

The influence mega events have on tourism tourism essay



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These days a huge range of mega-events is offered to diverse target groups. According to Getz (1991) as cited in Robertson (2006) sport events are more famous for male participants whereas arts and cultural events gain more importance for female participants. The range of mega-events offered are big sporting events like the Olympic Games, the FIFA football World Cup, Formula One, as well as many more disciplines. Furthermore there are also World's Fairs like the Expo or big music festivals as for example the Glastonbury Festival in the southwest of England, just to name some of the numerous offers. All of them are in different countries, regions or cities spread out all over the world. Some of them always stay in one location whereas others change the venue each time. Besides there is also a variation in the frequency the events take place. There are some events that are hold several times during a year and there are also events that are once a year whereas many only even occur every second or fourth year.

The aim of this essay is to critically assess the influence mega-events have on tourism. Furthermore it contains general information about mega-events, like definitions. As there is a huge range of different events along with many issues, the focus is mainly on sports mega-events.; on their diverse stakeholders as well as especially on the task of hosting them. The outcome is a conclusion and recommendations for future mega- events.

Mega-events in general are not easy to define due to the previously named different forms that are existing. In 1988 Jafari did not know how to clearly define them. For him it was not clear what an event needed to fulfil to be considered a mega-event. Therefore he had the following questions that needed to be answered beforehand: Is it more important to consider “ the <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-mega-events-have-on-tourism-tourism-essay/>

number of visitors attracted”? Or should it be the duration or the orientation it has that makes it a mega-event? (Jafar Jafari, 1988: 272).

However, Robertson (2006: 1) presented the definition Roche (1994) made: “Mega-events are best understood as large-scale cultural (including commercial and sporting) events which have a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance.” Roche avoids paying attention to the duration but in contrast considers the international importance as a key-value. Regarding the ‘global significance’ he mentions within his definition, this leads perfectly to sports mega-events which are performed by international athletes and simultaneously are watched all over the world. But before even arguing about sports mega-events it is important to define what they are considered to be.

According to Horne (2006) “sport mega-events are important elements in the orientation of nations to international or global society.” As can be seen here, Horne talks about the importance of the ‘global thought’ as well. This makes obvious that mega-events always have an influence on the whole world and therefore as well impacts on it. There is the possibility that they take place almost all over the world and besides that the visitors are coming from all over the world, too, to watch such a spectacle, which covers the tourism aspect in this case. But it is important to be aware that every single event has a different number of visitors coming due to several reasons. The author of this essay has the opinion that above all it is necessary to look at the place the event takes place. This is very significant because of probably existing political issues for example, tourists would rather visit a country where they feel safe than a country where they possibly would be afraid of.

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So the number of visitors attracted is not only dependent on the theme of the event itself but also on the country where it takes place.

One central question is: why did mega-events gain such an importance for the whole global community within the last years? To clarify this question Horne (2006) suggests as stated in Robertson (2006: 2) that there are “three reasons for the expansion and growing attraction of mega-events.” Firstly he mentions the media as an important factor for it. The possibility to use mass communication is responsible for “unprecedented global audiences” for these spectacles. As can be seen, the media makes it possible for the whole world to participate in a certain way in mega-events by e. g. watching them or reading about them in newspapers. Secondly he names a model called “tri-partite model”. Within this model are “sponsorship rights, exclusive broadcasting rights and merchandising” which “have been attracting sponsors by the association with the sports and the vast global audience exposure the events achieve.” (Robertson, 2006: 2). And thirdly there is also the importance of applying as host nation, city or region because according to the above mentioned author mega-events “have become seen as valuable promotional opportunities for cities and regions.” Regarding above all the third reason makes it obvious why there are always so many cities, regions and nations applying to host such a big spectacle. Nevertheless, these bidders should take into consideration that hosting a mega-event can also cause negative impacts. For example for the Olympic Games 2008 in Beijing a huge number of people has been displaced in the preparation of the Games for building the required infrastructure. This is a really bad issue because the same problem will inevitable occur for the

Olympic Games taking place in London 2012 and probably also for the upcoming Games in the future.

However, when thinking about this it is not really reasonable that for example the local population has to suffer when a mega-event is taking place in the area where they are living. Otherwise hosting a mega-event has many advantages for the host city, region or country: numerous jobs are created and most notably there is the possibility of enlarging tourism. But according to Roche (2000: 141): “[...] any new bid is likely to focus on long-term image-building and not short-term touristic economic returns.” That means that those responsible of a possible host city or country know, that they probably will not benefit from the event short-term but there will be more tourism long-term due to an improved image for example. This goes along with Kang and Perdue (1994) as cited in Roche (2000: 141): “ mega-events have a long-term impact on international tourism to the host country; the impact is the greatest in the year following the event and diminishes over time.” Besides that there are other authors who also see the possible economic impact. As stated by Toohey and Veal (2007) the potential positive economic effect is the reason for cities and nations to bid to host a mega-event. In addition to the possibility to enlarge tourism in long-term there are several other stimuli to host a mega-event according to Richard Cashman (1999) as cited in Toohey and Veal (2007: 74): He mentions “ different forms of legacies like economic benefits, built environment (transport infrastructure), public life, politics, culture and built sporting infrastructure.” All these legacies benefit the host city or country long-term.

Additionally to the long-term impacts there is always the danger of wrong estimations according to Horne (2006) as stated in Robertson (2006: 5): “[...] forecasts are nearly always wrong. [...] A major concern in considerations of sports mega-events has been the gap between the forecast and actual impacts on economy, society and culture.”

According to Horne and Manzenreiter (2006) another important fact is that on the one hand some areas will benefit through tourists visiting a mega-event but on the other hand the organizers have to be aware that tourists who maybe would have come to visit the city or region will not come because they are not interested in the event. There will always be a lot of people who come because of the event taking place but there will also be enough people who avoid to visit the host city or region because they are maybe not interested in the event that is offered or they do not want to be in that particular place when there are so many other people at the same time.

According to Kim and Chalip (2004: 695) “ marketers of mega-events have the need to stimulate international visitation to their event in order to optimize the events financial and tourism outcomes.” As seen it is the task of the marketers to make a mega-event attractive to appeal to as many tourists as possible.

Regarding the aspect of attracting tourists Kim and Chalip (2004) consider events as pull-factors for destinations. In the opinion of the author of this essay it is therefore important for destinations to host mega-events to attract tourists. This goes along with Alexandris et al. (2009), who mention that “ mega-events play an important role in strategies that expressly target

an international tourism market.” In addition to this, Weed (2008: 296) states that “ The main economic benefit for a region derives from the consumption by visitors during the event and increased tourism in the post event period.” As can be seen he also mentions the increase of tourism after the event took place and additionally brings up the theory of consumption during the event. But it is not easy to estimate the economic benefit that will be made through hosting a mega-event because along with Preuss (2008) as cited in Weed (2008: 296) “ one of the main hurdles in determining the economic impact of major multi-sport events on a city or region is the lack of knowledge on consumption patterns of visitors and the number of persons that are visiting the event.”

As a mega-event is such a big spectacle has to be planned for a very long time. According to Robertson (2006: 10) “[...] things come together after months and sometimes years of planning.” Therefore different stakeholders are essential as there are so many tasks that have to be fulfilled and as there is the need of a huge amount of money to make mega-events happen. This leads to a very important question: who is paying for organising any kind of mega-event? A perfect example that shows the complexity about funding a mega-event are the upcoming Olympic Games in London 2012. As the official Internet website presentation of the Olympic Games in London states, there are “ two key organisations – one private, one public.” (London 2012, 2010). According to this website the private sector is the ‘ London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games’ (LOCOG). The budget they have will be delivered through the private sector by for example the sale of tickets and merchandising articles, as well as it

will receive income from the 'International Olympic Committee' (IOC) and additional money through a "domestic sponsorship programme". (London 2012, 2010). The public sector, which is responsible for the new venues and the infrastructure, is represented by the 'Olympic Delivery Authority' (ODA). "The ODA is funded by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport, the Greater London Authority, the London Development Agency and the Olympic Lottery Distributor." (London 2012, 2010). As can be seen there are many different organizations that have to pay a huge amount of money to fund this specific big spectacle. And of course it would not be possible to make such an event happen if there would not be so many funding it.

Nevertheless, as mentioned by Toohey and Veal (2007) the host city or country knows beforehand that hosting a mega-event will cost them more money than they in fact will gain. So why are there each time so many bidders who want to host a mega-event? This question can easily be answered with the already above mentioned arguments that the long-term impacts of these events are more important for a city or the whole country than the fact that they have to pay more money than they actually will receive through hosting them. This was already found out by Pyo et al. (1988) by looking on several Olympic Games between 1964 and 1984, that "there were not enough visitors and there was not enough spending by them to justify the event costs." (Pyo et al., 1988: 141).

Along with Toohey and Veal (2007: 127) the most important source of income for the organizers are the broadcasting rights: "[...] the Olympic Movement is significantly dependent on income from broadcasting rights."

Furthermore they list some other "main sources of income for Game events: <https://assignbuster.com/the-influence-mega-events-have-on-tourism-tourism-essay/>

world and local sponsorship, ticket sales, lottery, sale of merchandising articles as well as Government donations.” (Toohey and Veal, 2007: 135). These statements show that there are many sources where money can be gained before and during a mega-event but it has always and probably will always be less than the money spend beforehand and during the event by the organizers.

Research for this essay shows that it is not easy to define mega-events in one term due to the huge range of existing events. Nevertheless there are various kinds of events that are called mega-events even if some have a lot more visitors than others. Besides each single event has a different target group that is attracted by it.

The fact that mega-events can take place practically all over the world makes them a contemporary issue for the travel and tourism industry. There may be some tourists who could be afraid to visit a certain country for example due to political issues. Therefore each country that is chosen to host a mega-event will have different impacts. There will always be a difference in the number of visitors attracted to an event and above all each host city or country will have different long-term tourism impacts afterwards.

As seen hosting a mega-event does not profit the host city or country short-term but all the arguments like enlarging tourism long-term, building lasting transport infrastructure and building up the image of a country are more important than the loss of money that probably will be coming in the years after the event took place. But even when the costs for hosting mega-events are much higher than the money gained through them the author of this

essay has the opinion that such huge events are very important for the whole world as already mentioned as well regarding the statements of Robertson (2006) and Weed (2008).

In the opinion of this essays' author events and especially mega-events bring the world together due to the global importance and definitely help people to get a better understanding of other countries.

Because of all the above mentioned arguments mega-events are a contemporary issue for travel and tourism and due to the fact that there always will be such events in the future the issues will be persisting.

“ Mega-events like Olympic Games and expos have been and continue to be important phenomena at many levels and in many respects.” Roche (2005: 5)