging scales, the toolkit was revised based on qualitative feedback from four purposively selected Philadelphia-based rugby clubs prior to the 2015 Collegiate Rugby Championships (CRCs) in
Results
The reliability of leveraging scales utilized in the toolkit were supported by measures of Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha > .800$) and test-retest correlations ($r > .800$) in the sample of NC rugby clubs. In the sample of English rugby clubs, scales for all three dimensions were reliable with alpha measures of .878 for business leveraging (6 items), .873 for sport development leveraging (5 items), and .727 for social leveraging (5 items). The governing body support scale also had high reliability ($\alpha = .859$). Overall, clubs were more likely to engage in social leveraging activities than business or social leveraging activities. Interestingly, regression results indicated that local leveraging activities alone were significantly associated with promoting club image, increasing social interaction, promoting a feeling of celebration, and promoting the sport of rugby. Perceived governing body support alone was associated with increased club revenues. Finally, both local leveraging and governing body support were associated with improving local rugby programs and the recruitment of new players to clubs.

Conclusions
In addition to providing support for the reliability of the leveraging toolkit, this study presents several intriguing findings that suggest the need for further study. Specifically, results suggested that local leveraging activities were associated with perceived impacts of the RWC in relation to club objectives. Most notably, social objectives were achieved predominantly through local activities, which were also the activities clubs reported engaging in the most. However, business objectives and sport development objectives, the latter being a primary legacy objective of RWC organizers, may require cooperation between national sport governing bodies and local clubs in order to achieve objectives. In addition to discussing these findings, our presentation will also focus on planned future applications of the leveraging toolkit to other MSEs.