



Major sports events – The reasons for hosting them

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Abstract

This article has investigated people's attitudes towards major sports events, of which two were mega events while one was of a moderate size. Surprisingly, the latter event (the World Skiing Championship) was the one that received most support in hypothetical referendums. This indicates that it is not necessary to invest heavily in venues and upgrading infrastructure to offer citizens the ability to enjoy sports events. The majority of international championships can be hosted at costs that are significantly cheaper than for example the Olympics and similar mega events. This represents an opportunity for cities and nations to have it both ways; achieving the benefits and at discounted prices. The surveys showed that particularly the social dimension was an important part of the events for many respondents. A pattern that was independent of which kind of events and sports they preferred.

1. Introduction

Whether it is worth spending efforts on hosting major sports events such as for example the Olympics and the most prestigious international championships seems to be a never-ending issue. Over the years, the popularity of such events has varied. In the 1970s and 80s, several cities were unwilling to apply for the Olympics. One reason for this was the poor economic results for the host cities, but also political

controversies. The 1972 Munich Olympics and the 1976 Montreal Olympics both turned out as financial failures for the host cities (Preuss, 2004). The 1980 Olympics in Moscow were boycotted by many western nations because of the Soviet's invasion in Afghanistan. Many cities were unwilling to apply for such events because of these experiences. The 1976 Winter Olympics, which initially were awarded to Denver, Colorado, were later moved to Innsbruck,

Austria after local residents in Denver voted against hosting it. The city of Los Angeles was the only serious bidder for the 1984 Olympics.

Since then, however, the pattern has changed. One reason for this was that the Los Angeles Games made a significant profit. This again triggered the interest for the events among cities. The 2012 Olympics, with five of the foremost cities in the world (London, Paris, Madrid, New York and Moscow) competing fiercely for the host position, represented an appropriate illustration.

Throughout 2014 and 2015, however, the pattern once again changed. Residents in Munich (Germany), Krakow (Poland) and St. Moritz / Davos (Switzerland) voted against applying for the 2022 Winter Olympics. Additionally, Stockholm (Sweden), Lviv (Ukraine) and Oslo (Norway) also withdrew their applications. Oslo even withdrew their application after the IOC had elected the city as a candidate city. In November 2015, the city of Hamburg (Germany) withdraw their bid for the 2024 Olympics¹. Similar attitudes were observed in Brazil prior to the 2014 FIFA World Cup. Their hosting caused severe opposition among residents, despite that Brazil traditionally has been considered as one of the leading (if not the leader of) football nations in the world.

One reason for this resistance was the cost overruns of mega events, which has been documented in the literature (Molloy & Skeath, 2015; Andreff, 2012; Baloyi & Bekker 2011; Flyvbjerg & Stewart, 2012; Gaffney, 2013; Müller, 2014).

¹<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/germany/12025211/Hamburg-withdraws-bid-to-host-2024-Olympics.html>

However, despite these experiences, the awarding of such events has usually caused joy and celebrations in the winning cities and nations. Academic research has also shown that the support among local residents tends to increase during the preparations (Preuss & Solberg, 2006). However, much is unknown concerning the reasons people have for welcoming the events. Is it because of the possibilities to watch competitions of top quality in their own backyard? Is it because of their value as a social happening? Is it because they expect the events will generate economic benefits for the destination and themselves? Alternatively, are there other reasons?

This article will address this issue by means of an empirical survey from Norway. Do local residents wish to host major sports events in their own backyard? If so, what are the main reasons for doing it? What do people want to achieve from the events? To what degree do they have different attitudes towards different events? By investigating these and related questions, this research can give politicians information regarding what kind of events that are worth supporting.

The survey was partly related to the 2011 FIS World Skiing Championship, which was hosted in Oslo three months before the survey. In addition, the survey also focused on the attitudes towards mega events, with the Winter Olympics and UEFA's Championship for national teams presented as hypothetical cases. The respondents were asked to imagine that Norway considered applying for these events, and were asked if they would have supported the application in a hypothetical referendum. The questionnaire did not indicate where the events would be hosted, only that they would be in Norway. This

allowed us to compare their attitudes towards an event that recently had been hosted with hypothetical events that could be hosted in the future. Norway has twice hosted the Winter Olympics. Additionally, the Norwegian Football Association applied for the 2008 UEFA Championship together with the other Nordic countries, but this event was awarded to Austria/Switzerland. In addition, the Norwegian and Swedish football associations prepared to apply for the 2016 Championship, but withdrew the applications when the governments in both countries were unwilling to support the event financially.

The next section first provides a literature review. This is followed by a discussion of theoretical perspectives of relevance for the research issue. Next is overview of data collection and methods. Then follow presentations of the results and findings. The final section discusses these findings and concludes.

2. Literature Review - Theoretical Perspectives

The literature analysing the impacts from major events has grown significantly over the years. Most of the academic research has concluded that the economic benefits for the host region tend to be moderate and significantly lower than expected (Zimbalist, 2015). Although many consultancy reports predict the opposite, these reports are often of poor methodological quality. Because of this, several contributions by academics have questioned the use of methods, as for example economic impact studies, which has been criticized for overestimating the benefits (Crompton, 1995; Késenne, 2005; Matheson, 2009; Porter, 1999; Porter & Fletcher, 2008).

According to Fourie & Santana-Galleo (2011), the impacts will depend on factors such as the type of event, the participating countries and whether it is hosted during the peak season or off-season. Some empirical studies have documented that hosts of the Summer Olympics enjoyed increased economic activities during the preparations. However, since cities that lost the awarding and hence only became applicants enjoyed the same benefits, this raises doubts whether it was the Games that caused the effects (Rose & Spiegel, 2011; Tien, Lo & Lin, 2011; Kasimati & Dawson, 2009). The Winter Olympics, however, do not seem to have any significant impacts on a national level, neither on tourism nor on other trade (Spilling, 2000; Teigland, 1999; Fourie & Santana-Galleo, 2011; Tien, Lo & Lin, 2011). Although some studies have shown that they can cause some impacts in the host city, these impacts are usually less than the ex-ante predictions. The conclusions summarizing the research from the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics probably reflect the view of many researchers.

“If the main argument for hosting a mega-event like the Winter-Olympics is the long-term economic impacts it will generate, the Lillehammer experience quite clearly points to the conclusion that it is a waste of money. However, this does not mean that there are no other arguments for hosting a mega-event. The Lillehammer Olympics was a great experience, although not in “economic terms” (Spilling, 2000).

Jakobsen, Solberg, Halvorsen & Jakobsen (2012) found that staging the Olympics had virtually no effect on foreign direct investments inflows, whereas the FIFA World Cup might have a small positive impact on

foreign investment, particularly in the years leading up to the event in smaller nations.

Kim, Gursoy & Lee (2006) showed that Korea's economic benefits from hosting the 2002 World Cup were rather a big disappointment for local residents, a pattern that also applied to the 1988 Olympics in Seoul. According to Lee & Taylor (2004), however, the World Cup tourists provided a much higher yield compared to ordinary foreign leisure tourists.

Maennig & du Plessis (2009) found that some sectors of low importance to the German economy profited from the 2006 FIFA WC in Germany. This research documents mixed results for the hotel and tourism sector, but also that hoteliers to some extent were able to compensate for the lower occupancy by raising prices. Similar to other studies, they showed that the employment effects were minimal (Kasimati & Dawson, 2009; Feddersen & Maennig, 2013).

An ex post analysis of the 1994 World Cup in the US indicates that host cities experienced cumulative losses of \$5.5 to \$9.3 billion as opposed to ex ante estimates of a \$4 billion gain touted by event boosters (Baade & Matheson, 2004). This corresponds with an analysis of the labour markets, which found no statistically significant change in employment or unemployment in host cities compared to cities that did not host the World Cup games (Baumann, Engelhardt & Matheson, 2011).

Some studies have documented increased awareness of the host city or nation, but also a quick "back to normal" pattern (Ritchie & Smith, 1991; Oldenboom, 2006). Other studies have documented none, or mixed results concerning changes in image (Chalip, Green & Hill, 2003; Gripsrud, Nes & Olsson,

2010; Mossberg & Hallberg, 1999; Rivenburgh, Louw, Loo & Mersham, 2003).

Recently, a number of studies have documented that mega events tend to be significantly more expensive than initially budgeted (Molloy & Chetty, 2015; Andreff, 2012; Baloyi & Bekker 2011; Flyvbjerg & Stewart, 2012; Müller, 2014). Another tendency is that many venues constructed for major sports events have a capacity that exceeds the post-event demand – the so-called "white elephants" (Alm, 2012; Preuss, Solberg & Alm, 2014).

Despite these results, Preuss & Solberg (2006) documented overwhelming support for the events among local residents. Their research was based on data from 117 opinion polls at 84 different locations (cities and nations), which in total represented 54 events. Surprisingly, they found a negative correlation between income and support for the event. It has also been documented that local residents, to some degree are willing to fund the events by earmarked taxes (Andersson, Rustad & Solberg, 2004; Atkinson, Mourato, Szymanski & Ozdemirogly, 2008).

This research will investigate factors that influence peoples' attitudes towards such events. The starting point was the literature that has analyzed the demand for sport spectating. This means that we investigate for similarities between the demand for sport and the demand for sports events. In other words, to what degree they are influenced by the same variables. In addition, we also use other control variables, as for example if the respondents expect the events will generate economic benefits for the host destination.

3. The Demand for Sports and Sporting Event

Sport spectating is in most instances a social activity, providing an opportunity to spend time with others. Indeed, for many people it is the social nature that attracts them to sport viewing. This is known as the *group affiliation motive*, i.e. a desire to spend time with others, for example friends. Another, and a related motive, is the *family motive* which involves a desire to watch sport because it provides an opportunity to spend time with family members (Wann, Melnick, Russel & Pease, 2001). This is based on the fact that humans are social beings, which is reflected in a number of classical theories of human motivation (Alderfer, 1972; Maslow, 1970; Danielson, 1997). Whether it occurs at the arena or at home, sports tend to be consumed in a group environment. This can fulfil the human need for social interaction by providing a sense of belongingness.

The *affective* component in attitude theory refers to our emotions about something (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Lutz, 1991). According to Oliver (2014), affect refers to the feeling side of consciousness that includes pleasure, happiness and liking, to mention some. An emotion can be more than a feeling or a passion, and is more cognitively involved than affect (e.g. Oliver, 2014). Examples can be the pride local residents enjoy from being awarded the event, but also from the attention the city receives during the host-period. Another example is the happiness and joy an individual feels from the atmosphere in city life during the event period.

It is well known that some sports fans identify strongly with teams/athletes. This can be connected to the *self-esteem motive*, which concerns an individual's desire to participate

in sports as a fan because it provides an opportunity to feel better about himself or herself. The individual uses sports fandom to help maintain a positive self-concept. Indeed, fans often increase their association with teams subsequent to successful performances, simply to bask in the team's accomplishment and boost their own self-esteem (Wann et. al., 2001). When their favourite team or athletes win, they feel like they themselves have won.

The hosting of events often creates expectations of *economic benefits* within the city or region. As the literature review illustrated, however, it is important to distinguish between the national and regional perspectives. Most of the academic research has concluded that the commercial benefits of the host nation tend to be moderate. Nevertheless, the host city (region) can benefit from investments in sport venues and upgrading of infrastructure, assuming the investments are funded by external sources, as for example the national government. Particularly the hosting of mega events requires substantial investments in sports venues, but also in non-sport facilities. Some cities have infrastructures that enable them to stage major sports events with a very low level of investment, whereas other cities have to invest substantially in infrastructure.

The city will receive worldwide attention during the event period. This can motivate governments to support projects and investments they otherwise would not have supported, hoping it will promote the city and its facilities and products. As an example, many Olympic cities have constructed new airports or upgraded the existing one prior to the games. Very often, these investments are totally or partly funded by the national government. In that way, the events can leave

a legacy for the host city. For the host nation, however, the investments represent only an internal redistribution of internal resources. If it was not for the event, the money would have been spent on other projects elsewhere in the nation.

Different practices exist with regards to the funding of such events. In many countries, the national government pays a substantial proportion of the investments in connection to mega events, such as the Olympic Games. North America, and particularly the US, has been an exception in this manner (Solberg & Preuss, 2007). However, any application for both the Olympics and the FIFA World Cup finals has to be complemented by a financial guarantee from the government. Hence, the government will have to bear some risk to have the application accepted.

Many impacts mentioned in this section are known as externalities in the literature. This refers to benefits that affect stakeholders who did not choose to incur them (Buchanan & Stubblebine, 1962). Local residents can enjoy a festival atmosphere in the city life and take pride in a successful hosting. This is comparable to a status of “celebration,” which tends to be stronger with the more people that enjoy it. Having a party only for some few is of limited value. Another example is the promotion of the city as a tourist destination. Additionally, if the event generates new sports venues, this can motivate more people to exercise and hence improve the health conditions among local residents. Many of these externalities also have the characteristics of *public goods*, as they satisfy both the *non-rivaling* and *non-exclusion* criterion (Samuelson, 1954).

The stakeholders who are directly involved in hosting of the events will mainly be

concerned about the impacts that fall on themselves, and with special attention to the revenues and costs. It is therefore a risk that positive externalities will be neglected. The consequences can be a suboptimal level of the inputs or outputs that cause the externalities. This, in turn, represents a welfare economic rationale for governmental funding.

However, if the national government funds the event, this creates a principal–agent relation with the government operating as the principal and the stakeholders who benefit being the agents. Following agency theory, this can motivate the stakeholders to behave opportunistically, which can cause the problem of a “moral hazard.” Those who benefit from the investments will prefer to increase the efforts until their own marginal benefits equal their own marginal costs, not the total marginal costs. This does not correspond with the objective of the principal, which in this case is the federal government. Therefore, the stakeholders will benefit from lobbying so that the efforts exceed the optimal level. If they succeed, the result can for example be that the city (or the nation) hosts too many events, or alternatively invests too much in facilities and/or infrastructure. For a more thorough discussion of the phenomenon in general, see, for example, Stiglitz (2000) and Gratton & Taylor (2000) for a sports related discussion.

4. Data Collection

Over the years, Norway has hosted a number of sports events, and the list gives an overview of events in the most popular sports.

- The Winter Olympics in Lillehammer (1994) and in Oslo (1952)
- The FIS World Skiing Championships (1966, 1982, 1997 and 2011)

- The FIS World Ski-flying Championship (1977, 1990, 2000, 2012)
- The IBU World Biathlon Championship in Biathlon (1986, 1990, 2000 and 2002)
- The IHF World Handball Championship (1993 and 1999 joint with Denmark, both female)
- The EHF European Handball Championship (2008 (male), and 2010 (female) joint with Denmark)
- The IIHF Ice-Hockey World Championship (1999)
- The UCI World Cycling Championship (1993)
- The ISU World Skating Championship (1989, 1993, 1999, 2004, 2009, 2013)

Additionally, several cities spent efforts on applying for the Winter Olympics in 2014 and 2018. Together with the other Nordic countries, Norway applied for the 2008 UEFA Championship football championship for national teams, and some years later the Norwegian and Swedish football associations prepared to apply for the 2016 Championship. However, neither of these plans materialized due to reasons mentioned above.

The last efforts started in 2012, when the city council of Oslo and the Norwegian Olympic and Paralympic Committee and Confederation of Sports (NIF) together decided to apply for the 2022 Winter Olympics. In a referendum from September 2013, the majority of local residents (55%) supported the application. As mentioned above, the IOC elected Oslo as a candidate city in June 2014. Two months later, however, the application was withdrawn when the national government rejected to give the necessary financial guarantee.

All these experiences, both as host and applicant have made Norwegians familiar with the events. Therefore, the respondents should have the necessary background to meaningfully answer the questions in the survey.

The data were collected by Norfakta Markedsanalyse AS (a Norwegian research marketing company). They have about 150 interviewers, and data collection by telephone interviews is one of their specialties. A total of 16,161 phone calls were conducted. Of these, 7129 did not pick up the phone, while 3242 rejected to be interviewed. The rest of the no-reply sample was due to other reasons, such as for example that the line was busy, the telephone answering machine and so on.

The first section of the questionnaire concentrated on the 2011 World Skiing Championship, Nordic Games in Oslo. Independent of this, the respondents were also asked to imagine that Norway considered applying for the Winter Olympics, UEFA's European Championship for the national team (male) and once again the FIS World Skiing Championship, Nordic Games. They were asked to consider the events independent of each other and not to rank them.

The questions focusing on the attitudes and motives for watching sports were inspired by the literature on sports demand, see Wann, (1997) and Wann, Melnick, Russel & Pease, (2001). This involved variables such as *group association*, *self-esteem* and *affective dimension*. Additionally, we also investigated whether expectations of *economic gains* and *political opinions* influenced the attitudes.

The interviews were conducted at the end of June 2011 in the four regions presented below. The sample consists of 980 respondents, of which 245 respondents from each region.

1. Oslo region (includes the city of Oslo and Akershus County)
2. Bergen region (includes the city of Bergen and Hordaland County)
3. Trøndelag (including both the Sør- and Nord-Trøndelag Counties)
4. Northern Norway (includes municipalities from the city of Narvik and further north)

We selected regions that had different experiences with major sports events. Oslo

hosted the World Skiing Championship in 1966, 1982 and 2011. Additionally, they have also hosted World Championships in biathlon, speed skating and ice hockey (joint hosting), as well as a number of World Cup competitions in both skiing and biathlon. Therefore, local residents should be very familiar with such events. Trondheim, the capital of Trøndelag, hosted the 1997 World Skiing Championship, but has also hosted several World Cup competitions in cross-country skiing, ski jumping and biathlon.

This was different in the Bergen region and Northern Norway, of which neither have any experiences with hosting such events. Tromsø, the “capital” of the Northern region, has twice tried to apply for the Winter Olympics, first in 2014 and later in 2018. However, due to lack of financial support from the governmental, the plans never materialized. Bergen, which is Norway’s second largest city, has yet to host any major sports events. The major reason is that Norway mainly has concentrated on winter sports, which are sports that do not fit with the climate in Bergen. In September 2014, however, Bergen was awarded the hostess of the 2017 ICU World Cycling Championship.

These differences in experiences made it interesting to investigate for regional differences in attitudes. In such surveys, there is a risk that the respondents will answer strategically if they expect that the answers can influence the decisions of politicians. However, that the questionnaire not indicated where the events would be hosted should eliminate the motives of answering strategically. Additionally, gender, income and education were also included as control variables. The next section will present the results from the empirical surveys.

5. Results

Descriptive Statistics

The figures in Table 1 document that the majority of the respondents would have supported applications for the Winter Olympics and World Skiing championship (Nordic Games). This pattern applied to both genders. This was different for the UEFA Championship, which was less supported, and where the data showed significant gender differences. Among those who had made up several billions their minds, 62% of men and 47% of women would have voted yes. The football championship also received less support from men than the other two events. Respectively 80% and 79% of men who had made up their minds would have supported applications for the World Skiing Championship and the Winter Olympics.

However, even if people welcomed the events, they were not automatically willing to support them financially, as seen from Table 2. About 50% of those who would have voted yes were also willing to spend earmarked taxes on them. Of the entire sample, about one third was willing to support the two winter events, while one fourth was willing to support the football championship. Hence, the pattern of the referendums and the willingness to pay questions corresponded.

Table 1: Referendum to Host the Events

	Yes	No	Don't know
Winter Olympics	71%	24%	5%
UEFA Football Championship	51%	43%	6%
FIS World Skiing Championship	77%	18%	5%
N = 980			

Table 2: Willingness to Support the Events by Earmarked Taxes

	Of yes votes	Of total sample (980)
Winter Olympics	52%	36%
UEFA Football Championship	52%	26%
FIS World Skiing Championship	51%	32%

The former three variables in Table 3 refer to some of the most common motives for watching sports, according to the literature (Wann, 1997). These variables were tested as explanatory variables in the regressions and logistic regressions in Table 4-6 which aimed to explain the attitudes towards the events. The respondents graded their answers by means of a scale from 1 to 10, where 10 indicated strongly agree and 1 totally disagree. The *social* and *affective* dimensions consisted of two variables, both with satisfying reliability (Cronbach's alphas of 0.758 and 0.733). The *self-esteem* dimension reflected to what degree the respondents identified themselves emotionally with

athletes or teams they supported. This dimension included only one variable. The variable called *economic benefits* expressed if the respondents also considered it important that the events generate economic benefits for the host destination/region, and this dimension included only one variable.

All but the *self-esteem* variable had quite high values, i.e. between 7.22 and 7.47 on a scale from 1 to 10. This indicates that both the social and affective dimensions played an important role. Additionally, the respondents also considered important that the event generated economic benefits for the host region.

Table 3: Enjoyment Dimensions / Experiences

	N	Mean	S.D.
Social dimension	970	7.36	1.980
Self-esteem	972	5.42	2.847
Affective	969	7.22	2.186
Economic benefits (regional perspective)	971	7.47	2.189
The 2011 World Skiing Championship:			
• Was worth the money	943	7.67	2.404
• Was an amusing experience	967	7.91	2.517
• Was effective promotion of Norway	968	8.39	1.957
• Made me proud of being a Norwegian	968	7.22	2.659

The 2011 World Skiing Championship in Oslo was hosted three months before the survey. Therefore, the respondents should be familiar with the effects that such events can create. The questionnaire included claims that reflected how they experienced the championship, and some of them are

presented at the bottom of Table 3. The figures confirm that most people enjoyed the championship and the impacts from it. We also used the claim “The Championship was worth the money” as a dependent variable in the OLS-regression in Table 4, where we analysed factors that influenced the attitudes.

Table 4: “The World Skiing Championship was worth the money” as Dependent Variable

	B	Std. Error	Sig.	VIF
(Constant)	-.833	.750	.267	
Social	.344	.044	.000	1.839
Self-esteem	-.019	.027	.477	1.530
Affective	.341	.050	.000	2.901
Economic benefits	.079	.033	.015	1.181
Geographical residence (Oslo = basic)				
Bergen region	-.237	.186	.202	1.650
Trøndelag	-.052	.177	.771	1.605
Northern Norway	-.399	.189	.035	1.735
Political opinion (Socialist/Red = basic)				
Labour	.374	.170	.028	1.457
Centre	.352	.217	.106	1.265
Conservative	.198	.172	.251	1.453
Progress Party (right wing)	.044	.255	.864	1.229
Previously attended major sports events	.096	.142	.502	1.300
Interested in football	-.008	.025	.741	1.474
Interested in winter sports	.219	.041	.000	2.324
Gender (Men = 1)	.140	.136	.305	1.211
Age	.007	.004	.099	1.111
Income (Ln)	.172	.101	.090	1.139
Higher education (Univ./college = 1)	-.140	.138	.311	1.211
Adjusted R-Square: 0.500, Durbin-Watson: 1.958				

The regression, which explains 50% of the variation, confirms that the *social* and the *affective* dimensions played an important role in peoples’ evaluations of the championship. People enjoyed the event, and they did it together with others. On the other hand, *self-esteem*, as defined in this context, did not have any effect on their assessment. Indeed, the coefficient was even negative, although not significant. The regression also showed

that those who considered the economic benefits to be important expressed more positive attitudes than others did. Whether this indicates a causal relationship can of course be questioned. Note, however, that the coefficient is lower than for the social and affective dimension.

The variables *geographical residence* and *political opinion* were both dummy variables. As for geographical residence, residents in

Oslo were the base indicator while supporters of either of the two socialist parties (Socialist Left and the Red Party) were the base indicator for political opinion.

The regression shows that respondents from Northern Norway assessed the championship lower than residents in the Oslo region. The obvious reason for this is the geographical distance of more than 1600 km, which made it more difficult and costly to attend the championship. The coefficient for people living in the Bergen region was also negative, but not significant.

As for political opinions, supporters of the Labour Party were significantly more positive than the base indicator. Voters of the central

parties also expressed more positive attitudes that almost were significant (sign. level of 0.106).

As expected, respondents who were interested in winter sports assessed the championship higher than other respondents did. The regression documented a positive correlation between age and the dependent variable, and that people with higher incomes were more positive than others. For these two variables, the coefficients were significant (only) at 10%.

Table 5: Voting Results Winter Olympics (Yes = 1, No = 0)

	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Social	.308	.077	15.921	.000	1.360
Self-esteem	-.021	.047	.204	.651	.979
Affective	-.058	.082	.491	.484	.944
Economic benefits	.111	.055	4.082	.043	1.117
Residence (Oslo = basic)			4.314	.229	
Bergen region	.463	.314	2.174	.140	1.589
Trøndelag	-.169	.289	.342	.559	.845
Northern Norway	.093	.321	.083	.773	1.097
Political opinion (Socialist/Red = basic)			4.936	.294	
Labour	.360	.381	.895	.344	1.434
Centre	.231	.423	.299	.584	1.260
Conservative	.480	.387	1.537	.215	1.616
Progress Party (right wing)	1.070	.514	4.328	.037	2.915
Previously attended major sports events	-.336	.239	1.966	.161	.715
Interest in football	-.093	.044	4.504	.034	.911
Interest in winter sports	.333	.072	21.198	.000	1.395
Gender (Men = 1)	-.197	.232	.717	.397	.821
Age	-.033	.008	19.721	.000	.967
Income (Ln)	-.268	.184	2.116	.146	.765
Higher education (Univ./college = 1)	-.177	.243	.531	.466	.838
Constant	-.197	1.432	.019	.890	.821

Table 6: Voting Results UEFA Euro Tournament (Yes = 1, No = 0)

	B	S.E.	Wald	Sig.	Exp(B)
Social	.173	.073	5.594	.018	1.189
Self-esteem	.077	.042	3.247	.072	1.080
Affective	-.047	.080	.338	.561	.954
Economic benefits	.026	.052	.249	.618	1.026
Residence			.958	.812	
Bergen region	-.088	.285	.095	.758	.916
Trøndelag	.179	.276	.422	.516	1.196
Northern Norway	.045	.299	.023	.881	1.046
Political opinion			7.570	.109	
Labour	.129	.367	.123	.726	1.137
Centre	-.533	.406	1.728	.189	.587
Conservative	-.387	.370	1.094	.296	.679
Progress Party (right wing)	.054	.451	.014	.904	1.056
Previously attended major sports events	.193	.220	.773	.379	1.213
Interest in football	.273	.041	44.727	.000	1.314
Interest in winter sports	-.031	.065	.223	.636	.970
Gender (Men = 1)	-.360	.210	2.948	.086	.698
Age	-.018	.007	7.768	.005	.982
Income (Ln)	.175	.165	1.131	.288	1.192
Higher education (Univ./college = 1)	.237	.222	1.139	.286	1.267
Constant	-2.694	1.309	4.235	.040	.068

Tables 5 and 6 present the results from the logistic regressions that analysed the hypothetical referendums for the Winter Olympics and UEFA's Championship for national teams. The results show that the social dimension had significant effects, a pattern that corresponded with the assessment of the World Skiing Championship. Contrary to the skiing championship, the affective dimension did not have any effect. For this variable, the coefficient was even negative, although not significant. A Pearson correlation coefficient of 0.64 indicates some multicorrelation in the regression, which also explains the VIF-index of 2.901 in Table 4. Therefore, we also tested alternative regressions where only one of them was used as explanatory variable. These tests, however, gave the same results, namely that the

affective dimension had a positive effect in the OLS regression, but not in the logistic regressions. The social dimension had a positive effect in all the three alternative regressions. Self-esteem affected the attitudes towards the football championship, but not the Winter Olympics.

The geographical residence of the respondents did not influence the voting results, a pattern that applied to both events. This did not correspond with the results in the OLS-regression that analysed the attitudes towards the 2011 World Skiing Championship, where particularly respondents from Northern Norway expressed more negative attitudes than others.

Political opinions did not have any effect on the voting results, with the exception of the supporters of the Progress Party (right wing),

who were more positive towards the Winter Olympics than other respondents were. This represents an interesting paradox, as it differs from the view of the party's leadership, who were negative towards Tromsø's and Oslo's applications for the 2018 and 2022 Winter Olympics.

Younger people were most supportive towards the two mega events. This was different for the World Skiing Championship, which was more supported among older people (Table 4). Men were significantly more supportive towards the football championship than women, while no gender differences were unveiled for the Winter Olympics.

6. Discussion - Conclusions

This article has investigated people's attitudes towards hosting major sports events and the factors influencing them. The empirical data is from a survey of Norwegian residents', which concentrated on their assessments of three major sports events; The Winter Olympics, UEFA Euro Championship for national teams and The FIS World Skiing Championship (Nordic Games). While the former two are mega events, the skiing championship is significantly more moderate, both in terms of costs and world-wide attention.

The respondents were told that Norway considered to apply for these events, and were asked whether they would support the application. Since the city of Oslo had hosted the World Skiing Championship three months before the survey was conducted, we also investigated their assessments of this specific event.

The results showed that a new application for the World Skiing Championship (77%) and the Winter Olympics received strong support (71%), while the support for the UEFA Euro Championship was more moderate (51%).

The survey confirmed that the social dimension is an important part of the events for many people. This was something many respondents had in common, independent of which event and sport they preferred. This does not correspond with the view of many politicians, who focus more on the ability to reap regional economic benefits. Although the respondents also emphasized economic benefits, this was nevertheless less important than the social dimension. This pattern corresponds with previous analyses of the demand for sport which also emphasize the importance of the social dimension. (Wann et al., 2001). Sports competitions are usually enjoyed together with friends, family or other acquaintances. Hence, they have a social dimension that is a value of its own.

The findings also correspond with research that has highlighted the "feel-good factor" as more important than the expectations of economic benefits as the reason for why people support the events (Hiller & Wanner, 2015; Kavetsos & Szymanski, 2010; Kersting, 2007; Kim, Gursoy & Lee, 2006; Maennig & Porsche, 2008; Zhang, Chen, Lei & Malone, 2013). In that respect, it is worth highlighting one of the conclusions from the research on the 1994 Lillehammer Winter Olympics (Spilling, 2000);

"It was a great experience, although not in economic terms".

In a poll shortly after the Games, 91% admitted that the Olympics filled the them with enthusiasm. The most important reasons for this were the good performances of the

Norwegian athletes (60%), lively street life in Lillehammer (44%), the opening ceremony (39%) and the positive reputation abroad (34%) (Spilling, 1994). These are all examples of *externalities*, which also have the characteristics of *public goods*. This means that the effects are non-rivaling and non-exclusive. See Samuelson (1954) for a profound discussion.

We also registered different reasons for why the respondents were supportive. Those who identified themselves with specific athletes or teams were more favourable towards the football championship than other respondents. This was different among those who supported the Winter Olympics and the World Skiing Championship. Interestingly, such a pattern corresponds with previous research, which has documented that personal identification with teams and athletes is more characteristic among football supporters than fans of individual sports (Solberg & Hammervold, 2008). The Winter Olympics mainly consist of individual sports, while the World Skiing Championship only includes individual sports, with the exceptions of relays.

Those who were most interested in football tended to be more negative towards the Olympics than other respondents. One reason for this can be that the Winter Olympics and the UEFA football championship are both very resource demanding. An application for these events must be accompanied by a financial guarantee from the national government. Hence, some football fans might have feared that hosting the Olympics could have reduced the chances of financial support the football championship. Therefore, their answers can also be the result of strategic behaviour and not their correct attitudes

towards winter sports in general. However, this pattern did not work in reverse order. Respondents who were strongly interested in winter sports were neither more positive nor more negative towards the Winter Olympics than others were.

The referendums did not indicate in which city the events would be hosted, which we believe reduced the likelihood of strategic answers. The logistic regressions did not document any geographical differences in attitudes with regards to the applications. This, however, was different for the 2011 World Championship, which was less assessed in Northern Norway than elsewhere. The most likely reason is the long geographical distance between Oslo and Tromsø. Although people enjoy the events, they prefer them to have them in their own region. Such preferences correspond with Atkinson et al. (2008), who documented a lower willingness to pay for the 2012 London Olympics in Manchester and Glasgow than in London.

Expectations of economic gains correlated positively with the attitudes towards the Winter Olympics, but with not the football championship. Although academic research has documented that the commercial benefits from hosting such events tend to be lower than expected, the host city may well benefit from public funding. This is more likely for the Winter Olympics than the UEFA Euro, since the former event is hosted in only one city, while the football tournament is spread across a number of cities. Hence, the Olympic impacts will be more concentrated to the host city.

However, even if people had positive attitudes towards the events, they were not automatically willing to fund them by

earmarked taxes. About 50% of those who would have voted yes were also willing to spend taxes on supporting them, while between 25% and 36% of the whole sample (also including those who would have voted no) were willing.

One interesting lesson event organizers, politicians, public administration and other stakeholders can learn from this research is that people can enjoy events of a moderate size (in terms of costs) as much (and even more) than mega events. The World Skiing Championship was the most popular alternative among the respondents. Although the venues had significant cost overruns, it was significantly cheaper than for example the planned 2022 Winter Olympics. While the total outlays, including both the operational costs and the investments amounted to NOK2,6 billion, this was only 7,5% of the budget for the planned 2022 Winter Olympics. Hence, it would have been possible to host 13 skiing championships for the price of the Winter Olympics. Furthermore, since previous Winter Olympics also have had cost escalations, the gap in costs would most likely have been significantly larger than these figures illustrate.

Hence, if the major purpose is to give local residents an opportunity to enjoy events within their own backyard, it may not be necessary to invest several billions necessary to host mega events in upgrading venues and new infrastructure. Skiing is very popular in Norway and other Nordic nations. This research indicates that residents assess events in this sport even more than mega events, and best of all at discounted prices. Other sports will have the same position in other nations as skiing have in Norway. If international championships in these sports can create

impacts that local residents appreciate about as much as those from mega events, it may be worth concentrating on them. Which events and sports that can serve this job will of course vary from nation to nation. More research is therefore necessary to identify the specific events and how citizens assess the impacts from them.

The majority of international championships are less resource demanding than mega events such as the Olympics, the FIFA World Cup and the UEFA Euro. History has shown that mega events requires substantial investments, in both venues and infrastructure, and also that they tend to become more expensive than planned. Additionally, they also have this habit of creating “white elephants”, which refer to venues that have a capacity significantly above the post event demand. Hence, if events of a moderate size can create the same impacts as mega events, i.e. the impacts local residents appreciate, the idea may be worth following up. In that way, event cities may have it both ways; Achieving the benefits, and at discounted prices.

7. References

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